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## Mimesis and Intellectual Conversion Towards and Eschatological Imagination

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MIMESIS AND INTELLECTUAL CONVERSION  
TOWARDS AN ESCHATOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

by

Peter Bisson, S.J.

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## VITA

The author, Peter Charles Bisson, S.J., is the son of Charles Richard Bisson and Anne-Marie Lorette Albert, and the brother of Paul Matthew Bisson. He was born in Edmundston, New Brunswick.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Problem

The general problem which concerns me is the use of the mind in working for social justice. The particular aspect which motivates this reflection and research concerns the use of concepts, or universals, in what I call a non-violent way. My hypothesis is that to use concepts non-violently or justly, whether to hypothesize the actual orderedness of reality or to prescribe or suggest how reality should be, then the ultimate level of consideration which guides the use of concepts must itself be unconceptualizable if the whole hypothesis or prescription of order and the resulting actions are to be just. I mean the non-violent use of concepts to apply in any aspect of human life: social, political, ethical, epistemological, ontological, metaphysical. This essay will restrict itself to ethics and metaphysics.

The whole essay is an exercise in developing what I mean by non-violence, an unconceptualizable ultimate level of consideration, a just description or prescription of order and a just use of the mind. Nevertheless, allow me to touch on them in a very introductory way now. I have in mind two forms of non-violence, moral and intellectual. Moral non-violence is where one acts in such a way that the other person or persons are free to formulate their own response, and are not merely forced into a choice between yes or no. Intellectual

non-violence is where opinions and systems of concepts are held lightly, that is they remain open-ended and never become a complete and closed system with no room for newness, otherness or surprise.

Something which is unconceptualizable cannot be adequately contained or represented by a concept. It may perhaps be referred to or expressed, but it cannot be completely contained in a concept.

A just description or prescription of order is an order imagined or hypothesized in current reality, or expected or hoped for in the future, which is just in its practical effects when used as a guide to action. This is an ethical basis for metaphysical theory. More specifically, when I say justice with respect to a general metaphysical theory of order, I mean that order imagined and expected, whether by an individual thinker or a group or a culture, should be such that individual identities are identities in themselves, and not merely versions of some other identity, deriving their identity only in relation to something else.

Concepts are general and impersonal and so cannot contain, represent and explain particular, unique things. A concept can name what is common, shared, but not what is individual. If understanding is defined as fitting something into a concept, then concepts not only cannot represent what is unique and individual, they also cannot represent what is not understood and what is not known. I do not wish to protest this weakness of abstract or general concepts; I wish rather to protest a use of concepts which does not acknowledge this weakness, and I wish to find a way of using concepts that does acknowledge it. If the use of concepts is guided by another concept, no matter how universal, then the theory of order so constructed will have no room for individual particular things, and especially no room for persons, the most individual and



unique things. A problem about how to imagine order is a problem about thinking, about how to use the mind. I am preoccupied here by the use of concepts, so my problem is only about the use of a certain aspect or power of the mind, the rational or intellectual power.

The highest level of order or consideration which is expected or imagined guides the use of concepts in a theory of order. In my reflection I am concerned with this level of consideration insofar as it influences the use of concepts. What bothers me is when the impersonality, universality or abstractness of concepts is assigned to this highest level of consideration. I find this to be violent. If what I find problematic about the possible primacy and centrality of concept is its impersonality, then I should be looking for a personal use of impersonal, general concepts.

Emmanuel Levinas seems to deal with similar issues in his Totalite et infini. I want to examine how he expresses the transcendent, which I analyze as his ultimate level of consideration, why he says it must be unconceptualizable, and how he uses it to think even if it is unconceptualizable. I want to use this work of his as an occasion to develop and test my own ideas.

I would like to proceed with a bit of intellectual autobiography to explain why I am interested in this problem.

### My Interest

My interest in the role of impersonality in our culture began with the shock and challenge of moving from a very small town on the periphery of Canadian society to a big, prestigious university in a big city in central Canada.

Suddenly I no longer mattered as a person. I did matter as a consumer, as a worker, as a student, as talented, but these categories were separated, objectivized and measurable aspects of me, not the more whole me which I had been used to experiencing from others at home. Many of my teachers and fellow students also unconsciously advocated a kind of rationality which was similarly impersonal and objectifying, usually holding up a certain interpretation of physical science to justify it.

I was fascinated by the efficiency and the power for good of these impersonal ways of organizing: for example the law ostensibly treated everyone the same, the university could handle so many people only by treating us as student numbers instead of as individuals. We could take advantage of many services without ever becoming personally engaged with the people providing them, unlike at home where you could probably not even get to the corner store without having a conversation with someone, and if you went to a big store you were probably related to at least some of the staff.

At the same time I felt that something was wrong with these impersonal ways of organizing collective human life. Even though I was "successful" in these systems, something about them hurt me. I missed something. So at some point during my second year of undergraduate studies I decided that I wanted to study this phenomenon of impersonality, to understand its goodness, its badness, its history, its remedies. I wanted to figure out what I was experiencing. In one way or another, the phenomenon of impersonality has been the intellectual theme of my life since then, about ten years ago.

A few years later I was involved in some activity which deeply influenced me towards formulating my idea of moral non-violence. I and a few other

student colleagues were trying to preserve the faculty position of one of our professors, without the professor really knowing what we were doing. For many reasons, it was a complex and very delicate situation. For about a month and a half we did many things to attain our goal. However, we did not simply want to have our own way even though what we wanted was very precious to us. We always acted in such a way as not to put the people we were struggling against into a corner. We never wanted to put them in a position where they had no choice but to say either "Yes, you are right," or "No, we are really bad people." We tried to create situations that always maintained relations with them and moreover which always respected their freedom to creatively and independently formulate their own responses. It was very difficult for us to maintain this attitude toward our own action and toward the people we were challenging. We maintained it through almost constant discussion and through much prayer and discernment together. The discussion and prayer enabled us to continually desire this orientation and to decide how to use it in particular ways. The outcome, thank goodness, was to everybody's satisfaction. But we were so exhausted --and behind in our work-- that none of us was much involved in student politics the next year. That, too, was probably to everyone's satisfaction. It is mainly from this short but intense experience that I have formulated my idea of moral non-violence.

Even though it can occasionally be rather satisfying to "beat people over the head" with the "right ideas," I have found that when I try to influence people only with concepts or principles, with a system of the "correct ideas," they feel threatened. I too feel threatened when others approach me in this way. I think that the threat comes from the requirement to be moved only by an idea, instead

of by a person, or to fit oneself into a system of ideas. An idea or concept is general and abstract, and cannot grasp the particular, the unique or the personal. So it is a threat to the uniqueness of the person in question, not because it violates personality and particularity, but because it ignores them. This is primarily what I mean by injustice: to ignore or violate personality, particularity or uniqueness. I do not mean to say that concepts are unjust; no, the problem lies with a certain use of concepts which ignores or violates individuality. An idea can be used unjustly, even an idea or vision of justice.

Recently the experience of a few months living and working in a poor part of Kingston, Jamaica led me to reflect on the use of the mind in working for justice, especially on the use of the imagination and hope. There many people could only imagine a better future coming from outside Jamaica: from some other country, from heaven, or by leaving Jamaica. In any case, the better future did not come from themselves in Jamaica. This was a disempowering eschatology. Not imagining a better future which came from their own power and work seemed to greatly constrict their hope and action in the present. This was in marked contrast with parts of Central America where the situation was economically, politically and militarily much worse than in Jamaica, yet ordinary people had much more hope and expectation that they themselves could make a difference for the future. The difference between the two attitudes seemed to come from self-image, the use of imagination, and the form of hope.

Thus it seems to me that an impersonal use of an idea of a better future, as well as a very weak idea of a better future are both unimaginative, and a great constriction on the use of the mind. These have been some points of my experience that have led me to worry and wonder about the use of the mind in

working for justice, and to look for a non-violent use of the mind, especially of concepts. I want to know if and how the impersonal can be used so that its use includes acknowledging personality and particularity.

Now I will describe the intellectual tools which I use to explore my problem.

## CHAPTER II

### TERMS AND METHOD: PHILOSOPHY AS TECHNOLOGY FOR CLOSING MIMETIC GAP

#### Intellectual Move

I use the language of strategy and game to analyze thinking into what I call intellectual moves.<sup>1</sup> When thinking is oriented to some practical end I see it as a strategic activity. The end or goal may be practical, such as solving a problem of action, making a decision; it may be a more theoretical end, such as solving a problem of understanding for the sake of understanding or curiosity as an end in itself. Goal-oriented thinking is intentional. Thinking is not only strategic problem solving, though. Thinking is also free and playful, something which can be done for its own sake and not only to solve some practical or theoretical problem. This is the game aspect. Enjoyment and appreciation are this kind of thinking. Both strategic and game dimensions should be present at once, and the notion of intellectual move refers to both dimensions. There are no doubt other aspects to thought, but these are the two which concern me in this investigation.

The kind of thinking that I refer to here is an activity of the psychic interiority. It is a response, not a reaction, to interior or exterior experience. Reactions are instinctive, immediate, reflexive and unreflected. Reactions may be a form of thinking too, but I only wish to deal with the free and strategic dimensions of thinking now.

An intellectual move is a decision. The will is involved. The result of a move is a concept, an argument, a system of thought, or a way of using a concept, argument or system. A decision can be conscious or unconscious, and is probably oriented to and by some end or purpose. An intellectual move can be unconscious if it is not made explicitly; then it is guided by a deeper and prior move, which can be an insight, a hope, an assumption in the individual or shared with a culture, a family, group, a class, a religion, a language, a nation. Such a deeper and prior move can provide an end or guide for subsequent, more conscious and more explicit moves. A particular move can be oriented to or by an end either in a way that is suitable or unsuitable to that end. Other moves may influence its suitability or unsuitability.

Orientation to and by an end which is itself an intellectual move is the strategy dimension of an intellectual move. The game aspect of the move implies freedom. For example, the end can be chosen, as can be the way to respond to that end. There is choice, and so a degree of spontaneity, at each point of the process. As a decision, an intellectual move is a free intellectual construction. It is free because the end which guides or at least influences it is also a move, the end is chosen. This does not mean an infinite regression of ends and moves, undisciplined or unguided by something other than the process of thinking itself. Experience, especially the experience of radical otherness and the intellectual conversion and intellectual non-violence it produces, prevents moves from regressing into themselves.

An intellectual move is also free because it is not an attempt simply to copy or represent whatever was encountered that stimulated the thinking to begin with, or even to copy the intention. The play aspect of game adds a

dimension of self-expression, and of thinking for the enjoyment of it to the strategy dimension.<sup>2</sup>

An intellectual move is analogous to a work of art, including dimensions of interpretation and expression from the artist, as well as of representation and imitation from whatever is being responded to. As a construction in this sense, it is a poiesis. The medium in this case is rational, conceptual thought. An intellectual move is an intellectual making or poiesis. The product is the thinking and behaviour that accompany the move.

The strategic goal behind my choosing the concept of intellectual move is to relativize concepts, to say that no concept need be absolute or primary. By using the concept of intellectual move to analyze other concepts, I mean to suggest that no concept is absolutely necessary, or totally adequate to what it represents or means, nor completely a representation. Being free means that a particular intellectual move is not necessary, and that the move could always have been made otherwise. The analogy of intellectual move treats every concept or other intellectual poiesis as a more or less free decision and construction, and therefore as always interesting because never obvious.

### Concept as Analogy

I analyze thinking into intellectual moves, and I treat concepts as analogies.<sup>3</sup> My use of the term intellectual move is as an analogy to game and strategy in order to relativize the notion of concept and the use of concepts. Analogy is a relation of likeness and unlikeness between two terms or things. A concept seen as analogy instead of as representation or as something objective is both like and unlike what it represents. It is unlike what it represents because it



is more than a representation, it is a chosen response to some stimulation from within or without consciousness. The response is a construction, a move, guided by some end, and chosen. It is like, since it also has a dimension of representation and imitation.

A representation is also a response; my point in contrasting concept as analogy with concept as representation or as something objective is to contrast two interpretations of concepts in general. A concept as an intellectual move and as an analogy sets up a relationship between the conscious self and that which is encountered. The relationship is constructed and chosen. My move of treating concepts as analogy and as intellectual move relativizes concept by making it not primary, not a relation between like and like, between concepts, but between consciousness and that which consciousness is responding to. This is my sense in which analogy is a relation between like and unlike: it is a relationship between the conscious thinking subject and what is not the conscious thinking subject. This can include relationship with parts of the subject which are not consciously known and understood. This is not relation in a formal or logical sense; to state the point in a more rhetorical way, concept in this sense constructs a society between like and unlike, between the thinking conscious subject and what is not the thinking conscious subject, between thought and what the thought is of.

