THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION

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ETHICS, AESTHETICS, AND EDUCATION

A Levinasian Approach

Donald S. Blumenfeld-Jones

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Series Editor

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The Palgrave Pivot series on the Cultural and Social Foundations of Education seeks to understand educational practices around the world through the interpretive lenses provided by the disciplines of philosophy, history, sociology, politics, and cultural studies. This series focuses on the following major themes: democracy and social justice, ethics, sustainability education, technology, and the imagination. It publishes the best current thinking on those topics, as well as reconsideration of historical figures and major thinkers in education.

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palgrave
macmillan

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The Cultural and Social Foundations of Education
ISBN 978-1-137-55606-6 ISBN 978-1-137-55607-3 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55607-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016950467

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Nature America Inc. New York

This book is dedicated to:
Kathryn Corbeau Blumenfeld-Jones, who everyday teaches me what it means to live ethically, and David Purpel, who first challenged me to start this work, and without whose constant presence as an inspiration, this work would never have found itself. I dedicate this book to him in his memory.

Series Foreword

The Palgrave Pivot series on the Cultural and Social Foundations of Education seeks to understand educational practices around the world through the interpretive lenses provided by the disciplines of philosophy, history, sociology, politics, and cultural studies. This series focuses on the following major themes: democracy and social justice, ethics, sustainability education, technology, and imagination. It publishes the best current thinking on those topics, as well as reconsideration of historical figures and major thinkers in education.

The cultural and social foundations of education are enjoying a rebirth. While studies of Plato, Pestalozzi, and Dewey or an analysis of the effect of Supreme Court decisions or the effects of world economic policies have always been important to understand education, there is increased urgency for such work in today's educational climate. Education is seen in both the developed and developing world as a means to social advancement and improvement of life. More than ever, there are questions about what kind of education should be provided and for whom. In addition, information technologies are rapidly transforming teaching and learning, while there is a political climate in many countries that emphasizes market solutions to social problems while moving away from democratic forms of schooling.

Out of this rich context, the Cultural and Social Foundations of Education series was established to explore five themes important in schooling in short books by leading and rising scholars. Democracy and social justice has been a perennial theme in foundations of education and continues to have greater urgency. This series features works that examine worldwide issues related to democracy and social justice, from the

effects of wealth and income, inequality on schools in developed countries to the spread of democracy and social justice concerns to other countries around the world. Closely related to this theme is the second theme of ethics: issues of right, wrong, fairness, equity, and equality in schools and educational practices worldwide. Increased attention is being paid to our planet's health, and especially to how we can educate our children to accept and deal with environmental degradation forms the third theme. What it means to educate for a sustainable future is a theme that foundation scholars are increasingly addressing. The impact of information technology upon education is enormous and not something that should be left to just technical experts in that area. There is a need for scholars in the cultural and social foundations of education to inquire critically about the claims made by technology, as well as inform us about new developments in this area. Finally, the arts and imagination are all too often pushed to the margins of schooling especially today. In the last century, John Dewey made a compelling argument for the importance of art and the imagination in his late work, *Art as Experience*, especially for supporting the arts in educational practice.

The volumes in the series will be both single-authored and edited collections, and accessible resources for those interested in foundational issues in education at all levels, in particular advanced undergraduate and graduate students in education and the social sciences being exposed to the latest thinking on issues of perennial importance and relevance to the context and practices of education worldwide.

Series Editor
A.G. Rud

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Abstract This book explores the intersection of ethics and aesthetics. In this chapter Blumenfeld-Jones discusses the genesis of his approach to this intersection, beginning in his days as a dancer and moving forward to the challenge to bring about this intersection as presented to him by his wife, Kathryn Corbeau Blumenfeld-Jones, and later by David Purpel, his doctoral mentor as he began his doctoral studies. This chapter is an example of thinking ethically and aesthetically simultaneously by exploring it through the details of a life. Ethics is, from Blumenfeld-Jones perspective, a lived experience replete with bodily, imaginative, and emotional dimensions rather than as only an intellectual endeavor. This chapter serves, therefore, as an introduction of how to think/feel ethically and as an inductive invitation into this work.

Keywords aesthetics • relationality • humility • normative ethics • imagination • community

This book explores the intersection of ethics and aesthetics. The idea that there is an intersection between ethics and aesthetics has a long-standing history in the West although not much explored. The Greeks posited a typology of philosophical explorations: epistemology involving questions of knowledge, ontology involving questions of existence, and axiology involving two questions rather than one. These two questions are: "What

D.S. Blumenfeld-Jones, *Ethics, Aesthetics, and Education*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55607-3_1

is 'the beautiful'?" and "What is 'the good'?" The Greeks understood that there was a connection between beauty and goodness but they did not do much with this insight. At the most Aristotle posited that the good life would lead to a beautiful life. Subsequently, in the history of philosophy, this intersection was not explored, except to some degree in the twentieth century by Dewey (who leveraged the processes of imagination as part of the process of pragmatic deliberation—see Steven Fesmire 2003).

In Western culture we tend to have a narrow view of aesthetics. It is seen, primarily, if not entirely, as synonymous with "the arts." I call this a mistake as I will show, in parallel terms to Dewey and drawing upon the work of Mark Johnson (1994), that while the arts are a reasonable venue for exploring aesthetics, they are not the sole site of aesthetic life. Aesthetic life, a life steeped in bodily, emotional, imaginative, intuitive knowing/presence in the world, permeates our everyday experiences. As with hermeneutics, the act of interpreting experiences, which also goes unseen (until, as Paul Ricoeur puts it, we do not understand and then we notice that we are working to understand, we are acting hermeneutically), so, too, with aesthetics: We spend much of our lives making aesthetic decisions or making decisions grounded in an aesthetic response to our circumstances (music, clothing, film, TV, hiking, and more). We simply do not know we are doing that. As aesthetics and the arts have been relegated to a special group of people practicing them, the rest of us do not see that we are, in fact, living aesthetically rather continuously. That is an idea that will ground this book.