Concept as analogy says that the concept is never fully adequate as a representation, that is, it is never a complete and full imitation. Concept as analogy says about that which is being conceptualized that it can never be fully and completely represented. It is inadequate to understand concepts only as representations, because then they are always inadequate. Thinking would then be only a process of representation and of manipulating the representations. But

a concept can be adequate if it need not be strictly a representation, if it is understood instead as analogy and intellectual move.

That a concept's degree of representation is not the only norm for its adequacy does not mean that any relation between like and unlike will do. The criteria of adequacy for an intellectual move include the suitability of its orientation to its purpose, the effects of its purpose. As an analogy and a relationship it must respect the self which is conscious, and it must respect that of which the self is conscious. Respect acknowledges the role of the self in making the concept, and the concept's inadequacy as representation. Respect also acknowledges the uniqueness of that which is being conceptualized, its hiddenness, its incomplete representability. There must always be room for the "unknown," that which is not yet consciously known and understood, or cannot be completely known and understood consciously, conceptually. These two dimensions of respect are the crux of intellectual non-violence. The main body of this essay explores these criteria of adequacy as intellectual non-violence.

Now I would like to describe some kinds of intellectual moves relevant to imagining or expressing the actual relationship and expecting or hoping for a future relationship between like and unlike.

### Theory of Order as Eschatological Imagination

To imagine a current relationship and to expect or desire a future one is a theory of order. It is a theory because it is imagined and expected, that is, it is an intellectual construction. This is theory in the scientific sense, that of hypothesis. Theory and imagination imply freedom and a point of view. Imagination means calling to mind or intellectually constructing that which is not

actually present to the senses, either because it is not sensible, or because it exists but is absent, or because it does not yet exist. The relationships which are interpreted as being in the present, either visibly or in an actual but hidden way, are imagined. That is, they are an interpretation and expression of the actual, present relations of the self with what is not the self, with the "unknown" as described above. The relationships which are hoped or perhaps expected to obtain in the future are also imagined.

A theory of order is a way of describing how all things that are, are related to each other, how they are like and unlike each other, how they affect each other. It is also a way of describing or prescribing how things could be or should be in the future, or at least in some ideal state. A theory or hypothesis of order can also project a relation between present imagined relations, and future expected relations, for example a relationship of potential in the present for the future or for the ideal relations, or no relation between them at all. The expected, future or ideal, relations can be used as a norm to judge and measure the imagined present ones. Because it can be used to judge or critique, it is a higher level of consideration or order than the present one.

Articulating the perception and prescription of order has two moments or levels of consideration, "is" and "should." The "is" moment or level expresses order as presently perceived. It is the perception, imagination or interpretation moment. It is a beginning point in the imagination and expectation of order. The "should" moment or level expresses order as expected or desired either in the future or in an ideal state. It is the expectation, hope or prescription moment. The "should" moment is an ending point in the imagination and expectation of order. It provides the energy to change present order and to build new order.

The two moments begin as insights and are then developed into analogies in order to be expressed and used. They become intellectual moves. As analogies they are both like and unlike what they mean. The analogy of "is" comes from an insight which provides a way to describe how things presently are, as experienced, and how they are related and unrelated to each other. I call this an existential level of consideration. The analogy of "should" comes from an insight which provides a way to say that things need not be the way they are now, and that things could or should be otherwise. The analogy of "should" does not simply say no to the "is" state of affairs, for it can suggest how things should be or could be. I call the "should" moment a critical level of consideration because it enables one to criticize and to suggest, prescribe or hope for alternatives. It provides criticism or judgement, and hope.

Because the existential and critical moments are each a beginning and an ending for the imagination and expectation of relation, of order, I call the two uses of the mind together eschatological imagination. This may be a poor choice of words, for eschatology properly refers to last things, endings. I choose it mainly because the two moments of imagining and expecting influence each other. End and beginning seem related, somehow, at least intuitively.<sup>4</sup> Eschatological imagination has a dimension of the present, perception and actuality, and a dimension of the future, vision, vocation and judgement.

### Primary Analogy and Limit

An intellectual move which expresses and makes usable a primary insight into either the "is" or "should" moments in general is what I call a primary analogy. For example, Aristotle's distinction and relation between act and potency

is his analogy for his primary insight into development or actualization. In my judgement, he interpreted the "is" moment of order as development or process. Aquinas's distinction and relation between being and essence is his analogy for a primary insight into act. It seems to me that Aquinas saw the "is" moment of order, particular natures and particular actions, even existence, as act. A primary analogy is consciously or unconsciously used as a norm or measure for description and analysis, or for critique and prescription. A primary analogy often combines both existential and critical moments.

A limit is an intellectual move which expresses what is accepted as either the end or the beginning of a description, an explanation or a criticism. It is not limitation in the sense of restriction or termination. Rather, limit is a level of consideration which provides identity through definition. Ultimate limit is the ultimate level of consideration, of order. Transcendence is an example of an ultimate limit, an ultimate level of consideration.

A primary analogy can serve as an ultimate limit, but does not have to. An ultimate limit can be constructed using a primary analogy. For example, Aristotle constructs his ultimate limit of pure actuality by completely actualizing the potency in his primary analogy of the act-potency distinction, leaving only pure act.

### Mimetic and Non-mimetic Intellectual Constructions

I see two general kinds of intellectual construction. The first and by far the most common kind is the imitation and adaptation of something already familiar and understood, a projection or extrapolation from a known thing. It a mimetic intellectual move. The resulting construction and abstraction is then used

in order to explain and interpret. Any universal or abstraction is this kind of intellectual move, because it is universalized or abstracted from something already known and understood. It remains within the realm of concepts.

The second kind of move is a non-mimetic intellectual construction is far more difficult to perform and to describe. It is not a mimesis of something already experientially familiar and cognitively understood, but it is still a poiesis, because it is still an intellectual and imaginative construction. The resulting construction is still built from already familiar things, but put together in an unfamiliar way. It is still an analogy and poiesis because it is thinkable, but it is a non-mimetic analogy. Non-mimetic analogy is the kind of intellectual move which is necessary in order to construct, express and use a relation of transcendence, to express radical otherness and uniqueness, that which might be experienced but not conceptually understood, which a common or universal concept cannot do. It is an analogy for radical transcendence or radical otherness. Any representation of this must be inadequate by definition. This intellectual move does not result in a concept but in a relationship. It makes participation part of knowledge, it makes knowledge personal. This is thought relating to what is not itself a thought, knowing relating to the unknown or the not yet known.

I call this transcendence radical because non-mimetic analogy is more than a maximum degree of abstraction, formalization or generalization. It is a very difficult intellectual move because it is not mimetic. It is not the imitation of a form. Instead, it expresses and is openness. It is a kind of letting-go of intellectual control, a leap, to express and to choose a relation with the unknown. It is from the perspective of this kind of intellectual move that the other moves appear as one general class, that is, as various kinds of mimesis.

Because non-mimetic analogy is not a mimesis of something already known and understood, something intellectually controllable, this leap can be understood as analogous to creation out of nothing.<sup>5</sup> It can also be understood as analogous to acting out of faith instead of out of prior certainty. I do not mean to suggest that understanding implies intellectual control. Rather I am building a case to criticize a form of understanding which does pretend to intellectual control.

To emphasize the specialness of non-mimetic analogy as an intellectual move, I call it intellectual conversion. I do not mean spiritual or religious conversion, but intellectual. Intellectual conversion is simply the encounter and acknowledgement of radical transcendence, or of radical otherness, which is made by discovering that abstraction, universalization, formalization --any conceptualization-- are mimetic, finite and limited intellectual moves and are not strictly objective, no matter how abstract and universal they are. Just because a concept has a certain degree of abstraction and universality does not mean it is true. Intellectual conversion is more the discovery of the limitation and relativity of conceptualization than it is a positive experience of transcendence. It is where one discovers one's perspective as a perspective.

Radical transcendence is the "other side" or a possible consequence of discovering the relativity of concepts. Intellectual conversion discovers the possibility of radical transcendence, then the possibility must be accepted or rejected. Accepting it and using it must be a decision. Either decision becomes the basis for how reason is used.

Now I would like to give some examples of intellectual conversion in the history of philosophy. Non-mimetic analogy and intellectual conversion describe

Plotinus's concept of the One as an intellectual move which constructs the ultimate limit in his construction of order. Moving to construct the One expresses radical transcendence or radical otherness because it is beyond the concepts of knowledge and of being, so it is strictly unconceptualizable. The distance between the One and the next level of consideration is greater than the distance between the second highest level and the lowest one.<sup>6</sup> Augustine's experience in the garden was an experience of intellectual conversion, where he discovered and accepted radical transcendence and let go of his earlier materialistic and mimetic interpretations of reality. Anselm's ontological argument does not prove the existence of God; rather, it expresses radical transcendence. Aristotle breaks through to radical transcendence when he decides that his ultimate limit will be a substance instead of a form or any other universal or concept, or anything that could be completely contained in a universal (Metaphysics, Book XI).

### Effects of Intellectual Conversion: Critique of Mimesis

Intellectual conversion does not do away with mimetic intellectual moves; it simply relativizes them by reference to radical transcendence. It relativizes them by revealing that they are not absolute, that they have a place which is not primary. It reveals them as tools and expressions, and not only as representations. It reveals them as mimetic. Then a concept or universal cannot be an ultimate limit. Intellectual conversion has this revelatory power of judgement because it does not issue in another concept or intellectual construction. It issues instead in a relationship or in openness to relationship. All mimetic intellectual moves then become relative to and changed by intellectual conversion. In this essay I will try to show that this is what Levinas does.



Until intellectual conversion a primary analogy, as described on page 16, and the ultimate limit constructed from it can only be used mimetically. Before the breakthrough to non-mimetic analogy is made, thinking and imagining are materialistic for until then they can only be based on mimesis, on abstraction and universalization from material, sensibly known and understood things. Materialism in this sense is an imitation, that is, a projection or extrapolation, from something already known and understood, an extension from previous experience and which does not go beyond the bounds of previous experience and understanding. Therefore it has no room for the unknown, for the radically other, for that which transcends previous experience. Mimetic materialism is when the mind refuses to or simply does not go beyond the bounds of previous understanding. It makes explanations, hypotheses, investigations only within these parameters.

A primary analogy is a mimesis, for it expresses an insight, a general pattern perceived in one's experience of reality. An ultimate limit which is constructed mimetically can only be used as a standard of measure for other things to establish their degree of imitation. These degrees constitute order. Order then is characterized primarily by ranking, based on relativity to the ultimate limit. Distance from or closeness to the norm become the form of ranking. Relation is then reduced to ranking and relativity. When order can only be intellectually described and prescribed by mimetic relation of things to a norm, then anything which is not the norm is inadequate. When concepts are seen as objective or as representations, then the relation between the concept and that which is conceptual is mimetic. The relation between the critical level of consideration and any other level is also mimetic.

Mimetic relation produces a problematic gap between the beginning "is" and the ending "should" levels of order. I call it mimetic gap. Mimetic gap constitutes the relation between the two levels so that the relation is between what imitates, the "is," and what is being imitated, the "should." Mimetic gap means that the imitation, the mimetic relation, is always inadequate. Mimesis produces a gap between the concept and what it represents, because it defines concept as representation, and it produces a gap between action and its model or its goal. In this view, action is an image of the thought which motivates it. Mimetic gap is an unsatisfying feeling of inadequacy produced by the inevitability that an imitation be always imperfect. Imperfect imitation is a problem if imitation is the model for knowledge and action. Mimetic relation or gap reduces relation to relativity by restricting relation to degree of likeness or unlikeness to some paradigmatic norm. Then relation becomes relativity to some standard of comparison. Mimetic relation produces a unidirectional relation to the norm or ultimate limit because the relation involves the activity only of what is doing the imitating. That which is imitating cannot ultimately have its own identity because it is meant to be like something else. Only the norm has self-subsisting identity.

A mimetic use of the primary analogy cannot construct an ultimate limit of consideration which is radically transcendent or radically other because mimesis cannot handle what is not general, universal or impersonal. It cannot consider the particular, the unique or what is experienced but not understood. The ultimate limit then simply becomes an extrapolation from what is already known and understood, in effect a "graven image" fashioned out of the material of one's own experience. Because mimesis defines mimetic gap as a problem, it tries to solve the problem by closing the gap. It can do so in two ways. It can

close the gap by trying to establish better mimetic relation of things with the norm. Or mimesis can construct a norm and ultimate limit which has no relation within it so that it does not have to relate to anything.

For example, Aristotle specifies the nature of the substance he has assigned as ultimate limit by eliminating the relation between potency and act in his primary analogy. He defines his ultimate substance as pure actuality, with no potency in it. This ultimate limit need not necessarily be a problem, except that he has used his primary analogy mimetically to construct it. He has simply pushed the act-potency distinction and relation so that only act is left. This postulates an ultimate rank or level of order which itself has no relation with prior ranks, but all the prior ones must relate to it. Therefore, their identities are not truly individual, unless other factors are brought in.

Intellectual conversion acknowledges that there is a gap, but does not define it as a problem. The gap is not a problem because mimetic relation, even if operative, is not primary or normative. The primary analogy is not used mimetically to construct an ultimate limit, because the parts of the primary analogy, even if related mimetically to each other, are not related only in that way. Intellectual conversion relativises mimetic relation and gap by giving the ultimate limit of order or consideration radical transcendence or radical otherness. Such a move makes the ultimate limit no longer a limit in the sense described above on page sixteen. Radical otherness or transcendence is not a boundary that completes or defines; rather it is a passage that transforms and opens. Such a "norm" cannot be imitated, it can only be related to. If it cannot be imitated, then relation to it cannot be primarily mimetic, and so neither mimetic relation nor mimetic use of a norm can be primary.

For example, like Aristotle, Aquinas also assigns pure act to his ultimate level of consideration. Unlike Aristotle's pure act, however, Aquinas's can be radically transcendent because it he has not constructed it mimetically. It is not simply extrapolated from something already known and understood, where the primary analogy is pushed so that one side of it is maximally developed, and the other side is dropped. His pure act still contains the distinction and relation between existence and essence, but in a different way than in any other level. In any other level the relation of essence to existence is also one of potency to act. Thus he has not used his primary analogy, the distinction between existence and essence, mimetically, and he has constructed an ultimate limit which is radically different from any other part of his system.

### The Use of the Mind in Working for Justice: Philosophy and Intellectual Non-Violence

Non-mimetic analogy is necessary to imagine and hypothesi current order or relation justly, and to imagine and expect or hope for future order or relation in a just way. Non-mimetic analogy is a necessary intellectual move to imagining and hoping justly and non-violently, and for acting in a just way to build a better future. A vision of a more just future which is not constructed by a non-mimetic analogy will not be just. Non-mimetic analogy is the key to intellectual non-violence. The materialism of mimetic thinking, as described above on pages twenty and twenty-one, is violent because it does not acknowledge the uniqueness of a particular thing, and cannot by itself welcome the unknown or what it cannot understand. For these reasons mimetic thinking is particularly problematic when used on or for persons.

The breakthrough to non-mimetic analogy, intellectual conversion, is the beginning of philosophy. Intellectual conversion is a breakthrough to intellectual non-violence. Philosophy's role is to assure a non-violent use of the mind, especially of concepts. I understand philosophy as the intellectual freedom and the intellectual "technology" if you will, or skill, to manipulate concepts, based on the insight of non-mimetic analogy. It does away with the problem of mimetic gap. Intellectual conversion enables one to use and govern concepts instead of being governed by the illusory power of concepts as objective. In this light, concepts are important and powerful, but are still "only concepts," they are limited and relative as representations. Intellectual conversion and non-violence give one a certain sense of humour about one's own ideas and world view, never closing or finalizing one's views and always being ready to welcome surprise and newness. Philosophy helps us hold our ideas lightly in this way by building openness to radical otherness, to the unknown, and the known-but-not-understood into the imagination and expectation of order. A non-mimetic use of the mind enables one to do this.

### Levinas and Intellectual Non-Violence

Now I would like to indicate how I intend to interpret and use Levinas's work to reflect on my own problem, the use of the mind in working for justice. I will focus on how he imagines and uses radical transcendence.

I think that Levinas's articulation of radical transcendence by means of the idea of infinity is a non-mimetic analogy. I suggest that his idea of infinity is his primary analogy and that infinity is his ultimate limit. The non-mimetic use of concepts, or the "post-intellectual conversion" state is what he calls metaphysical

relation, while the "pre-intellectual conversion" state is either what he describes as totality, or the self before relationship.

I use three intellectual moves as my tools to interpret Levinas for the sake of the problem which concerns me in this essay. The main one is to use my concept of eschatological imagination to interpret Levinas. Another is to call his own distinctive use of concepts interpersonalized or infinitized. The third intellectual move is my choice of perspective.

My analysis and description of Levinas's eschatological imagination in Totalite et infini consists in describing how he uses his idea of the infinite to construct order or relation using his concepts of the Same and the Other. I describe three intellectual constructions or moves which he develops in this way. The first is what I analyze as the beginning point for his imagination and expectation of order. He begins with the Same and the context of its powers before it comes into relation with the Other. Then I describe what I call two possible endings which he projects from this origin. One is a false ending, in effect a non-relation or an ignoring of the relation between the Same and the Other. He calls it totality. The other is the true ending, which is the proper or ideal relation between the Same and the Other. It is transcendent and expresses the idea of the infinite.

The beginning, the false end and the true end are not serial parts of Totalite et infini. Nor are they labels or structures which Levinas himself uses. I take their components from throughout the book. They are as much patterns which I find in his work as they are patterns which I myself superimpose on it. I find the patterns there because I find that the concepts of the Same, totality, and the relation between the Same and the Other always occur in the

relationship of beginning to false end and to true end. I superimpose the patterns because they help me to analyze how he uses concepts to analyze, imagine, expect and hope for a just order.

My second interpretive move is to call Levinas's own distinctive use of concepts interpersonal or infinitized. His distinctive usage shows in his distinctions. One side of a distinction is the concept or relation which he advocates, the other is one which he criticizes. For example, he advocates expression over image, same over like, origin over cause, infinity over totality. All of his own concepts implicitly acknowledge either interpersonal relation or the possibility for such relation. His distinctions always separate his own usage from a strictly impersonal and formal use. For this reason, I call his side of a distinction interpersonal. This is "personal" in the sense of acknowledging the centrality and mystery of the person, rather than the sense of emphasizing one's own subjectivity. His use of concepts can also be called infinitized because he uses the idea of infinity as an analogy for the interpersonal relation.

My third interpretive move is my choice of perspective. I try to write and reflect from the point of view of the self using its faculties. This choice of perspective helps me to use Levinas to explore various uses of the mind, various intellectual moves. Levinas, too, almost always writes from the perspective of the Same, what the Same experiences, and what it thinks it experiences.

I do not consider my interpretation of Levinas's thought to be an exegesis. I am not interested in his thinking for its own sake, but for the sake of developing and improving my own thinking, as outlined in the preceding pages. So I bring my own mind to speak with him and to be challenged by him. I am primarily interested in how he reaches and articulates transcendence, so there are

many aspects of Totalite et infini that I will not touch in this essay. Some aspects that I ignore are, for example, his interpretation of love, much of his idea of economy, and his interpretation of phenomenology and of western ontology.

My academic apparatus is as follows. I use parenthetical documentation, according to MLA style, for references. This is the author's last name followed by a page reference in parentheses. Fuller bibliographic information is in the bibliography at the end. Since almost all my references are to Levinas, and since these deal only with Totalite et infini, my Levinas documentation is simply a page reference to the French text. I have used Lingis's English translations, but any quotes in the text are my own translations. All the notes are endnotes.



## CHAPTER III

### LEVINAS'S INTELLECTUAL TOOLS

Now I would like to introduce Levinas's thought by explaining three concepts which he constantly uses to construct the relationships and non-relationships which are central to his thought. These concepts are the Same, the Other, and the idea of infinity. They are three concepts but two intellectual moves, the one being the choice of the terms "Same" and "Other," the other being the idea of infinity. The choice of the Same and the Other are one move, and it is very important for establishing Levinas's distinction between the impersonal and the interpersonal. The reasons for this choice will only be clear after we have investigated how he uses all three concepts together.

#### Intellectual Tools I: The Same and the Other

The Same is an ontological position and in a very general way the self. Its context includes the powers of the self, the projections, the possessions and works of the self. More specifically, the Same is the self's psychic interiority. This is a broader sense of mind than we typically expect. It includes reason, conceptual thought, imagination, feelings, sensibility, unconscious awareness. The Same is the "I" or the "me." To be the Same absolutely is to be me, the self, the beginning point of a relation (6).

The context of the Same is where my powers of possession, usage, labour, representation or conceptualization, can extend and produce effects. It includes

what has become mine and what comes from me. The powers of the Same enable me to do something for my sake, for my enjoyment, or for ends which I conceive or which otherwise originate in me. We will see later how the powers of the Same also enable the relationship with the Other to proceed, once the challenge of the Other has broken through the context of the Same. This includes material as well as mental dimensions of living. For example, conceptual experience comes under the Same because it becomes mine, or it comes from my liberty (74). Thematizations and concepts are relations produced within the Same (81, 82). Economic existence remains within the sphere of the Same (150). Labour is the process by which the other is converted into the Same (90). The context of the Same labels the powers of the self, including the powers of the mind, and their products, as extensions or projections of the Same.

The Other is the other person. The Other is not merely that which is non-I, or not the Same. What is simply not me is the generic other, spelled with the minuscule. A non-I can be reduced to the context of the Same. For example, food can be deprived of its otherness by being digested and assimilated for the survival and enjoyment of the self. Relation with the non-I is relation with what I live from (145). Its identity as non-I comes from relativity to the I. This is relation as relativity.

The other person is also not the Same, but not by reference to or relative to the self, the Same. I say the other person instead of another person to emphasize that this is not an alter ego, another version of the self, because the Other is transcendent over the Same. The Other, spelled with the majuscule, is radically other. A person is an Other in his or her own right, from within, without reference to anything or anyone else. Like Sameness, Otherness derives

from within. Yet an Other does not exist as Other alone; it proceeds as a challenge to the Same.

An Other, even though in the same biological genus and species as the Same, as a person is formally entirely outside the context of the Same. The Other is beyond my powers, beyond the context of the Same, and indeed limits my powers. My powers cannot reach there because the Other surpasses any idea which I could make of it (59). An idea that I can make by myself is part of the context of the Same. Therefore a projection of the Same can never be Other. Both the Same and the Other are resistant to categories (10).

Levinas never speaks of the context of the Other. Context and powers seem to be relevant only from the perspective of the Same.

The Same and the Other are separate from and independent of each other; they are not related to each other in a logical way. One is not the negation of the other, so they are not contradictories. One is not assimilable to the other, so they are not opposites (266). They are not complementary to each other for one does not need the other for completeness. They are not relative to each other like the more or the less, the larger or the smaller (266). They cannot be the terms of a genus. Therefore they are not the terms of a logical, formal relation.

The Same and the Other are terms of an interpersonal relationship. This is relationship in the personal sense, and not relativity in the logical sense. Indeed, the interpersonal relation is possible only if it is not a logical, formal one. We shall examine the reason for this when we examine totality. The Other is related to the Same only as rupture or challenge or invasion of the context of the Same (Reed, 17). The Same and the Other are interpersonal concepts, not logical ones. Therefore, we can expect that they will be used in a different way than are

impersonal, formal concepts. I suggest that by orienting his concepts in an interpersonal way, Levinas is proposing a different use of the mind than occurs when concepts are used in an impersonal, objective way.

### Intellectual Tools II: The Idea of Infinity

The idea of infinity is the primary analogy which Levinas uses to express the transcendent level of consideration. Simply put, the idea of infinity is a concept which is necessarily surpassed by that of which it is a concept, infinity. This idea guides all his analysis: it inspires his criticism of totality insofar as totality cannot construct an idea of infinity, and it guides the relation he wants to see between the Same and the Other. "Our analyses are directed by a formal structure: the idea of the infinite in us (52)."

Levinas speaks of the idea of infinity, not of infinity itself, and not of the idea alone. The distinction between the idea of something and the "idea itself" or the "something itself" is an important intellectual move. That his analogy is not an idea alone, or the object of an idea, but expressly the idea of something, means that it expresses a relationship. Indeed, the idea of the infinite is itself a metaphysical relation (49-50). With this intellectual move he chooses relationship over substance and over idea. His version of metaphysical relationship is used as a model throughout Totalite et infini. It provides a guide for eschatological imagination, criteria for imagining beginnings and ends. Now I would like to explore the significance of making his primary analogy a relationship instead of simply an idea or the object of an idea.