Another mistake exists within the Western tradition. Beginning at least with Plato, we dismiss the arts as a location of wisdom and knowledge, much less a location for goodness. The argument goes: The arts as a venue for knowing wisdom are too easily manipulated for persuading people of what is not good. In appealing to the emotions and the body, the arts block proper knowing which is lodged in the mind and the capacity for reason. This is Plato's prejudice against the arts a rejection which has influenced the development of philosophy even until today. Thus Levinas, whose work will ground the present investigation, agreed with Plato and the West as he, too, suspected of being misleading. (A task of this work is to demonstrate how Levinas, despite his protestations, actually makes room for aesthetics in his thinking.) In rejecting the arts, Levinas also conflates "the arts" and "aesthetics" not recognizing that a person may know aesthetically without being involved in the arts. The arts may be a location for aesthetic exploration but, as already asserted, they are not the sole location for an aesthetic life. (Indeed, this was a fundamental notion

of Dewey in *Art as Experience*.) Ironically, therefore, Levinas does not recognize that he, in fact, leverages aesthetics in his ethics. This contention will be made clear of an exposition of Levinas's ethics.

The Origin of This Book

I have been involved with the arts my whole life. More specifically, however, I have been involved with dance, as both dancer and choreographer, for the whole of my adult life. Even when I left the arts behind, it was never for long. In providing the following auto-biographical narrative I provide the basis for this project of bringing together aesthetics and ethics. For this I have David Purpel to thank. This will become clear during this narrative.

As with many of my generation I was involved with the anti-Vietnam war movement and was a member of SDS and the Socialist Workers Labor party. I had been raised in a politically leftist home and was steeped in the desire for healing the world of its injustices. At the same time I had determined that my own future would be in the arts, specifically in being a poet. I did not contemplate the intersection of my political and poet life and, in fact, kept them well apart. I never wrote political poetry and I never explored poetry during my political activities.

And then in the spring of my junior year in college I discovered dance. I went to take a dance class at the request of a friend (who did not want to be the only male there, going, as he was, at the request of his wife). I agreed (I did not know why). I went. My life changed instantaneously. Within the first ten minutes of that class I knew something enormous had happened to and for me, something I needed to explore. The next year Margery Turner, the head of the dance program at Douglass College (the all-women's sister college to my school, the all-male Rutgers College) persuaded me to attend a lecture-demonstration/concert/master classes of the Nikolais Dance Theater in Trenton, NJ. I did. Again, my life felt itself shifting under me. Margery then persuaded me to take Saturday classes at the Nikolais School in NYC the spring of my senior year. And, again, my life changed. I realized I wanted to dance and that I did not want to attend graduate school in English in order to become an academic who wrote poetry. And, so, that fall after graduation I began my life as a dancer, full-time.

At the same time as I moved into this new life, I entirely ignored my political activities and abandoned them. I could not conceive of how they could intersect and chose dance as my life focus. This separation per-

sisted for many years until 1979. In that year the Communist Workers Party (CWP) of Durham, NC (I was teaching dance at Duke University at this time) held a "Death to the Klan" rally in Greensboro, NC. They proclaimed they would march unarmed. They invited the Klan to show up. The Klan did. Both sides were armed. Five CWP marchers were killed. In the subsequent trying of the Klan members responsible for the deaths, all accused were acquitted. The state of North Carolina erupted in protests against the verdicts. Duke University held a protest gathering. At the time I was dancing in my dance studio. My wife came by to invite me to go with her to the protest. I said I could not, that I was busy dancing. She said "Suit yourself" and off she went. I danced, briefly, and then thought I needed to attend this protest. I changed into my street clothing, went to West Campus and, with her, joined the protest. That was the beginning of my return to politics but not to my developing an understanding of the intersection of my dance and political selves.

Fast forward to 1986. I had just begun my doctoral studies at University of North Carolina at Greensboro. David Purpel, at the time the chair of the Curriculum Studies and Cultural Studies department in which I was to get my doctorate, asked to meet with me as he did with all incoming doctoral students. During our meeting he said the following:

> Donald, I have a question for you I would like you to answer at the end of your time here. This is it: given the terrible state of the world, the huge number of people living in poverty, the ever-increasing degradation of the environment, the ever-present possibility of nuclear holocaust, don't you feel just a little foolish prancing around in a room in front of a mirror with very little clothing on? At the end of your time here I want you to tell me how dance can address this situation because if it's not part of the solution then it is part of the problem. You know, I always wanted to learn to play the clarinet but there just wasn't time.

This shook me to my core. He was demanding I figure out what I now believe to be the intersection of aesthetics and ethics and, by extension, the meaning for education. How was I to do this? I could not do it at the end of my time with him (I eventually wrote my dissertation under his guidance). I could not do it ten years after that. But now, I think, I have an answer to him and it is in this book. This book is my attempt to show David how the arts and aesthetics, more particularly, can address a situation that has not changed since David posed that question (indeed, even Max Horkheimer voiced precisely these con-

cerns more than 80 years ago). I want to show how living aesthetically with ethics is a route to a world of freedom and justice. It is not the end for that world but a way of living in it.

The Basic Dimension of this Work

This book, as I write in Chap. 2, is a story of relationality. At the end of this book I invoke the notion of "humility" in the face of an ethics that begins in what we do not know and are not and have not yet. These are the two basic dimensions to this work as I couple *humility* with *relationality in aesthetics and ethics*. It is to the latter that I will speak in this introduction, setting out why "relationality" is central to aesthetics offering an initial connection to ethics which is also a story of relationality. I will leave humility as the background trope for the whole of the work.

Relationality in Aesthetics and Ethics

What has *relationality* have to do with aesthetics? Many years ago, while attending a summer dance concert sponsored by the American Dance Festival I noticed that I was experiencing not the isolated movements of the dancers on stage but, rather, the relationships between dancers' motions and the way they occupied the dance space in relationship to each other. That is, aesthetically, the choreographer's task was to organize the relationships (motionally, spatially, temporally, and dynamically) between the dancers in the dance space. The dance was "about" these relationships. It might be "about" some specific topic but that "topic" was only legible as the dancers were in particular relationships to each other. Years earlier, at a Picasso exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, I had the opportunity to study the ways in which Picasso developed the relationships between the three prostitutes in his iconic *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* by examining the displayed studies that led to the final canvas. In both cases I realized the foundational work of thinking in relationship as an artist making art.

When I encountered Levinas I found a parallel image: for Levinas ethics arises *between two people* who are in a particular relationship to each other. He is very clear about this. Ethics is not a group phenomenon. Politics is a group phenomenon, involving sets of people bound together through common concerns expressed through language that makes sense of the world. As I will show, this is antithetical to a Levinasian view of ethics. Politics is important but it is distinct from ethics.