He must make his primary analogy a relation if he is going to use the idea of infinity. He cannot speak of infinity directly, or of an image of infinity,

because a finite mind cannot have an infinite thought.<sup>7</sup> Yet one can think of infinity, one can refer to it without the thought itself being infinite, a representation of its object. So any concept which pretends to be a representation in the sense of an image or imitation of infinity is necessarily always inadequate. Infinity cannot be grasped or known in that way.

The relation between the idea of infinity and infinity says something about the concept, that it is always inadequate and incomplete as a representation. It also says something about that of which it is a concept, that it can never be exhausted, contained, or completely represented. A concept is a generality, an abstraction from experience. The infinite can neither be contained in the general nor copied. There is always a gap between this concept and that of which it is a concept. Yet this gap need not be interpreted as a deficiency in the concept or in that which is being conceptualized.

The necessary gap between the idea of infinity and that of which it is an idea means that the idea of infinity expresses a relation between terms, and does not express only one or other term. One of the terms cannot be conceptualized, so it always surpasses any relation with itself. The norm for relation which Levinas presents by means of this analogy is that of being in relation with a substance which surpasses and overflows the idea of it in me (50). The most direct example of such a relation is that of the face-to face (51). Another person always surpasses my concept of that her or him: the mystery and surprise of the other person always surpasses my idea of him or her, no matter how closely my idea follows the developing and ongoing relationship. In this way the idea of infinity is an interpersonal concept. The idea of infinity asserts a relation between the mind in the self and that which the mind encounters. The primacy of an always

surpassed relation between terms prevents the primacy of any concept, of any generality or abstraction.

Infinity is the thought of that which is always outside of thought (xiii). The idea of the infinite is transcendence itself, which is the surpassing of an inadequate idea (52). The infinite cannot be defined (72). It is where all definition is cut off (72).

We cannot think infinity because we cannot have an infinite thought, but we do think of infinity, for we can have an idea of it. So what kind of idea is it, then?

### Infinity: How to Think It

Relation with infinity cannot be described in terms of experience (xiii). Infinity cannot be imagined by relation to finitude, for this would presuppose finitude and would merely amplify finitude infinitely (170). This would be mimesis. To have the idea of infinity is a use of the mind which is somehow beyond projections of the Same. The breakthrough to relation with infinity brings one through and beyond finitude; it is only in this special sense that infinity can be said to "presuppose" finitude.

The idea of the infinite is not strictly an idea alone, by itself, but a desire (56). Levinas never calls it an idea but always the idea of the infinite, always indicating a relationship and not only an idea. The idea of the infinite is the desire for infinity (124). It is the desire for that which is non-me, which is not the Same, which surpasses me. This is what Levinas means when he calls the idea of infinity a metaphysical relation. It is metaphysical because it goes beyond the sphere of the Same.

To call the idea of infinity a desire and not strictly an idea is another very important intellectual move, because it separates the idea of infinity from any other idea. Its uniqueness is that while the idea of infinity is in me, it is not produced by me; it is not my idea or my image. The idea of the infinite is not deducible from the identity of the soul (33). It is neither the immanence of the "I think," nor the transcendence of the object (58). The idea of infinity is not a recollection (155); rather it is a trace of the Other, of the infinite, left in me by the encounter. That which is strictly an idea can be produced by me, and is an extension of the Same; it does need to come to me from the outside.

The idea of the infinite is a vastly different kind of intellectual construction or poiesis. It cannot be part of the context of the Same. The idea of the infinite is the Other as Other, which cannot fit a theoretical idea of another me (56). If it cannot come from within me, then it must come from outside the Same, it must be given to me, offered to me, engendered in me.

#### Source of the Idea of Infinity: Revelation

Infinity is a unique form of knowledge, for it is without a priori (33). The idea does not come from me or from my needs; rather, it is revealed to me (33). Its source is not in the Same at all. In this sense it is origin out of nothing, not origin out of something prior.

That the idea of infinity has no a priori means that it is not an object of knowledge (33). If it were an object of knowledge, infinity would be reduced to the measure of the gaze contemplating it (33). If it were strictly an idea, it would be an object of knowledge for it would be produced by me, at my initiative. This would make it an extension of the Same, another version of myself. In effect, the

Same is the prior of a strict idea, it is the prior of this form of knowledge. If the idea of infinity were strictly an idea, then it would be reduced to and by the power of my intellectual gaze, by my powers of definition. Instead, the idea of infinity has no prior because infinity is completely outside of my initiative and power. It is not my own discovery. Rather, it must be revealed to me or, more precisely, it must reveal itself to me.

Revelation is not objectifying consciousness (39). In the context of the relation between the Same and the Other, absolute experience is revelation, not uncovering or discovery (37). Uncovering or discovery results from the powers of the Same, but infinity escapes its powers. Infinity refuses to be contained (168). The revelation of the Other is a relation which cannot be reduced to the subject-object relation (45). The relation of transcendence supposes radical separation between the Same and the Other, and supposes the revelation of the Other (45). Revelation breaks through and overflows the context of the Same from outside of it. Thus the idea of infinity is the infinitely more contained in the less; it is the presence of a being overflowing the sphere of the Same (169-7).

The idea of infinity implies an actual relation with something outside the Same. The idea of infinity effects the relationship of thought with what exceeds it (171). This is a relationship of openness to the new, the unexpected, the not-the-Same. The idea of infinity introduces newness into a thought (194), a newness which cannot come from the Same.

Thus there are two things about the idea of the infinite which separate it from other ideas and which make it unique. First of all, the very nature of the idea itself shows something about its relation to that of which it is an idea: the idea shows its own inadequacy as a representation, and in the process reveals



the same inadequacy for all concepts. Secondly, by exposing its own inadequacy, it breaks through self-centered or Same-centered relation to interpersonal relation and to interpersonal use of the conceptual, the general, abstract and impersonal. The idea of the infinite is the result of intellectual conversion.

### The Idea of Infinity as an Expression

Now we are in a position to answer the question about what kind of idea is the idea of infinity. The idea of infinity is a response to the revelation of infinity. As we have seen, the response is not strictly an idea, for that would be a projection from the Same. It is not an image. Image is immanent to my thought, as though it came from me (273). Nor is it a representation, for reasons described above. Rather, it expresses the response to revelation, it expresses the reception of the revelation. The idea of infinity is a sign of having received or welcomed the revelation. The reception in turn is a sign of the desire for the infinite, and it is in this sense that the idea of the infinite is itself a desire. Without the desire there could be no idea of the infinite, because the revelation could be rejected.

Expression overflows image, and is only effectuated exteriorly (273). Expression is the presence of the Other (273). In expression the manifested always accompanies the manifestation (274). An idea, image or representation comes from the Same, so it does not need the presence of that of which it is an idea, image or representation. This is the key distinction between an expression and that which is strictly an idea. Thus something else which distinguishes the idea of infinity from other ideas is that it cannot happen alone, from the Same only. It is beyond imitation by the Same, so it is beyond the powers of the Same.

It requires exteriority, real relation with an Other. It is a communal reality, not individualistic.

To summarize the idea of infinity, I would like to comment on its nature as a primary analogy. Levinas makes three intellectual moves which make this idea important: his choice that his primary analogy will be the idea of something, and thus a relation; his choice that it will be specifically the idea of the infinite; and his choice that the idea of the infinite is about the nature of transcendence.

That the idea of infinity is an idea of something makes it an analogy, according to the sense of analogy which I offered in the introductory chapter. It presents a relationship between a concept and something which is not a concept. Furthermore, the idea of infinity can be interpreted as a primary analogy, for two reasons. Firstly, he uses the idea of infinity to interpret, analyze and critique actual relations in the present. In this way he uses it to construct a beginning in the sense of eschatological imagination which I elaborated above. We will discuss this in Chapter III. Secondly, Levinas uses the idea of infinity to construct a limit, the relationship between the Same and the Other. In this way he uses it to construct an ending in the eschatological sense elaborated above. We will discuss this in Chapter V.

That the primary analogy is the idea of the infinite makes it a non-mimetic analogy. It therefore presents non-mimetic gap and relation as norms. Infinity cannot be used as a mimetic norm or paradigm because it cannot be imitated, copied or represented. It cannot be imitated because we cannot think an infinite thought, we cannot do an infinite act, and we cannot make an infinite thing. If infinity cannot be imitated, then nothing can depend on it for formal

identity, whether as complementary to it, contradictory to it or part of it. Relation to infinity cannot be one of relativity, in the sense that a being's identity comes from its somehow being "relative to" infinity.

Nor can infinity be an ethical goal to be imitated or attained. Finitude is not a nostalgia for return to infinity (268). Imperfect imitation cannot be a problem if imitation is not a goal. It is not necessary to posit a fall from infinity in order to understand the limitation of the finite (268). The limitation of finitude need not be judged as a problem or lack. In the relation of the finite to the infinite, the finite is not absorbed in what faces it, the finite remains its own being (268). Because the distance between the infinite and the finite and their mutual independence is a gap which need not be closed, it is a non-mimetic gap. Yet there is a relation across this gap, and it is a non-mimetic relation.

Because relation with infinity cannot be relative or imitative, it cannot be mimetic. It also cannot be essentially formal, that is, it cannot be essentially conceptual, general. The relation cannot be one of logic and abstraction. The idea of infinity reveals the formal and general --and therefore the conceptual-- to be self-centered when taken by themselves because they are projections of the Same. Therefore the abstract, general and impersonal cannot be primary in the hypothesis and imagination of present order and in the hope and imagination of future a just order. Relation with infinity must be interpersonal. It is a relationship. Therefore the intellectual expression of that relation is a non-mimetic analogy. This intellectual move has the aspect of intellectual conversion because it turns away from the primacy of the context and powers of the Same.

Finally, the idea of infinity is a choice about the nature of transcendence. It determines what will be evaluated or chosen as the ultimate level of order.

Non-mimetic analogy means non-mimetic relation of things with whatever is primary in the imagination and hope about present and future order. Transcendence will be a non-mimetic relation and a non-mimetic gap. Whatever produces the idea of the infinite in the Same will be transcendent. The complete "distribution" of transcendence, as an intellectual move eliminating the hierarchical ranking constructed by mimetic relation, will only become clear once we see how the idea of infinity guides Levinas's use of the Same and the Other.

Levinas does not build an order by simply replacing the two terms of the idea of infinity with the Same and the Other. If he did, he would be using his primary analogy idea mimetically. Instead, he uses it to construct a beginning state and an end state. The resulting order is then the relation between the beginning and the end. The beginning state is the Same in its context of self-sufficient separation, before relation with the Other. The end state is the relation of transcendence and separation between the Same and the Other.

## CHAPTER IV

### INTELLECTUAL CONSTRUCTIONS I

#### BEGINNINGS: CREATION --THE SAME AND SEPARATION

In this section I want to explore the beginning point which Levinas establishes for the imagination and expectation of order. I will focus on the Same in its context of separation and before relation with the Other by showing that the Same derives its identity from itself. Separation has two related meanings. One is the sense of a being having its identity from within. The other is the sense of mutual independence of the Same and the Other in their relation. In this chapter I will be focusing primarily on the first meaning. I will try to show the context of the Same as an example of separation, demonstrating the effective or pragmatic meaning of separation as identity from within. Most importantly, I will begin sketching out Levinas's eschatological imagination by presenting the Same and its context as an example of an eschatological beginning point.

I will begin by showing what the context of the Same demonstrates: separation.

#### The Same: Separatedness

Separation is the possibility for a being to be posited by starting from itself, instead of by being defined from its references to a whole (276). In the logic of the Same, identity consists in identifying oneself from within (265). Otherwise its identity would be dependent on and relative to something from

without. Separation is the structure of thought and of interiority; it is a relation in independence (77).

Separation in the sense of identity from within means an interiority. Interiority can only be a psychic interiority, that is, a consciousness. Interiority ensures separation but without preventing egress from itself, so relation with the Other, relation with exteriority, is still possible (122). This possibility for separated interiority to relate to what is exterior makes it a beginning. Since consciousness accomplishes separation, and since the work of consciousness is part of the context of the Same, then we can look at the context of the Same as an example of separation and of an eschatological beginning point.

Now I would briefly like to indicate the other sense of separation in order to place the sense of identity from within in a context. Separation is fulfilled as consciousness opening itself to the idea of the Infinite (78). Separation is part of the relation between the Same and the Other in that both remain absolutely separated even in relationship; they maintain themselves in relation but at the same time they absolve each other of the relation (75). The will can refuse the Other as an influence being exerted on the I (202). Separation is a relation linking two terms which are each sufficient to themselves (77).

### Enjoyment: Context of the Same as Consciousness

Levinas describes a conscious relationship to the context of the Same in terms of enjoyment. The independence accomplished by the context of the Same is more than survival. It is a rather full sense of independence, for it includes self-development, anything which I can orient toward myself. Levinas calls this orientation toward myself enjoyment. Enjoyment includes what makes up the

necessity of life as well as what makes up the grace or joy of life (83-4). It includes all that we live from, both earthly and spiritual goods (86). The independence of separation is the independence of enjoyment and of its happiness (82). Self-reference is accomplished as enjoyment or happiness, enjoyment is an essential self-sufficiency (275).

Enjoyment is an interiority, and the interiority of enjoyment is separation itself (121). Enjoyment is a form of consciousness which is oriented towards itself. The independence and self-sufficiency established with the context of the Same is also a form of consciousness. Enjoyment is consciousness of a content. It is the ultimate consciousness of all the contents that fill my life (83). Enjoyment depends on a content (82). Enjoyment separates, or accomplishes separation, by engaging in the contents from which it lives (120). To enjoy is to live from something, to enjoy something. Now let us examine what kind of content enjoyment has, then what kind of consciousness it is.

The content of enjoyment, that which is enjoyed, is what Levinas calls an element. Because that which can be enjoyed can be transformed into the Same, used for my sake, does not mean that its otherness can be completely reduced to my need. The element comes to me without my being able to possess its source; it comes from nowhere so it is an appearance without anything that appears (114). An element is indeterminate because it overflows the sensible, that is, it overflows the freedom of my representation of it (114-5). The identity of that which is enjoyed or needed surpasses my intention or representation of it. Enjoying something means living from it without it having the sense of a goal or an ontological means (107). Enjoyment is more like play than like finality. Indeed it is the suspension of ultimate finality (107). It leaves a content some identity to

itself.

While the element is not a beginning point for the relationship between the Same and the Other, it shows us something important about the meaning of a beginning. In Levinas's terms an element is not itself an origin. An element is impersonal. Impersonality is a way of existing without revealing itself (116). The impersonal is that which has no source, no origin, because it cannot reveal itself. It is not a revelation but an appearance, without that which appears. The personal, on the other hand, is that which has a source because the personal is that which can reveal itself. This is what makes it an origin. The personal is an appearance accompanied by that which is appearing, and so it can explain itself. An origin or therefore, is personal, it is that which can reveal itself. The Same is an origin because it is personal; it is the beginning and ending of enjoyment, it is an I.

Now let us examine what form of consciousness enjoyment is. Enjoyment involves dependence but it is not strictly dependence. It is dependence in that it depends on what is not itself, but it is a dependency that turns into sovereignty because what is not the Same is transformed into the Same (87). Need is not simply a lack, for we are not enslaved by what we live from (86-7). Rather, we enjoy what we live from. Need is a happy dependence (87). Enjoyment is a relation of happy dependence to its content.

The mode of enjoyment is not thought but sensibility (108). Enjoyment belongs to the order of affectivity and sensation, not to cognitive thought (108). One does not know sensible qualities, one lives them (108). Enjoyment is not an intentional relation of consciousness to its content. Sensibility is unreflected and naive consciousness, and this constitutes the originality of enjoyment (112).



The originality of enjoyment does not mean that it is an origin, but that it comes from an origin. Origin in Levinas's sense, as we saw with the idea of infinity, is origin out of nothing, from no prior. Enjoyment's originality is its naivete and its unintentionality, that which makes it enjoyment. Since the Same is enjoyment's origin, the Same is an origin with no prior. Its identity comes from itself. This is its liberty. We shall return to this sense of origin shortly.

Enjoyment circumscribes the context of the Same. Now I would like to summarize how enjoyment and the context of the Same demonstrate the separatedness of the Same, and how the separatedness of the Same is its interiority and freedom. All labour and possession, economy, is the separated being effectuating its separation (126). The fruits of labour, possession, economy, conceptual work, can all be enjoyed. Thus the context of the Same is like a gravitational field curving in toward the Same because it orients what it encounters toward the self. This orientation is the Same's freedom.

The orientation of the context toward the Same is unreflected. So the context of the Same is not itself an origin, for it does not reveal itself, and it is impersonal. However, the context of the Same originates in the Same, so it can be described as composed of extensions or projections of the Same. The power of the Same to enjoy, that is to build a context, demonstrates the Same's separatedness because it demonstrates the power of the Same to be for itself, to be an interiority. This shows the Same in one sense of its separatedness: as deriving its identity from within, as an origin, and because of these qualities as that which has no prior and that which can reveal itself.

Explaining consciousness in terms of enjoyment, and then establishing enjoyment as the relation of the Same to the impersonal world is the intellectual

ority is consciousness and the possibility for self-revelation. Only freedom is the possibility for revelation. Beginning cannot be impersonal, so it cannot be primarily conceptual or general. Thus origin or beginning is person.

Before closing my comments on the Same as a beginning, I would like to deepen the sense of an eschatological beginning point by investigating the Same on the analogy of an origin out of nothing.

### Beginning as Creation

Separation implies creation. The Same's power of establishing a context and of enjoying is made possible by the relations of separation and creation. To explain these relations I must anticipate my Chapter V somewhat and explicitly use the perspective of awareness produced in relationship with the Other. The Same can exercise and enjoy its separation but cannot become fully aware of its own separatedness and createdness before relationship with the Other.

The Same and the Other share no common genus because they share no common origin. Creation contests the idea of a prior community from all eternity, where everything arises from a common matrix (269). Creation implies origin from nothing (269). The Same and the Other share no common origin because they share origin from nothing. Their createdness enables them to be separate, to have identity from within. Creation affirms at the same time a kinship of beings among themselves and a radical heterogeneity, a reciprocal exteriority among themselves (269). Creation is a very different relation than causality (256). When creation is confused with causality it contradicts the creature's freedom (256). Relation and independence must be grasped otherwise than in terms of causality (119). There are many forms of causality –formal, final,

efficient, material. What is common among them which Levinas wants to distinguish from creation is that in causality there is a likeness or continuity between effect and cause. This would mean mutual limitation and definition between the Same and the Other. Levinas wants the Same and the Other to be in classes completely by themselves, so there can be no relation of cause and effect between them. If creation is not causality, then there can be no continuity between the context of the Same and the infinitely Other. Then the Other cannot be enjoyed, cannot be a content of consciousness. The Other must be outside the context of the Same, outside the grasp of the concept, of the general.

This is what origin out of nothing means. Separation with respect to the infinite is the essential characteristic of the created being (78). Levinas calls this separation atheism. In order to avoid freedom as arbitrariness and to avoid the "me" disappearing into neutrality or into infinite regression, it is necessary to approach the "me" as atheist and created (60). The continuity implied by causality would necessitate an infinite regression of mimesis of the infinite, infinitely regressive because it could never be accomplished. If the Same were not created and atheist, then it could not be a beginning. Then it could not be interiority or identity. Thus the gap and the relation between the Same and the Other are both non-mimetic. The Other is not to be imitated by the Same, nor can it be.

The Same as origin out of nothing, that is, as created, strengthens the sense of beginning with a rather dramatic intellectual move. In addition to being self-centered, free and personal, the beginning point is beyond grasp by the conceptual, beyond the grasp of the general. This is not beginning in the sense of a mythical origin, for it is not an insight into the past. It is not a genesis. Rather, it is an existential insight into the present, the actual. For these reasons, the Same

as separated and as created is the analogy or insight of the "is" as described in Chapter I. It is an eschatological beginning.

Now let us move from the beginning to examine two possible ways of ending in imagining order.

## CHAPTER V

### INTELLECTUAL CONSTRUCTIONS II

#### TOTALITY

I would like to present totality as an ending point which can be reached from the beginning point of the Same in its context. Totality is a relation between the Same and the Other which makes them relative to each other. Their relativity implies a third thing, a generality common to both, which is logically and ontologically prior to both the Same and the Other. In a totality two terms form one thing together by the synthetic power of the understanding (8, 9). This relativity and the priority of generality ignore the uniqueness of identity in the Same and in the Other. Such a picture of order eliminates radical otherness between terms of a relation or comparison (6).

Since totality is a formal or conceptual relation, it represents a particular use of the mind. I want to present it as such by showing it as a particular use of projections of the Same, as a particular use of the context and power of the Same. I will do this by showing that it is a particular interpretation of consciousness's relation to its content. Most importantly, I intend to show that it is a false end because it destroys otherness, and because it destroys beginning. Without beginning or ending, it is an infinitely regressing mimesis necessarily producing mimetic gap and relation.

Now I would like to proceed by showing what kind of thinking totality is.

### Totality: Kind of Thinking

Totalizing consciousness does not see its relation to its content as enjoyment but as intentionality. The content of consciousness is not seen or treated as an element. Instead it is treated as an end or object. Intentionality as objectifying consciousness recognizes only a spiritual or intellectual activity which issues or terminates in an object (163). An intellectual or spiritual activity is a projection or extension of the Same, and it constructs a context for the Same. An object is an ending to a projection or extension of the Same. Now let us examine what kind of ending an end an object is.

Intentionality reduces whatever is non-I to the univocal sense of the objectivity of an object (162). Objectivity reduces a reality to its content in thought. The thought of the object becomes the locus where the total identity, that is, the idea and the reality which ought to deny it, are reconciled without contradiction (99). That which is represented is reduced to its representation in the mind (99). Content as end or object is not an element because the content is imagined to be completely known reflectively. Totalizing consciousness assumes that being can be completely represented (xvi).

Objectification consists precisely in neutralizing the Other to a theme or an object, which is supposed to make the Other transparent, intelligible (14). A theme or object is a generality, but a generality cannot represent uniqueness. A thing's identity becomes its end or object in my consciousness. Totalizing consciousness assumes that a thing's identity is not its primordial structure but something which is assigned from outside of it (136).

The disappearance of otherness is accomplished by the mediation of a third, neutral term, a concept, between the knowing Same and the known Other (12). This attenuates the shock of encountering radical otherness (12). End or object is conceptual, so they mediate between the Same and the Other. It is my end, my object. I produce the representation, so it is an extension of the power or context of the Same. There is no otherness in the world of ideas, so I can account for otherness by reference to myself (245). If I notice only the content of my consciousness, and do not imagine that it is the content of my consciousness, then I cannot imagine that I have produced it. If I see only my representation, then I ignore its inadequacy along with the otherness of that which is being represented. Mediation by concept reduces the other to the Same, and makes freedom consist in not receiving anything surprising from the Other (12). It is through mediation by concepts that the object of the idea is not permitted to surpass the idea; it reduces the distance between them (20). The neutralization of otherness makes universality impersonal (16).

Neutralizing otherness by imagining a content to be an end or an object assigns the conceptual and universal or neutral to the ontological level of primacy and transcendence. This is not a relationship of the Same with transcendence, but a mimetic assignment of the value of transcendence.

A totalizing relation of consciousness to its content has the effect of willing the universal (192). Objective and universal thought renounces singularity; it can be neither a me nor an other, and it cannot be a communication (44). To will the universal is to negate one's own particularity (192). The universal amounts to a being thinking only itself, the Same thinking the Same (193).

Intentionality as objectifying consciousness does not provide room for

recognizing enjoyment, because enjoyment of sensible life cannot be interpreted in terms of objectification (161). A content of consciousness becomes an end or object when a thing has meaning only in relation to the I, to the Same instead of from itself. This kind of thinking ignores psychic interiority's dimensions of affectivity and sensation and it assumes that it can represent everything, including itself. It uses only that part of the mind which relates to the universal, the reason (192). Affectivity and sensibility can relate to the particular. Totalizing thinking is not enjoyment because the orientation to the Same is exclusive, it has no room for otherness which cannot be absorbed into the Same.

Now that we have examined the kind of thinking which is totality, let us go back and examine the logical relations which it assumes between its terms.

### The Logic of Totality

The logic of totality shows how one can mistakenly pretend to will the universal instead of a particular. The relations of totality can be reduced to relations of formal logic, relations of genus and species, of part and whole, of action and passion, of truth and error (254). The relation between terms in a totality is one of simple opposition, which Levinas calls negativity (12). Simple opposition between terms is not the interpersonal opposition of a face-to-face relation. It can construct a genus either by the opposition of contradictories or by the interaction of dialectical opposites. For example, in the logic of contradiction the other of A is not-A (124). In the logic of dialectic, the Same dialectically participates in and is reconciled with the Other in the unity of the system (124).