When I encountered this distinction I instinctually gravitated to it. I had always felt, in my political days, an alienation between myself and others, even those others with whom I agreed and protested. A frozen identity arose around each of us that was, admittedly, necessary to take political action. I had to make common cause with individuals with whom I might not be comfortable for any number of reasons but with whom I needed to be in solidarity in order to accomplish our ends. As I have already asserted, this is important for political action to be successful. And political action is important.

Ethics, however, feels different to me and always has. James Macdonald, the eminent curriculum theorist whose work I encountered well before I found Levinas, declared that there were only two questions worth asking in education: "What is the meaning of human existence?" and "How shall we live together?" This second question is the ethics question. It asks how we are to be in relation to each other. When I found Levinas I felt I had, at last, found a way of addressing "How shall we live together" that felt human to me rather than the calculations of utilitarianism/consequentialism or what I take to be the hyper-rationalism of Kantian deontology (both to be discussed briefly in Chap. 2) or, frankly, any of the other approaches to ethics discussed in Chap. 2 of this book. I felt I knew this ethics and it released me from being "too much in my head."

"Too much in my head." With this I close this introduction. When I was learning to choreograph my mentors, especially my most important mentor, Phyllis Lamhut, always told me that I was living too much in my head and that the choreography was not flowing from a bodily knowing, from an aesthetic knowing. One day I presented the beginnings of a new solo to Phyllis. I had my back to her, with no top on so that the muscles of my back were visible. I began in a sitting position. The dance began with simply motions of my back. The whole of the dance, even once I stood and turned around, remained located in "thinking in my back." I built the dance focused on that and that alone. There was something else going on in that dance for me (something to do with the moon and something feral). But that "something else" was not how I built the dance. I built the dance through sensing. When I was done Phyllis said "At last! I've been waiting for that. That's what I'm talking about." And I began the journey of "thinking" in my body, in my senses and not in my intellectual life. There is nothing wrong with the intellectual life. Indeed, you hold in your hands the product of intellectual work. But it is also the product of this bodily/sensed work.

That is where the intersection of aesthetics and ethics begins: in a pre-intellectual, prerational state that is afforded through a presence to the

world in my body, my emotions, and my imagination. This is the work of the artist but it is also the work of each of us that we perform every day. As it turns out, it can also be the work of the ethicist.

Organization of this Book

This book is divided into four chapters that are integral to each other.

Chapter 2

In this chapter I present summations of normative ethical systems (consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics, naturalism, and feminism) to set the ground for understanding how Levinas is different. I then describe Levinas's ethics in detail, beginning with discussing his form of ethical motivation as the Metaphysical Desire for connection to another and the increase of the good. This is followed by describing Levinas's phenomenology of self in which a person, in order to craft a self, sees the world as a resource for her/his making of a self, fitting everything into her/his terms, an act of totalizing the world. A person discovers that the world does not fully cooperate with this project and, in escaping the total control of the person, an other arises for the person. This other becomes understood as radically Other (radical alterity) and in this moment responsibility for an Other arises and ethics emerges. The Other is seen in her/his infinity, and Levinas locates this relationship within the image of proximity to a neighbor and an encounter with the face of the other. In presenting Levinas's account of ethics I do so through discussing a set of dualisms he employs to structure his phenomenology, dualisms not meant to present an essential relationship but a fluid, ever-changing relationship. These dualisms include self/other, totality/infinity, saying/said, expression/action, and sensible/symbol or sign.

Chapter 3

In this chapter I present a set of philosophers who engage with the idea of moral imagination, setting out their arguments along with my Levinasian response to them. These philosophers are John Dewey (through Steven Fesmire 2003), John Paul Lederbach (2010), and Mark Johnson (1994). Mark Johnson's work is used to set the beginning terms of how the aesthetics and ethics intersect. I also present various objections to this intersection, including Levinas's various objections. I follow this with a discussion of how Levinas is, at base, quite aesthetic, grounded in the

body, emotions, intuitions, and imagination, especially through his invocation of sensibility in *Otherwise than being, or beyond essence*. I finish with a discussion of the practice of art and how it is parallel to ethical consciousness and can function as a base for addressing and enlivening ethical consciousness.

Chapter 4

In this chapter I present the various modes I use to help my learners develop an ethical consciousness. These modes include didactic teaching of normative ethics and Levinasian ethics followed by the creation of a personal ethics statement as to how each person will create an ethical community in her/his classroom. This community will be designed not to teach people to be ethical but to help each person develop her/his capacity to live ethically through the actual practice of co-creating various ethical communities with the other learners (teachers and students) in the room. This is coupled with the creation of various "classroom rules" documents keyed to various normative ethical systems as well as a Levinasian system. Finally I present various activities in which we engage, designed to bring home the remembrance that each of us is "more than we can tell" by telling stories of how someone else's categories and labels served to limit each person and never speak to the whole of the person. There are movement activities designed to encounter what it means to be with the face of an Other and to be present to the world for purposes of presence and not totalizing.

And so, onto Levinas. (A note to the reader. For citing Levinas I will use the following shorthands. When referencing *Totality and Infinity* I will use TI. When referencing *Otherwise than being, or beyond essence* I will use OTB.)

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CHAPTER 2

Levinas's Ethics: A Story of Relationship as Radical Alterity

Abstract In this chapter Blumenfeld-Jones begins with a summary of normative ethical systems (consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics, feminism), setting the ground for a Levinasian approach to ethics. Blumenfeld-Jones describes Levinas's ethics in detail. He begins with Levinas's form of ethical motivation: the Metaphysical Desire for connection to another and increasing ethical goodness. He then describes Levinas's phenomenology of self. A person crafts a self by using the world as a resource, translating everything into her/his categories and labels. Levinas terms this an act of totalizing the world. In the act of totality a person discovers that the world does not fully cooperate and escapes the total control of the person. In this moment an other arises who is understood as radically Other (radical alterity). In this moment responsibility for an Other arises and ethics emerges. The Other is seen as infinite and fragile. Levinas characterizes this relationship as the proximity to a neighbor. The person encounters with the face of the Other. Levinas uses a set of fluid, ever-changing dualisms to structure the phenomenology. These dualisms include self/other, totality/infinity, saying/said, expression/action, and sensible/symbol or sign.