Totality is also a perspective. A totality appears only when the relation which unites individual things into a multiplicity is imagined to be visible from



outside. A point of view exterior to the relation exposes the reality of the relation, and then the relation forms a totality in which the individuals participate (93). The possibility of the panoramic view means that the whole is or should be deducible from one formula, and that the whole absorbs multiplicity (197). This whole is assumed to have logical priority and privilege as a concept adequate to being (269).

The panoramic point of view outside and above a relation from which totality and objectivity appear is not a real place and therefore not a real point of view because it is not a term of a relation. It seems to exist in a kind of void. From this false point of view the relation of the subject with the object is subordinated to the relationship of the object to the void of openness (164). The empty openness is a generality which does not exist (164). Yet this perspective is a mode of enjoyment (165). The false panoramic perspective comes from a power of the Same. While it gives the appearance of universality and objectivity, it really is oriented toward the Same, because it is part of the context of the Same.

The logic of totality can also be called the logic of likeness, which comes from the formal logic of the exterior gaze (265). A thing is like or unlike another. From this perspective the terms of relations are parts composing the totality. One part is limited by other parts (155). A part is defined by its relations to other parts, not from itself. A separated being, on the other hand, is not a part. In the logic of likeness, a thing's identity comes from a thing being like to itself, which can only be said if a thing is identified from the outside (265). In contrast, a separated being's identity is from within and does not come from being like to itself, as seen from an outside perspective. Thus, separation cannot be a dimension of totality (150).

## Totality as False Ending

To conclude this section, I would like to show how the primacy of the neutral or of the conceptual amounts to exclusive self-centeredness, which in turn is without beginning or ending.

Totality affirms the supremacy of the Same (60). This is equivalent to affirming the supremacy of an impersonal relation in a universal order where freedom denounces its own contingency and lets itself be absorbed in a totality (60). Ideas replace persons (60). The impersonal, as we have seen, is that which has no source and so cannot reveal itself. Having no source places the impersonal in the void of generality, where a thing can appear as an object (165). This is an ending, the level of transcendence, the highest level of consideration, the ultimate limit in imagining and expecting order. This particular expectation of order and meaning expects objective consciousness to be the ultimate relation of transcendence and it expects that the Other can be known objectively (62).

The primacy and transcendence of the conceptual, general and impersonal, is mimesis because it is produced by the Same. Its primacy and transcendence is caused by the Same, so there is a continuity of likeness between cause and effect. This is why the impersonal and conceptual may be called an extension or projection of the Same. It has no otherness. Thus the primacy of the conceptual is really the primacy of the Same because the conceptual is an extension of the Same.

Totalizing consciousness makes action subordinate to thought. Its centeredness on the self gives action a mimetic relation to thought. The object of the exterior or interior act must be represented before willing, desiring, or doing

(143). This use of the mind subordinates life to representation (143). It subordinates an action or an expression to a pre-existent thought (175). Then no expression or action can be original. The totalizing relation is the ontological and causal priority of the impersonal or conceptual. If the conceptual is universal cause, then causality is also infinite regress. In this perspective, the norm for action is action out of certainty, ignoring action in faith or in openness. Objectification is the desire for complete intellectual control, that is, for complete elimination of the unknown prior to risking action or expression. The technique for the pure exercise of knowledge demands that action have a complete mastery of matter, of persons, of societies; the goal is the pure exercise of knowledge (xvii).

Even though totalizing consciousness imagines its content as an end or intention, and that of which it is conscious as an object, this kind of content is not an ending for a projection of the Same. If content is viewed in this way, then nothing is imagined to stop the context of the Same. Totalizing consciousness can objectify anything because it ignores otherness. It does not destroy otherness, for to do so would first require acknowledging it. Rather, totalizing consciousness simply ignores otherness. What has no ending has no beginning either. Its source does not appear. Therefore totalizing consciousness reduces infinity to infinite regress and does not present infinity as transcendence. It is the finite projected infinitely. Causality always has a prior cause in this situation, so things are determined. Knowledge is reduced to causality. Knowledge cannot be enjoyment. A concern for knowing as a problem of origin in solitude or interiority is inconceivable in totality (91); totality would solve the problem of knowledge with causality.

If there is no beginning and no ending, then infinity cannot be seen as transcendence but as infinite regress. This is chaos, so it is responded to with control instead of openness. Infinite regress is the void of generality, in which objects can exist but persons cannot.

Totality is not a relation between the Same and the Other in the sense of interpersonal relationship. It is a reduced notion of relation because it is relation only in the sense of relativity and logical relation.

Totality is an impersonal use of conceptual reason. This represents one side of Levinas's primary distinction, the distinction between an impersonal use of reason and an interpersonal one. Impersonality ignores its own origin by allowing itself no end. So it has no source and cannot reveal itself. This is simply the Same focusing on itself in an exclusive but unreflected way, and so it projects itself infinitely. It makes itself its own content.

Totality's error is its fundamental intellectual move: assuming that all which is non-I is impersonal, because the non-I can be understood as such because it is a content of consciousness. This assumption ignores the personality of its source and therefore ignores its own beginning point as well. The telling criticism of the primacy and transcendence of impersonality is not that it is objective, but that it is exclusively self-centered, that is, it is selfish.

Now let us explore another possible ending for a projection of the Same, another way of imagining and using the context of the Same.

## CHAPTER VI

### INTELLECTUAL CONSTRUCTIONS III

#### ENDINGS: ESCHATOLOGY --THE TRANSCENDENCE OF THE OTHER OVER THE SAME

This is the heart of Levinas's thought. In this picture of justice and order he constructs the relation between the Same and the Other from the transcendence of the Other over the Same and from the separation of the Same from the Other. This is the breakthrough from the context of the Same to radical transcendence. The Same in its context is preparation for this breakthrough, and totality is a false development from the preparation. I would like to show that the power of the Other to break through the self-centered context of the Same demonstrates the transcendence of the Other and the transcendence of the relation between them. I want to show the relationship of consciousness to the Other as a particular use of the mind, just as the relationship of consciousness to an element or a content, and of consciousness to an end or an object, are also particular uses of the mind. This will complete my description of Levinas's distinction between impersonal and interpersonal uses of concepts.

I also want to show the breakthrough to accepting radical transcendence as an intellectual conversion, and the relation between the Same and the Other as a non-mimetic relation. Most importantly, I would like to specify the meaning of an ending in Levinas's hypothesizing, hoping or expecting present and future order, by treating the transcendence of the Other and the relation between the

Same and the Other together as an example of an eschatological ending point. This will complete my description of the parts of Levinas's eschatological use of imagination. I hope to sum up his eschatological use of imagination in my conclusion.

In order to prepare for transcendence breaking through the context of the Same, I would now like to introduce that which the breakthrough will demonstrate, the transcendence of the Other.

### The Other: Primacy and Transcendence

The Same is a central concept but it is not foundational (59). When it is, totality results. Rather, it is the Other which is primary and foundational (58). The Other is a limit as the cessation of my powers; I have no power over the Other because the Other absolutely surpasses any idea I could have of it (59). Welcoming the Other breaks through the self-referent context of the Same. Nevertheless, my freedom and power to welcome or reject the Other makes the Other vulnerable to the powers of the Same; the Other cannot force itself on the Same. This is the essential non-violence of the Other's transcendence; this is its call and challenge to the Same.

There are two possible senses of the Other, and they diverge: the Other as my theme, or the Other as my interlocutor (169). As my theme, I place the Other in a genus with me, making the Other relative to me. This produces a totality out of me and the Other. As interlocutor, I acknowledge and respect the Other's radical exteriority to me, and transcendence over me.

Otherness or alterity is exteriority (267). The exteriority of the Other means that the Other cannot be grasped as in any way relative to my interiority.

Exteriority does not appear in opposition to interiority from an outside point of view (266). No concept can hold exteriority (272). The alterity of the Other is anterior to any initiative of the Same; it is not resistance to the Same, it is not formal, it is not simply the obverse of identity, and it is not a limit or defining boundary of the Same (9).

Otherness or exteriority describes a being which comes absolutely from itself. In order to have consciousness of radical exteriority, it is necessary to have a relationship with what comes absolutely from itself (166). I cannot initiate knowledge of it; its exteriority means that knowledge of it must be initiated by its self-revelation to me. Such a being does not refer to enjoyment (166). The capacity for relation with the exterior is the capacity for not confusing one's own interiority for the totality of being (155). Interpersonal relationship allows exteriority to state itself, and there it is effected as superiority (267). Being's exteriority, its appeal to me, its holiness, is its truth (267).

The Other in its exteriority transcends the Same. Transcendence is a relation totally different from sensible experience. It is metaphysical since it is beyond the sensible, beyond what can be enjoyed, beyond the context of the Same. Transcendence cuts across sensibility and reveals itself; it is preeminently openness (167). Sensibility, on the other hand, does not deliver itself (167). Transcendence is not consciousness of an object because transcendence or infinity means relating to what consciousness cannot contain, to what always overflows consciousness (178-79). Transcendence can only be revealed, that is, from outside the context of the Same. Only relation with the Other introduces the dimension of transcendence (167). Transcendence cannot be derived from within (179). It is not an outside perspective on the Other; rather, it is a gift of the Other (149).

Transcendence has two senses or orientations. One is the transcendence of the Other over the Same, which comes from outside the context of the Same. The other is the Same receiving the revelation of the Other and transcending or breaking through its context. Now let us explore both senses of transcendence by examining the effects that the encounter with the Other has on the Same.

### Intellectual Conversion: Breaking Through the Context of the Same

The encounter with the Other calls possession into question (137). It suspends the independent being of the element (137). If it calls the context of the Same into question, then it also calls the Same into question. The Other can contest my possession because it approaches me from above, not from outside (145). It challenges the self-centeredness of possession, of possession's and enjoyment's orientations to the Same. Faced with the Other, with Infinity, the Same discovers itself as violence, and enters a new dimension (146). The encounter with the Other shames the naivete of the direct impulse of being exercising itself as a force on the move (146). The Same's naivete and violence are the its centeredness on itself, whether this centeredness is exclusive and totalizing, or inclusive and potentially open. Thus relation with the Other is the negation of murder (145-46) and of violence. The revelation of the Other breaks through the self-centeredness of the context of the Same, of the Same's relationship with that which it enjoys.

The recognition of the Other as infinite, and therefore as unthinkable, is produced as morality, not as a thought (207). The Other is unthinkable in the same way that infinity is unthinkable, in the essence of representation. The Same cannot grasp the Other without suppressing the Other (145). Moral conscience is



an experience without concept (74). Like the idea of infinity, morality is not primarily conceptual; rather it is relational and personal. It is a desire responding to and welcoming a revelation. Not being a concept is part of its being a breakthrough. As interpersonal, it is its own origin, and it is a revelation. Only moral conscience comes from itself (74). Moral conscience is the impossibility of assuming, for my freedom is not the last word, I am not alone (74).

That the transcendence and exteriority of the Other must be revealed indicates that the experience does not come from the Same at all. In the context of relation between the Same and the Other, absolute experience is revelation, not uncovering or discovering (37). Revelation is not objectifying consciousness (39). The revelation of the Other is a relation which cannot be reduced to the subject-object relation, for there is not a community between the terms of the relation (45). The relation of transcendence supposes both radical separation from the Other and the self-revelation of the Other (45). The experience of the Other breaks through the context of the Same. The breakthrough to metaphysical, transcendent relation is conversion. It is the conversion of the soul to exteriority, to the absolutely other, to the Infinite (33). The Other cannot be related to as a content of consciousness. The Other reveals the inadequacies of formal, impersonal knowledge, and shows the need for another form of knowledge.

The Same experiences this breakthrough or conversion as criticism, judgement, teaching, and/or morality. Criticism breaks through the sphere of the Same by challenging its self-centeredness, its freedom to enjoy things for itself. Criticism consists in the Other putting the Same in question, putting my spontaneity in question (13). The freedom or spontaneity of the Same which is challenged is the pre-relational freedom of not receiving anything from the Other

(13-14). To criticize is to go beyond one's origin (54). Origin is something beyond which one must search in order to find a created liberty (54). To go beyond one's origin is to go beyond one's orientation to oneself in order to discover one's self-centeredness. This is to learn that one's freedom is created, that one is separated. To become aware that one is self-centered is to be judged. Then one's freedom can become freedom for the Other.