Keywords normative ethics • totalization • metaphysics • radical alterity • neighbor • face

D.S. Blumenfeld-Jones, *Ethics, Aesthetics, and Education*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55607-3_2

The genesis of this book is grounded in the following assertion by James B. Macdonald (one of the most important curriculum theorists of the twentieth century): "There are only two question worth asking in education: What is the meaning of human existence? and How shall we live together?" (James B. Macdonald in Stinson 1985). The second of these questions ("How shall we live together?") is the ethics question. Macdonald is insisting that the ethics questions along with the question of meaning are the most important questions we can ask as we form our educational programs and practices. Not only are these the two fundamental questions: We are answering them every day in the way we organize schools and attempt to direct people's experiences within those schools. This book is dedicated to exploring Macdonald's ethics question through the work of Emmanuel Levinas.

Notice that the ethics question is put in terms of relationality (how shall we live *together*?). Ethics, at its most fundamental, is about how we live together, how we determine what is the right or good way to be with others, and how to form a society that reflects those understandings. Whether the approach to an ethical life is grounded in reason and the cognitive (as are most conventional approaches) or grounded in something that at least supplements the cognitive or, in some cases surpasses it (as, I will argue, is the approach of Levinas—a bodily, emotional, intuitive, even aesthetic approach), in the end all ethical thinkers are about what constitutes proper relationships between people. Therefore, think of this book as a story of relationality and how to educate for it in the light of Emmanuel Levinas's work.

In this chapter you will find a description of Levinas using his own words with a discussion of the implications of those words as I present his approach to ethics. This description will be in quasi-narrative form, offering a "reading" of Levinas rather than, for instance, a critique or a leveraging of the secondary literature on Levinas. This is in keeping with how I read Levinas: He tells a tale of the self and the Other and the dance with which they engage each other. As he approaches this work as a phenomenological account of self and Other, so I want to present Levinas as lived experience rather than as a system of interlaced concepts. To take this approach is not to critique others' work, but only a different way into the text. This elaborated view of Levinas will, hopefully, reveal both the structure of Levinas's thought and how to think educationally about his ethics. There are, already, excellent books on Levinas and teaching (Strhan 2012 for example) and curriculum (Joldersma 2014). There does not appear, however, to be a book that focuses entirely on an ethics education in a Levinasian manner (or if they seemed so focused, their interests are broader, such as Todd's (2003) focus on psychoanalysis and Egéa-Kuehne's 2007, focus on postmodernism).

I begin with setting out the position of Levinas vis á vis the rest of what LaFollette (2013) terms meta-ethics. Levinas's approach is unique to this arena. Most meta-ethics deals with what is generally termed "normative ethics" (Frankena 1988; LaFollette 2013), laying out our rights and duties and ways of determining them (and, then, ways of fulfilling them). Levinas, on the other hand, works in a phenomenological nonprescriptive manner, offering a description of the "birth" of ethics steeped in human activity and experience, rather than in rationally determined ethical schemes that result in "rules" governing behaviors. Levinas's first major work on ethics (*Totality and infinity: an essay in exteriority*) is an account of how the self comes to be (through necessary acts of totalization) and how ethics arises in the context of recognizing that one has no power to make the world around him/her serve her/his interests and desires (no power to completely totally make the world bend to her/his will). In this state, the world becomes a place of infinite possibility that escapes our control but, simultaneously, our responsibility for that world arises in the face of our recognition of the frailty of the world around us (even as that world robustly resists our schemes and desires). In Levinas's second major work, *Otherwise than being or beyond essence*, he makes corrections to his presentation of his ethics. In this book he does not change his approach to ethics but only attempts to avoid pitfalls his work encountered in using ordinary language that is too linear to adequately describe a nonlinear form of thinking/being. In my presentation of Levinas I will want to show the ways in which Levinas contributes to the possibility of not only thinking well ethically (normative ethics does this) but also of encountering the world in order to live the ethics of which we become aware. That is, for me Levinas provides access to being ethically present in a full-bodied manner that does not tell us how to act but provides the grounds upon which we are able to act ethically, a much more "practical" approach to ethics (in my estimation).

Conventional Ethics and Levinas

In order to make clear how Levinas differs from much, if not all, of ethics it is worth taking an excursion into that other world through a brief exegesis of "normative ethics." This will provide an image that acts as a foil to Levinasian ethics and places it as not just another version of ethics. In fact, it can be argued that once we understand ethics in the way Levinas offers it, we might better understand the potential of normative ethics to be a lived experience. That is, Levinasian ethics is a foundational ethics that transcends specific ethical systems. This, however, is a secondary argument to the main argument to this book: Ethics can become a lived ethics through

aesthetic encounters in the world. This may not be the only way for ethics to be lived but it is one avenue not well explored.

In what follows I will provide a "listing" of various ethics systems along with brief descriptions of each that will provide an image of how one would act ethically within each system. In this, I am discussing what constitutes thinking well ethically under each approach. This emphasis upon thinking differs from Levinas as, I am arguing, for Levinas thinking in a conventional logico-rational manner will not be the centerpiece of living ethically. Thinking is usually considered a cognitive/rational affair. Sabina Lovibond (1991), over against this and using Wittgenstein as her basis, discusses the development of "noncognitivist" ethics which move away from a rationally based, transcendent-of-human-invention ethics. She points to the critiques made of noncognitivism as a worry at the free-for-all of subjectivism with no grounds for believing anything. Lovibond documents a turn to realism in ethics which, according to the realists "turns away from the individualistic and anti-authoritarian values exhibited in non-cognitive theories" (p. 16). I mention these two approaches (noncognitive and realism) to indicate that Levinas is also not of those persuasions. His ethics is not subjectivist (even though, as will be discussed, it is an intimate relation between two people) but, rather, transcends the individual for a connection to something beyond any one of us. It is also not anti-authoritarian in that there is no rejection of particular versions of what constitutes being ethical or living responsibly. It might even be said that there is an authority in Levinasian ethics and that authority lodges within the other person with whom I am in ethical relationship. Levinas presents a more or less "natural" arising of an ethical sensibility/life that does not rely on self-enclosed, self-referencing thinking (indeed this would be anti-ethical in Levinasian terms), does not rely on rationality and does not reject authority as a premise for the ethics (the partner in the ethical relationship has great authority over the other person but not an institutional or official authority—rather an authority of existence). With this in mind I turn to normative ethics. I rely heavily upon LaFollette (2013) for this exegesis.