Criticism is self-knowledge. It is the essence of knowledge (56). To criticize is to penetrate within one's condition, to put oneself in question (57). Knowledge as criticism is not the possibility of having an object, or of going toward an object (57). Knowledge of self as created, separated, atheist, is awareness of being centered on oneself and therefore of the possibility to be centered on the Other.

To receive something by revelation is to experience it as taught. Teaching is the mode of the metaphysical relation between the Same and the Other. Levinas describes teaching as the way in which truth is produced, in such a way that it is not my work (271). Truth does not come from the interiority of remembering (74). That way I cannot derive truth from my own interiority (271). Only the absolutely other, the stranger can teach us (46). Teaching signifies the whole infinity of exteriority (146). Teaching consists in placing the idea of infinity in me (155).

To recognize the Other as my teacher is justice (44). This is another aspect of experiencing breaking through the context of the Same. Justice is a summons to respond (222). Justice is the summons to go beyond the straight line of law, beyond that kind of universal which is a principle and not attentive to the unique and individual (223, 225). The possibility of breakthrough to justice requires singularity, the unicity of subjectivity (224), the separatedness of the

Same. Judgement is the act of situating by reference to infinity (218). The Same and its context are no longer primary. They now have a place, they are situated by reference to infinity. To be situated is to be judged.

So far we have explored the transcendence of the Other over the Same, and over the Same's context and powers. Now let us explore the other sense of transcendence, the response of the Same to the self-revelation of the Other, where the Same transcends its own context and powers.

### Effects of Conversion: The New Impersonality

The revelation of the Same's freedom as arbitrary and guilty, as self-centered, does not counter freedom, but raises it to responsibility (178). Pre-relational freedom is self-centeredness and enjoyment. Relational freedom is responsibility. Responsibility here goes beyond the usual sense of accountability to include the etymological root of "response," the ability and especially the inclination to respond to the Other --"response-ability," if you will. In the relation between the Same and the Other, the true I of responsibility is to be unable to shirk (223). Conscience is transcendence, and it accomplishes metaphysics (239). Conscience transcends being-for-the-Same.

Morality is an existing which is otherwise than existing for myself (239). Being-for-the-Other is necessary in order for meaning to arise (239). The Other does not occupy the place of a purpose, function or end in being-for-the-Other. Being-for-the-Other does not suggest finality, nor an antecedent positing of a value (239). Nor is being-for-the-Other a relation between concepts (239). The Same and the Other are not related by means of comparison, by a more-or-less-like or -unlike each other or anything else. Being-for-the Other is not a relation

but a relationship.

Now let us examine in greater detail how the Same can transcend its own context and self-centeredness. I can withdraw from possession only if I have already been in relation with something that I do not live from, with the Other who welcomes me (145). To refuse enjoyment and possession, I must know how to give what I possess (145). I must know how to give the context of the Same. Only thus can I rise above my relation with the non-I (145). To receive the Other by offering that which I previously had enjoyed is to rise above my relation with what I live from and to enter into metaphysical relation. This is a completely different use of consciousness because it is no longer the relationship of consciousness with a content. It rises above relation with the non-I to relation with the Other.

Conversion places the impersonal in an entirely new perspective. The impersonal, the non-I from which I live, the context and powers of the Same, includes the conceptual and general, language, society, material things, phenomena. Instead of being oriented to the Same in the context of the Same, the impersonal becomes part of the relation between the Same and the Other. This relation happens by the intermediation of things. We acknowledge or recognize by offering and refusing, and things are what we offer or refuse (49). The impersonal becomes the common world between the Same and the Other, the world shared between interlocutors (229). The impersonal need no longer be only oriented to the Same as it was before the Same's relation with the Other, and impersonality need no longer be primary as it was in totality. Relation already consists in serving the Other (153).

Insofar as the impersonal is in a person's power, it becomes an expression

of the Same or the Other in the relation between them. It is a response of one to the other. Thematization and objectivity consist in offering the world to the Other in speech (184). The world is offered in the language of the Other (65). An expression, as we saw with the idea of infinity, is a manifestation which is accompanied by the manifested (274). The impersonal manifests a being when it is attended by a being, for then the manifestation has an origin, a source (71). The impersonal does not simply appear out of nothing in a void of generality, like an object. The impersonal cannot be primary, for being an expression situates it with reference to the infinity of the Other. Then the impersonal can inaugurate community for it is present as offered (72). The impersonal becomes interpersonal by being made common, by being offered, given, received, exchanged.

#### How to Think the Transcendence of the Other: Desire

If the Other cannot be represented, then neither can the relation with the Other. How, then, can it be thought? What is the relation of consciousness to the Other? The relationship can be expressed, just as the idea of infinity expresses infinity. Such an expression is a response to revelation.

The relation of consciousness to the Other is a relation to that which cannot be a content of consciousness, so the relation is not enjoyment. The relation is not with that which can be an end or object of consciousness because the relation with the Other must welcome Otherness. It cannot be impersonal knowledge. To enjoy the transcendent, as one would enjoy the impersonal, would be ambiguous and equivocal (233).

The relation of consciousness or interiority with that which cannot be contained in consciousness is interpersonal knowledge, which Levinas calls desire.

Desire is rapport with the Other (56). Desire is the relation between strangers who do not miss or lack each other (77). Desire for exteriority is the work of the intellect which aspires to exteriority (54). It is in this sense that desire is knowledge. Since it is a work of the intellect, and since it breaks through the context of the Same, it can be described as an intellectual conversion.

Enjoyment is the relation of psychic interiority with impersonal otherness, enjoyment does not acknowledge Otherness. Enjoyment is material but desire is metaphysical. Desire is not need (77) or lack (70). Desire is not enjoyment. Metaphysical desire is above life, that is, it is above nourishment, above satisfaction, and above what is accomplished by life and above what fills life (86). It is spiritual, for the spiritual is something that is not lacked (89). Desire is neither satisfied nor unsatisfied; rather, it is accomplished (154). It is accomplished by relation with the Other, or by the idea of Infinity (154). The accomplishment of desire is the engendering of desire, giving the capacity to give (247). Desire is open to Otherness. This openness to Otherness and going beyond satiety mean that desire has an uncharted, open future before it (89). Moving forward into an open future makes desire essentially eschatological.

The transcendence of the Other breaking through the context of the Same is an intellectual conversion in two ways. First of all, the Other's transcendence turns the consciousness of the Same from orientation to itself to orientation to the Other. In doing so the Other teaches the Same a completely new form of consciousness. The Same can no longer understand or think by reference to itself because it realizes that when it does so it only reproduces itself. Relation with the Other is something which can only be worked when the Same does not project its own power and self. Secondly, the work of changing orientation is a

work of the psychic interiority of the Same. It is a decision, an acceptance, because relation with the Other can be rejected. It is a letting go of the previous use and understanding of consciousness, and a letting go of the previous relation to the self and to the self's world. It is an intellectual move radical enough to be called a conversion because it is so different from the kind of thinking which has gone on before that it is a leap into the unknown.

Now that we have examined the experience of forming the relationship between the Same and the Other, let us go back over the relation to examine its structure.

### The Relation and Its Logic

The movement from me to another is produced in depth and is not a species of relation in general (93-4). Relationship with the Other is unique from the perspective of logic, for it has no relativity in it. The relationship between me and the Other does not have a structure which formal logic finds in all relations (156). The terms of the relation remain absolute despite the relation (156). Indeed, the community of genus nullifies alterity (168). Let us see how this relation is not one of formal logic.

The Other and the I are not copies of each other, and they are not included in the same concept (93). I do not conceive the other as relative to myself; instead I confront or encounter the Other from my egoism (94). Similarly, the alterity of the Other is in the Other, it is not relative to me (94). I do not have access to the Other by comparing myself with the Other, but by proceeding from myself (94). The alterity of the Other is visible only from an I, not from a third party (93).

The Same and the Other cannot define each other because the Other is transcendent over the Same. This is a relation where the two terms are not limits to each other, and where the terms do not form a totality (9). The relationship cannot be reduced to the relation which the synthetic activity of understanding establishes between terms (9). In this relationship the two terms remain separate. Transcendence is not objectivity.

The relationship between the finite being and the transcendent being does not end in any community of concept or in any totality; it is a relation without relativity (52). It is impossible for the transcendent being and for the being separated from it to participate in the same concept (53). Nevertheless, the relationship between the Same and the Other subsists despite the impossibility of a whole (53).

Metaphysical relation does not attach a subject to an object (81). It is exterior; it approaches or accosts without touching (81). It is not participation, nor is it awareness of something (81). Metaphysical relation exists not as act but as social relation (81). It is not control of that with which it is in relation.

Now that we have seen how the relation between the Same and the Other is not a relation of formal, logical opposition between terms, let us see how the relationship is in the positive sense. It is still a relation and an opposition. It is the interpersonal opposition of a face-to-face relationship, with both transcendence and separation.

The face-to-face relationship places the centre of a being outside that being, where one offers one's being to the Other (158). This offering is grounded in being in oneself in order to express oneself (154). One must come absolutely from oneself (166). This relation surpasses phenomenal or inwardly oriented



existence (158). It breaks through the context of the Same, it breaks through the purely conceptual, the intellectual. Face-to-face opposition is a conversion from self-centered interiority to exteriority.

The face-to-face relation has no relativity in it because of how the face is. The face is not literally the physical face. It is an analogy for how a person is in a relationship. A person is not a term in a relation, for the Other does not stop the movement of desire (247). The presence of the face is the refusal to be contained (168). The face is the infinite paralysis of power by its infinite resistance to murder (173). The transcendence and exteriority of the Other is not only height though; it is also vulnerability. The face is the Other's vulnerability to rejection, perhaps even to murder. The face is the nudity of the absolute openness of the Transcendent as defenseless (173). Ethical resistance is the resistance of that which has no resistance (173) --the Other can speak a sovereign "No" to a totalizing effort of the Same yet its only defense is not force but its challenge: its transcendence, its sovereignty and its vulnerability. Ethical resistance is non-violence.

The face is a revelation. The epiphany of the face is the origin of exteriority (239). The face is not a form or an image (239). The face allows to see, it does not show, it does not clothe a content (239). The face means that signification is not added (239). The face-to-face is a straightforward relation.

Now let us explore the face-to-face opposition between terms of a relationship in a more abstract way. I will touch on three dimensions, multiplicity, asymmetry, and power.

Metaphysical or transcendent relation does not connect individuals into a totality, but into a multiplicity. Multiplicity is not a totality because the relations

between individuals are invisible from an outside vantage point, and because they proceed from one to another from within, maintaining the secrecy of the individual (93). This kind of relation produces a multiplicity which is not an addition of individuals (93). Multiplicity is a non-mimetic gap of separation.

The metaphysical relation realizes a pluralism, a multiple existing (195). This is not a numerical plurality but a radical one (195). Multiplicity is produced in multiple singularities, not in an exterior perspective (229). Existing is produced as a multiple (247). It is society and time; it is split into the Same and the Other (247). Society is a relation whose terms absolve each other from the relation (183). Social multiplicity resists the violence that opposes exteriority (267).

The interpersonal relation is not reciprocal (190-91), it is asymmetrical (201). The Same does not seem to the Other the way the Same seems to itself, and vice-versa. The transcendence of the Other over the Same is not the separatedness of the Same from the Other. There is not a correlation from which both the I derives its identity and from which the Other derives its alterity (191). The relation between me and the Other starts in the inequality of terms, where the terms are transcendent to one another (229). The Other as Other exists both in a dimension of height, where the master is called to invest and justify my freedom, and in a dimension of abasement and vulnerability, as the face of the poor, the widow, the stranger, the orphan (229). The inequality does not appear to a third party (229). This inequality makes plurality radical instead of numerical.

Relation with the Other is not a relation of power exercised: it is neither enjoyment nor knowledge (172). It is not an opposition of negation. Enjoyment and knowledge are forms of partial negation. Murder is total negation; it is the

exercise of power over what escapes power (172). Partial forms of negation have a finality for they answer to a need (172). Labour, usage, and representation are partial negations for they effect a grasp or a comprehension (172). The relation with the Other is pacific, non-violent because it has no frontier or negativity (147). Nonviolence maintains the plurality of the Same and the Other, where the Other has no frontier with the Same (178).

Relation with the Other is not a power or a potency or a potential (245, 247). Attention to the Other is not the actualization of a potency, because the attention is inconceivable without the Other (153). It is responsibility which is my final reality (153).