Normative Ethics

Traditionally ethics, in modern Western times, is taken to mean "normative ethics." William Frankena (1988) defines normative ethics as: "… a set of acceptable judgments (1) of moral obligation, (2) of moral value, and secondarily (3) of nonmoral value" (p. 10). Such ethics focus on

ascertaining and certifying invariant truths of ethics, rules, obligations, responsibilities, social reasoning processes and the like which inform us how to reason and act ethically. They are concerned with such ethics issues as rights, freedom, equity, duty, justice, and responsibility. They are concerned with these issues from the perspective of providing moral premises of one sort or another which precede and undergird our reasoning and actions about and for these issues. They are focused on the individual acting (or not acting) ethically in the light of the particular approach to ethical life. *Consequentialism* (also known as Utilitarianism), *deontology* (conceptualized by Kant), *naturalism*, and *virtue ethics* all are particular species of the notion of the normative.

Consequentialism

Consequentialism begins with the premise that we will know our actions are ethical or not by the consequences of our actions. If those consequences fit within what we deem to be ethical, then the actions we took can be deemed ethical. A first step in this system is to establish an *a priori* "good" (in the ethical sense of that word) and then establish how to maximize the good. In simple terms, we set a goal and then determine to what degree we achieve that goal. If we achieve that goal to an acceptable level, then we can say that we are in the midst of an ethical society. There is a fundamental understanding that the good we wish to establish will never be completely established. Thus, we accept that we are only maximizing the good, not having it be experienced 100% by everyone. As a society we come together, in whatever sort of conclave we think will yield us agreement on what "good" to maximize. We perform a sort of social calculus to determine the "good" and what degree of fulfilling that good is acceptable. Having accomplished all of this, each person sets about attempting to maximize the good in the society in question. Each person should keep in mind, as s/he acts in her/his life, the task of maximizing the good with each action s/he takes and evaluate her/his actions in the light of this agreement to maximize. This form of consequentialism is known as "act consequentialism" as each act we perform can be evaluated in terms of whether or not the "good" is being maximized and, if not, what actions must change in order to achieve such maximizing.

There are those consequentialists who think that this is too onerous a task as we would be scrutinizing ourselves at every moment. These ethicists shift the focus from actions we take to rules we can establish. As

we use these rules to live, we can be assured that we are acting ethically. We do not have to constantly scrutinize ourselves. Such self-scrutiny would make it difficult to accomplish anything in the world. Thus the "rules-consequentialists" focus not on determining the goodness of each act a person has performed but, rather, determining the rules we will apply in order to act (thus establishing ethical life before, not after, an act). In both cases, what constitutes "the good" (and the social calculus used to determine it) must be revisited periodically in order to make sure we have established the correct "good" we were seeking to maximize. In the case of rules-consequentialism, we must also revisit the rules we established to see if and to what degree they are the right rules for what we desire to occur.

Deontology

Deontology, developed by Kant, functions from a different premise. Ethical life is not a matter of shades of gray. One is acting ethically or one is not. Ethics is a matter of fulfilling one's duty (the Greek word for "duty" is *deon*), not a matter of being ethical more or less (as with consequentialism). Absolutes are sought and once identified become the markers whereby you know if an act is ethical or not. It has nothing to do with the consequences of actions. Rather, the principle tells you if an action is or is not ethical. Kant was a dedicated rationalist but not in the sense of consequentialism which also values our ability to reason in order to establish what good should be maximized and, in the case of rules consequentialism, what rules should be employed in order to maximize the good. Rather, there is a particular, singular criterion whereby to determine what constitutes the "good" and a test for determining what to do. The criterion is lodged in Kant's *categorical imperative*: only do that which you would have everyone do. If you would not universalize the particular principle or act, then that contemplated principle or act is not an ethical good. You can test your proposed principle or act by imagining a world in which the opposite principles were in play. You ask yourself if that world would be an ethical world in which you would want to live. If not, then your proposed principle or action is not ethical. The principles for ethical living are established through reason prior to taking action and once established you are not concerned with the outcomes to confirm or disconfirm your established principles. No matter the outcome, if the act was deemed *a priori* to be ethical then it is, by definition, ethical.

Kant's favored example was that of lying. Kant reasons that lying is not ethical. He then asks, "Would I want to live in a world in which lying was permissible?" The answer is "no" as, in such a world you would never know who to trust or when to trust. As the ability to trust each other is fundamental to a good world, lying is unethical. We do not need to rehearse here all of the critiques made of Kant's example but only to note that, for a deontologist, it is possible to determine ethical principles upon which to fashion an ethical life. There is a further detail to Kant's *deontology*. Kant believed that the fundamental principle of human life was to preserve each person's dignity as a human being without concern for who the person is or what that person can do. In other words, a person's ability to do certain things in the world does not add to her/his dignity. Each of us is born with full dignity and it is our ethical task to preserve and protect that dignity. A favored image of the implications of this comes in the form of a brief story.

> Two men are the sole survivors of ship wreck and find themselves on a lifeboat with enough rations for one of them to survive until they are rescued. One of the survivors has the cure for cancer and if s/he dies, the cure dies with her/him. The other is a trash collector. Under the consequentialist banner, the cancer cure person is more valuable to the world than the trash collector as the former person will maximize the well-being of a large swathe of humanity. The trash collector's task can be fulfilled by anyone. Therefore, the cancer cure person should receive all the food available. In a deontological approach, however, each person's dignity has nothing to do with what s/he can provide to the world. Each person is fully dignified in a fundamental way. Therefore, the rations will be divided equally between them.

Naturalism

Naturalism begins in the premise that we usually have a natural response to a situation that is, usually, properly ethical in character. That is, we have a "gut feeling" that guides our ethical determinations and this natural response should not be dismissed (as it is with consequentialism and deontology). For the most part we intuitively know what is right. Most ethicists find this approach questionable as it can easily be shown that our intuitions are grounded in personal and cultural histories that might lead us to act in quite suspect ways that are more rooted in narcissism than ethics. It belongs in the "normative" approach, however, because a natural ethicist is trying to determine the right behaviors that will mark an ethical life.