### Eschatological Ending in Levinas's Imagination

To sum up my examination of Levinas's Totalite et infini, I would like to reflect on the relation between the Same and the Other as a non-mimetic relation. Then I intend to comment on his choice of the concepts of the Same and the Other, and on his distinction between the personal and the impersonal. Finally, I want to reflect on what eschatological ending seems to be in Levinas's imagination and expectation of justice or order.

The relationship between the Same and the Other is non-mimetic because it is not a mimesis of the Same or of any aspect of the Same. Relation with the Other is possible only if the Other cannot be imagined, that is, relation with the Other is possible only if it is not relation with the Same's imagination or expectation of the Other. The Same must retract its contextual powers of enjoyment, of understanding, of conceptualization, of using, in order to relate to the Other. The Same cannot gain knowledge of the Other by its own initiative; the Other must

reveal itself, and vice-versa for the Other's knowledge of the Same. The Same must become receptive and vulnerable in order to know. To choose to receive the Other's self-revelation is an active move. Just as the beginning of mimesis, of a projection of the Same, comes from an origin, a source with no prior, so does the ending of mimesis, of a projection of the Same, come from a source with no prior, from out of nothing. The ending of the projection of the Same, of mimesis, must be unknown.

The Other does not "end" mimesis in the sense of a stop or a terminus to a projection; rather it is an "end" in the sense of a transformation or conversion. Indeed, the projection may stop but the movement of desire from the Same continues. This ending or transformation of the projection of the Same makes the relation between Same and Other non-mimetic. Impersonal mimesis becomes interpersonal relationship. In this way the Other's revelation is a surprise. It surprises the self-centeredness of the Same --whether exclusive or inclusive-- by revealing its egoism to itself, and it surprises because it comes from the unknown, from outside of the Same and its context. The revelation and the transformation are completely unforeseeable. Non-mimetic relation is necessary for relation with radical otherness.

Because mimetic relation interposes an image or concept of the Other between the Same and the Other, and uses this concept as the guide for action or understanding, it has little or no room for the receptive dimension necessary for relationship. Mimetic relation is the complete activity of the Same in its relation, because it is the one who produces the normative images. It reduces relation with radical otherness to relativity to a concept made by the Same. Mimesis is a witting or unwitting imitation of the self. Mimesis is also essentially

impersonal, since its origin and ending are hidden from itself. So the impersonality of the general, of the conceptual, is essentially self-centered.

Now that we have seen what Levinas does with the concepts of the "Same" and the "Other," we can look at why Levinas chooses these terms instead of the more direct possibilities of "self" and "other persons." He can analyze and criticize certain uses of the mind by showing them to be part of the context of the Same. The concepts of the Same and the Other, guided by the idea of infinity, can then situate and judge the context of the Same and these uses of the mind. Articulating the context of the Same and its situation is the intellectual move which enables Levinas's critique of impersonality, whether it is the impersonality of totality or of enjoyment. He can show the powers of the mind and of the whole self to be self-centered, the "same as" the self because they are extensions of the self. They are mimetic because they imitate the self, or they imitate at least what is consciously understood. Inclusive self-centeredness is not bad, but it is not sufficient to receive radical otherness.

There is an even deeper brilliance to Levinas's choice of concepts here than its usefulness to critique various uses of the mind. His choice expresses a prior intellectual move, his distinction between the personal and the impersonal. This distinction is his fundamental intellectual move and it is simply this: not all of what is non-I is impersonal. He distinguishes the non-I into two classes, the other, with the minuscule, and the Other, with the majuscule. The other is impersonal and material, and the Other is personal and metaphysical. The non-I implies that the perspective is that of the Same. But if some non-I is not impersonal, then the Same's perspective cannot have a monopoly. The distinction between the two forms of non-I already reveals and converts the self-

centeredness of the Same. This is why the Other, not the Same, is fundamental.

Levinas uses the idea of infinity with the Same and the Other to express a sense of transcendence which is radical, that is, which is not simply a level among other levels, even if it is above other levels. He does so by placing any Other as the source of the idea of infinity in the Same. His concept of the Other does not distinguish between a divine or a human person. So transcendence is not associated with a level. Dehierarchicalizing transcendence and redistributing it to all persons makes it unconceptualizable, unimaginable. It can be "imagined" only by relating to it, by acting.

In a very simple sense, an ending is where the projection of the Same, or a mimesis, stops. Either it stops itself or is stopped from outside. To be more precise though, an ending as a stop is not quite right. A stop implies a boundary negating the Same, which makes the Same relative to what stops its power, totalizing its exteriority to an Other. Ending appears as stop only from an outside panoramic perspective. An ending for mimesis or a projection of the Same is not a stop but a conversion. The context and power of the Same continue, so in a sense mimesis and projection of the Same also continue. However, they continue with a completely new orientation. The new use of the impersonal is an example of this orientation. The egoism of the Same is maintained in infinity, but the I now gives the resources of its egoism (191) instead of retaining them.

Since conversion requires radical Otherness and transcendence, an ending comes or is revealed from outside the context of the Same. Like a beginning, an ending has no prior and so comes out of nothing. It is revealed. But conversion needs more than revelation, for the revelation must also be accepted and received

in order for the conversion to happen. Conversion requires some activity from both the Other and the Same, so it begins a relationship. My existence as a thing in itself begins with the idea of infinity in me (153). This is my converted or interpersonalized existence. My converted existence consists in serving the Other (153).

An eschatological ending point in Levinas's imagination of justice is a relationship, which makes it a new beginning. The relation between beginning and ending is not circular, because the ending is a different beginning than the first one. Conversion moves from the old freedom and identity to a new freedom and identity. There are two self-consistent sources of identity. The identity of the "I" comes first from egoism, then from the being separated from its insular self-sufficiency by the face teaching it infinity (191). Levinas's eschatological ending point transforms even impersonality itself by orienting it to persons, by making it the stuff of relationship, of the interpersonal. The impersonal becomes that which is offered and received, the traffic between the Same and the Other. The eschatology, or vision of justice, which he imagines and constructs is a personalized world. He is able to imagine his eschatology because of the respectful, non-violent way that he thinks the Transcendent, leaving room for the unknown, the unimaginable, the Transcendent and Infinite in how he uses his mind.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

#### ESCHATOLOGICAL IMAGINATION: COMMENTARY ON THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, where you lived as slaves.

You shall have no other gods to rival me.

You shall not make yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God... (Ex. 20: 2-5)

I would like to conclude this essay by summarizing how reading Levinas has influenced my thinking about eschatological imagination and about the use of the mind in working for justice.

When I began reflecting on how to express and use transcendence for purposes of criticism, I focused on the importance of eschatological ending, or vision of a future, as a guide and inspiration in working for justice. Ending expressed the critical insight of the "should" moment which I articulated in my introduction. Understanding the "should" moment as both an ideal and a future state led me to use the term eschatological imagination. I saw transcendence and the critical insight as the same level of consideration.

Levinas, in addition to focusing on ending also focused on the importance of beginning --in his sense of origin and in the separatedness and createdness of the Same. His emphasis eventually led me to round out my notion



of eschatological imagination to include beginnings as well as endings, even though "eschatology" usually refers to "last things." One cannot deal with ending unless one also takes beginning into account.

A fuller definition of eschatological imagination has not been the most important thing I have learned from Levinas, though, but a more radical sense of transcendence than I had been using. Even after I had rounded out my sense of eschatological imagination to include both senses of limit, beginning and ending, I still associated the limit of ending with the level of transcendence. Now I see that transcendence must be completely different from both beginning and ending. Otherwise, ending and beginning --a vision of a possible future and an interpretation of the present-- would be mimetic and therefore impersonal and violent. If ending is the converted openness of the Same and the relation between the Same and the Other, then the intellectual construction of an eschatological ending point depends partially on the powers of the Same. Insofar as the ending point depends on the decision and effort of the Same, it is a part of the context of the Same and therefore a level of consideration. Transcendence cannot be simply a level, because then it would be a level among other levels. If transcendence were a level, even an ultimate level, then it could be imaged and it would be mimetic. It could not be radical transcendence.

Levinas makes transcendence radical and imageless --not a level-- by treating both God and human persons with the same term, the Other. The person, whether divine or human, is metaphysical. Levinas is able to distribute transcendence by combining all persons under the term "Other" because he treats beginning as an existential insight into present experience, as the "is" moment of relation or order, instead of as a genesis, a theory about past origins.

While Levinas's work has helped me refine my thinking about eschatological imagination, there is one difference between us which strikes me now. If transcendence is not a level, then Levinas has really only one level of consideration, the material or the context of the Same. Above it and among it but without being of it and without being a level is the metaphysical or the spiritual. He does not make a clearly articulated distinction between the metaphysical and an eschatological end. I now do. I divide his one level into two: the existential or "is" level which is eschatological beginning, and the critical or "should" level which is eschatological ending. Then above and among these levels of consideration but without being of them and without being a level I have --or hope to have-- radical transcendence. I think this stricter distinction between ending and transcendence leaves my ending point, my hope, my whole eschatological imagination a bit more explicitly open to judgement and to otherness than Levinas's.

Therefore there are three aspects to eschatological imagination. There are the limits of beginning and ending, and there is radical transcendence. Limit relates to my powers, the context of the Same, and has two senses, freedom and conversion. It is relationship with transcendence, or openness to that relation which enables me to use my powers of thought or action in a non-totalizing, non-violent and just way. Thus it is relation with radical transcendence which enables me to begin and to end in using my powers, to imagine and to act eschatologically. It is radical transcendence that enables me to imagine and use eschatological beginning and ending in a non-violent way.

If transcendence is conceptual, and if the concept is deemed a representation, then action and thinking will have the appearance of

impersonality, and will be exclusively self-centered. This form of "transcendence" is totality because it has no beginning or end; it is circular, rotating about the self. This centre is an individual and a self because it is a centre, but it is not a person because it is not a beginning. This way of thinking and acting order is unjust because it cannot acknowledge radical otherness. It cannot acknowledge person. Assigning primacy and transcendence to the impersonal and conceptual is a violent use of the mind.

Intellectual conversion, and proper thought, cannot be worked by the Same alone. A just use of the mind cannot be developed by the self in isolation. The Same cannot produce or imagine Otherness without an Other revealing her or himself. The necessity of revelation for conversion and for the proper use of the mind indicates the necessity of interpersonal relationship, even for thought. It must be a shared activity. This also means acknowledging the primacy and transcendence of interpersonal relationship over logical or impersonal relation. Revelation can only be received or offered non-violently. Intellectual non-violence is a positive thing, it is not simply the lack of violence. Relationship with transcendence --the idea of infinity-- enables a non-violent use of the mind in trying to build order or justice.

My concern in this investigation has been the use of the mind in working for justice, especially investigating a non-violent way of using concepts and of imagining just order. When I began I was concerned for intellectual and moral non-violence, but ended up focusing on intellectual non-violence. Moral non-violence is simply the extension to action of the critique of mimesis. The work for justice, whether the action or the thinking, can be neither primarily mimetic nor primarily ethic. That it cannot be mimetic means it cannot be intel-

lectually violent, it cannot be a projection and extrapolation of my own mind and experience. That it cannot be ethic means that it cannot be morally violent, it cannot be the impersonal application of an object-like and impersonal principle. This too is mimetic for it is simply copying an abstract ideal. Mimetic action and thought are ideological, with no room for the unknown, for radical transcendence and otherness. Thus working for justice, for changing and building order, must be non-mimetic both in thought and action; this requires a non-mimetic relationship with transcendence, radical otherness, the unknown, the unforeseeable.

## ENDNOTES

1. I get the general idea of intellectual move from Ludwig Wittgenstein his Philosophical Investigations. The way I use it is my own.
2. The terms "expression" and "enjoyment" come from Levinas in Totalite et infini. They are particularly apt for the dimension of creativity which I want to express here.
3. I get the idea of using analogy to describe a concept, especially the term primary analogy which I will use shortly, from David Tracy in his The Analogical Imagination. The usage is my own.
4. I owe a debt of acknowledgement for serendipity to Frederick Sontag for the chapter "First and Last Things" in his book Problems of Metaphysics. I do not get the idea of eschatology from him, for he uses it for last things. But since he put first and last things together in one section, I saw the importance of connecting beginning and ending.
5. I adapt the analogy of creation out of nothing from De Nicolas's use of it to describe mysticism in his book Ignatius Powers of Imagining. I use it to describe a way of thinking.
6. I get this interpretation of levels in Plotinus from a conversation with Dr. Gary Gurtler, S.J., a Plotinus scholar teaching at Loyola University of Chicago.
7. See Aristotle's discussion of infinity in Book II of his Metaphysics.

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The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts.

April 23, 1991  
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