Virtue Ethics

A fourth normative approach, *virtue ethics*, does not rely on maximizing the good, on establishing eternal principles of ethically living or determining ethical choices on the basis of intuition. Rather a person will know s/he is acting ethically if s/he is fulfilling a virtuous life. This is a matter of cultivating an inner state such that her/his actions will be informed by a virtuous character. In this case an outside viewer cannot determine the ethical goodness of a person's actions by evaluating the actions themselves either through a consequentialist or deontological lens. One can only determine that the person's actions are ethical because s/he is known to be a virtuous person. Such a person might do very different actions in the face of the seemingly same situation (although no situation is identical to any other situation) and still be ethical because s/he is motivated by particular virtues. The Greeks had a set of four virtues which constitute a virtuous life: A love of wisdom (which is not a love of knowledge but, rather, a love of knowing what is proper to do with the knowledge one has), courage (the ability to do what one deems is right), a love of justice (defined as a world in which everyone gets what they need, not necessarily what they want but, rather, what they need) and temperance (living a life of moderation in all things). To the degree that a person is known to love wisdom and justice, be courageous and live in moderation, to that degree that person is a virtuous person. There are more modern virtues, such as honesty, but the principle of a virtuous existence remains. In sum, we cannot determine an ethical life by externalities. Rather we trust that if a person is truly virtuous then every action s/he takes is virtuous.

Feminist Ethics

More recently some ethicists have developed a feminist version of ethics which is non-normative and based in the fostering of ethical relationships *between* people rather than finding the proper rules and principles for ethical living. Nel Noddings (1986), in particular, has well-developed this approach. The basis of her thinking is as follows. An ethical relationship is dyadic. That is, there are two people fulfilling different roles but they are necessary to each other for there to be an ethical relationship. There is the *care-giver* and the *one-cared-for*. The *care-giver's* responsibility is to set aside her/his personal interests and concerns and become engrossed in the *one-cared-for*. The *cared-for's* responsibility is to acknowledge that care

is being given. If the *cared-for* does not so acknowledge then the ethical relationship is broken. This is why there is a necessary linkage between the two. Note that there is no mention of the form care will take and no mention of particular actions. Rather, the *care-giver* will determine, at the time, what is efficacious for care, given the other person and the circumstances. The most important characteristic of this approach is that there is a bond between the two and the maintenance and development of this bond is what constitutes ethical action. In that sense, unlike the other systems, there is no "content" to the ethics but only a relationship characterized as "care."

Levinasian Ethics

The above approaches share several commonalities. They focus upon products that can be used to make ethical decisions (rules, definitions of issues, principles for taking actions). They uniformly rely upon reason to arrive at moral conclusions and to guide moral actions (thus they are cognitive in character). They share the notion that there are ascertainable moral premises we can develop through the use of reason. We will find, in our exploration of Levinasian ethics, that these concerns for products, premises, and reason are set aside in favor of a state more fundamental to human life. That is, rather than quarrel with normative ethics, this approach will describe a state of affairs that creates the foundation for all of these approaches. This foundational ethics might be manifested in any of these systems, but it, itself, points us in a different direction for living ethically that only finds itself manifested in rules and the like when we do not see the ground upon which we stand. Taking this view, even if one should opt for a particular form of normative ethics, the practice of that ethics will be greatly improved by considering the ideas in Levinasian ethics.

A Schematic of the Levinasian Presentation

Levinas's two major works are *Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority* and *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*. The latter book was Levinas's attempts to correct what he understood, through Derrida's critique of the first book (2001), to be flaws and difficulties with that first book. Specifically Levinas, in the second book, attempts to undermine a structuralist tendency based on the fact that he engages in a set of dualisms to present his ethics. The subtitle of the second book ("beyond essence")

works to move away from the essentialist tendency of structuralism which describes a rigid, underlying structure that informs human culture and consciousness. In this presentation of Levinas, I shall present both of these texts intermixed as they present substantially the same case but provide differing strengths for understanding Levinasian ethics.

Totality and Infinity opens with an extended meditation on what constitutes a desire for a moral life. If we think of ethical life as a pursuit of goodness, Levinas's attention to moral motivation is central and crucial as the desire to do good is intimately coextensive with what is goodness. "Desire" as a central motivator of our actions interjects emotion into ethical life. Unlike the usual notion that emotions mislead us in ethics (a central tenet of Western philosophy since Plato) judging what is a correct moral action arises within a relationship with another person with the immediate force of desiring to act upon that moral judgment. Rather than moral judgments as separate moments cut off from our experiencing the world and rather than ethics as a prethought system, ethics becomes a lived moment to which we can be available if we so choose and have the understanding and wherewithal to be available to its imprecations. In Levinas ethics does not function separately from our acts of living. It is core to them.

Following Levinas's exposition on desire, in the rest of *Totality and Infinity* he explores human life in two dimensions: interiority (living for oneself) and exteriority (living for an other). Interiority functions through acts of totalization, bringing the world within the self's control for purposes of solidifying one's self as central to living. Exteriorization is the recognition of the infinity of the Other, grounded in the way the world resists the self's project of using the world. The word t*otality* synopsizes the act of a person forming a self who can function in the world for that self. As Levinas is descriptive in character, this image of the self is not decried or praised. The formation of a self is simply a necessary act. After all, without a self, how could there be a self who is ethical? On the other side, *infinity* synopsizes the recognition that there is something/someone outside the self. Thus, the term in the subtitle to the book ("An Essay on *Exteriority*") suggests that each of us has been dwelling on the interior of ourselves, cut off from the world around us in a direct manner and, now, in this life of ethics, each of us achieves an exterior understanding. What we recognize in our exterior understanding (the full presence of an Other) is imaged by Levinas as *face*. The encounter with *face* is the necessary moment in which ethics is born. As with *totality*, *infinity*, and all that it means, this describes how ethics emerges, rather than prescribing how to act. As each of us moves from a stance of *totality* to a stance of recognizing

infinity as a crucial dimension of each of our existences we do not abandon our tendencies to totalize which remains part of how we negotiate everyday life. Rather, with exteriority each of us enters into ethical relationship.

Some may take the above as a structuralist account of ethics (totality/infinity as a dialectic). However, as I have already noted, Levinas was very clear that he was not a structuralist. Structuralism is, at its base, an unvarying armature of paired terms (dialectical partners) which exists below the surface of everyday experience but provides the necessary structure for everyday life to make sense. Thus man/woman provides the structure of gender which then helps us recognize features of our lives that are distributed across this dialectic and use those features to fashion a self. A particular culture may respond to this dialectic in one way and another culture in another way but the underlying structure remains intact and the same for both. This underlying structure is eternal and omnipresent. We can trace many seemingly different material phenomena back to this one underlying structure. The structure is not in process; it is static although how it is employed in any particular cultural setting varies widely. Levinas, on the other hand, is focused not on the invariant of identity (I am a man *or* I am a woman) but on the *process* of self-formation and its meaning for living the possibility of ethics. Ethics does not exist in a vacuum nor is it a matter of either/or structures such as good/bad, sin/righteousness, self/other out of which we construct actions, rules, and concepts to guide our ethical life; it responds to the specifics of the world. Ethics is a matter of *becoming* present to the world around us in a way that begins in our recognition of *being in relationship* to a world. Levinasian ethics does deal in dualisms, but these dualisms are not dialectically opposed/connected dialectics such as those above nor, for instance, such as man/woman. Rather each dualism comprises a structure and a prestructure such as, from Levinas, *the said* and *saying* in which *the said* is the words I hear from someone and *saying* is what occurs prior to my response to the world as I congeal my *saying* into *the said*. *Saying* affords a "knowing" that precedes specific knowledge I have of the world around me. *The said* is what I utter into the world. This distinction creates a tension (in this case between *the saying* and *the said*) which provides the context for seeing another person in her/his infinity. This description, however, runs ahead of a more thorough discussion. It is provided only as an initial sense of the terrain in which we will be living. It will be elaborated once I begin to discuss underlying dualisms. For now it is enough to understand that each partner is an echo of the other, not an opposition of the other.

With this in mind I proceed to a discussion of Levinasian ethics. I begin with his discussion of desire (which includes an examination of what is termed moral motivation) and then proceed to the totality/infinity discussion.

Levinasian Ethics Begins in Metaphysical Desire

Levinas begins *Totality and Infinity* with the following insight. There is a self who has a Metaphysical Desire. This desire of metaphysics is a desire for that which is not visible and never could be visible but is radically other. Metaphysics is concerned with "a line outside-of-oneself, toward a yonder." Metaphysics exists in the sense of believing that "The true life is absent" meaning that I look other than to this world of material life for a true life. Levinas means by this that I am "turned toward the 'elsewhere' and the 'otherwise' and the 'other.'" I am turned from being at home in this world "toward an alien outside-of-oneself, toward a yonder." (T.I., p. 33). Levinas further characterizes the desire for this "other" as

> No journey, no change of climate or of scenery could satisfy the desire bent toward it. The metaphysically desired is not "other" like the bread I eat, the land in which I dwell, the landscape I contemplate, like, sometimes myself for myself, this "I," that "other." I can "feed" on these realities and to a very great extent satisfy myself, as though I had simply been lacking them. Their alterity is thereby reabsorbed into my own identity as a thinker or a possessor. The metaphysical desire tends toward something else entirely, toward the absolutely other. (T.I., p. 33)

It is important to note that what is normally other to me (such as the food I eat, the places I travel, and the place in which I live) is not actually other. "Other" is reserved for something truly other and which will never be absorbed into myself such that it becomes part of me.

This notion of desire is not the normal notion of desire. Unlike our normal needs and desires, the Metaphysical Desire "cannot be satisfied" because what it desires is "beyond everything that can simply complete it." This Metaphysical Desire is predicated on "remoteness."

> This remoteness is radical only if desire is not the possibility of anticipating the desirable, if it does not think it beforehand, if it goes toward it aimlessly, that is, as toward an absolute, unanticipatable alterity, as one goes forth unto death. Invisibility [of the metaphysically desired] does not denote an

> absence of relation; it implies relations with what is not given, of which there is no idea. (TI, p. 34)

Metaphysics deals with what is beyond the material (in all its forms). It "desires the other beyond satisfactions, where no gesture by the body to diminish the aspiration is possible, where it is not possible to sketch out any known caress nor invent any new caress." In contrast to this Metaphysical Desire ("a desire that cannot be satisfied" [T.I., p. 34]), we may speak, so Levinas writes, of

> desires satisfied, or of sexual needs, or even of moral and religious needs. Love itself is thus taken to be the satisfaction of a sublime hunger.…our desires and love…are not pure. The desires one can satisfy resemble metaphysical desire only in the deceptions of satisfaction or in the exasperation of non-satisfaction and desire which constitutes voluptuosity itself. (T.I., p. 34)

Metaphysical Desire is of another order altogether: "the metaphysical desire has another intention; it desires beyond everything that can simply complete it. It is like goodness—the Desire does not fulfill it, but deepens it." (T.I., p. 34). This Metaphysical Desire animates our ventures into life, whether we will it or not. It may be argued, for instance, that everything that a person does in life is dedicated toward the person having more happiness. No matter how perverse the actions may seem to us, for that person it is these actions which may lead toward more happiness. Having achieved this happiness, however, does not complete the desire for happiness. There is always more that can be said of happiness, and the actions taken are motivated by that which can never be fulfilled. Substitute the words "metaphysical desire" for "happiness" and you will understand what Levinas is describing.

Note that Levinas has asserted that we desire the absolutely other, that this Metaphysical Desire is directed toward that which is not of us and could not be of us. What is meant, then, by "absolutely other?" Levinas explains:

> Besides the hunger one satisfies, the thirst one quenches, and the senses one allays, metaphysics desires the other beyond satisfactions, where no gesture by the body to diminish the aspiration is possible, where it is not possible to sketch out any known caress nor invent any new caress. A desire without satisfaction which, precisely, understands the remoteness, the alterity, and the exteriority of the other. (p. 34)

Note the words "remoteness…alterity…exteriority." These form central dimensions of Levinasian ethics. Whereas in much human endeavor, the idea is to bring people closer, to feel that closeness as a safe place, here the ethical relationship is in opposition. The ethical relationship is an experience of remoteness (not near, distant, and high), radically other (alterity), wholly outside of who each of us is and who we have become (exteriority). Any other state makes the other no longer other but turns the Other into us. Bringing close is to risk the possibility of never encountering the other *as other* but only finding something of ourselves in the other. Thus, what seems, on the surface, to be other and remote is made to be the same as you or me and, therefore, no longer remote. In this failure of otherness, the metaphysical Desire cannot be fulfilled (although, ironically, for it to be metaphysical it will never be fulfilled). In short, the desire for connection is directly in opposition to closeness. Levinas continues:

> For Desire this alterity…has meaning…as the alterity of the Other and of the Most-High. The very dimension of height is opened up by metaphysical Desire. That this height is no longer the heavens but the Invisible is the very elevation of height and its nobility. To die for the invisible—this is metaphysics. This does not mean that desire can dispense with acts. But these acts are neither consumption, nor caress, nor liturgy. (T.I., pp. 34–35)

Here Levinas stresses the notion of "height": The ethical relationship is an heteronomous relationship rather than an homogenous relationship. In the homogenous relationship the other becomes homogenously the same as me (I consume the other). This is in direct contradiction to the desire to know something other than myself. Further, Levinas characterizes this height as invisible and noble, stating "to die for the invisible—that is metaphysics." What might Levinas mean by "die?" He does not mean this literally. He means we are dying to our own tendency to encompass the other in our own worlds, in our own desires. We are dying to our egos as the center of the universe. This sounds very like many Eastern religions and, I would argue, Levinas might be read in that way except that he is not prescribing a spiritual practice so much as recognizing a more or less "natural" state we are already in. This desire is lodged in us in a way that no material hunger or emotional hunger can comprehend. Animated by this Metaphysical Desire, we also hold ultimate hope, whether or not we will it. There is no other way to understand the politically charged person who declares her desire to pursue a good society even against all odds and not

give in to despair. David Purpel (personal communication), when asked once, what constituted spirituality for him, replied that given the terrible state of the world and the ways in which no one seems to be paying attention to this state in ways that appear, to him, to be defensible or moving us in the right direction, while he might be tempted to despair, somehow he persists in his work of trying to move us toward a better world. He could not explain this motivation for it made no logical sense and yet it persisted. For him, the spiritual is found in this persistence which cannot be explained or understood and, yet, continues. Just so, Metaphysical Desire and ultimate hope are words for marking something that has no logical explanation and yet persists in animating us.

In sum, the desire to experience something which is not us (radically other, radical alterity) and, more than this, to feel a connection with something outside the self, this is the *beginning* of ethics, although it is not ethics itself. Further, the desire to experience that which is not us is accompanied with the Metaphysical Desire for goodness of which, to repeat, we could never have enough. There is never enough goodness in the world nor could there be. These two coupled desires with which we are born are the basis for the possibility of ethics. They are not yet ethics but without them ethics would not exist.

Totality

Metaphysical Desire links to Levinas's notion of "totality." What is "totality?" Levinas writes of totalization as using reason to organize the world: "Because reason is the practice of breaking into parts and reassembling within a totality, objectification and thematization, it cannot lead to society, finally. Reason leads to the loss of ipseity of the I." (TI, p. 120) Reason breaks apart what is whole in order to reassemble it into a form the person can use to form the self. However, in the process the *I* that is fluid and always in a state of becoming is lost and, so also, is ethics. This act of reason takes the Other and makes of that person "[a]n existence…reflected in the thought of the others, and…in the totality, does not express me, but precisely dissimulates me." (TI, p. 178) To be "reflected in the thought of the others" is to lose contact with the person totalized through the act of labeling and categorizing the other. The label or category is made to speak for the other person as if it is accurate and complete. The label makes of the other something understandable but also, as Levinas puts it, making other same; the Other is subsumed under the label/category and

is made useful for some project through its transformation into something already known, thus making other same. This is the idea of *totality* and *totalization*.

Levinas contrasts such totalization with "absolute exteriority of the metaphysical term." There is that in the world which resists and/or refuses such totalization, thus is metaphysical because it is beyond our capacity to "know" it. It exists exterior to us and, unlike labels and categories which are of "this world," this resistance is "claimed by the word transcendent." (p. 35), as it is beyond the world we occupy. The distance of the metaphysical "is distinctive in that the distance it expresses, unlike all distances, enters into the *way of existing* of the exterior being." It is not a physical distance (the "something" may be physically quite close) but, rather, a psychic distance that is unbridgeable. This exterior being cannot be totalized, cannot be subsumed into the person and become her/his possession. This is part of what makes it radically other. It is desired and desirable precisely because "[i]ts formal characteristic, to be other, makes up its content." (p. 35) "Thus the metaphysician and the other cannot be *totalized*. The metaphysician is absolutely separated." (p. 35). This separation is crucial to the emergence of the ethical relationship as the distinction between the interior and exterior and between the physical and the metaphysical is at the heart of Levinas's ethics.

Levinas makes another move that establishes the conditions for an ethical relationship. He transposes a more general notion of a person into the personal *I*. This may seem strange since most people would say that s/he knows who *s/he* is. But that is the point of this move. To say "I know who I am" is usually to reference a set of attributes. But, in order for a person to enter into an ethical relationship with another person, that person must first understand her/himself as an identity, rather than the bundle of various kinds of referential contents (man or woman, husband or wife, teacher or business owner, black or white, and so forth, these are "contents" of a self). This personal *I* identity is one of those "contents" but it is also different from them in that it is an undifferentiated self as "[t]he I is not a being that always remains the same, but is the being whose existing consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity throughout all that happens to it. The I is identical in its very alterations." (TI, p. 36). This *I* presents "the point of departure" for the ethical relationship to emerge. This *I* is not the usual personalism of a subjectivity caring only for itself. Rather it is a fluid self. This *I* undergoes "all that happens to it" and, yet, "is identical in its very alterations." That is, while the *I* may undergo

many changes, there is, at its core, a constancy that eludes the representations and changes in the midst of those representations and changes. This dialectic of change/stability is a dynamic relationship that grounds the capacity to "know" the Other in the Other's radical alterity/separation.

Levinas enters his discussion of totality through the twinned images of "Interiority and Economy." (This will be in contrast to the ethical relationship which is grounded in exteriority and not in an economic world.) In so doing, Levinas establishes the relationship between evolving a self (the building of an interior life) by using what the self finds in the world. The self treats the world in economic terms: exchanges, resources, manufacturing, employment, and so forth. Levinas's use of economics, however, over against the usual economic grounds of food, shelter, and so forth, becomes transformed into one dimension: enjoyment. Levinas stresses that the self seeks enjoyment as s/he works with and wends her/his way through the world, assembling what is necessary for the crafting of the self.

How does a person begin to make a self? For Levinas deployment of reason is central. Levinas writes, "… reason is the practice of breaking into parts and reassembling with a totality, objectification and thematization." (p. 119) What the person finds in the world is submitted to reason which is put to the service of enjoyment. "For the I to be [to exist] means neither to oppose nor to represent something to itself, nor to use something, nor to aspire to something, but to enjoy something." (p. 120) Levinas is declaring that we cannot nakedly appropriate the world but must confront the world for what it is and "enjoy it." He argues that we "live from" the earth (it is not simply available to us). This "living from" involves being in touch with the earth and the body is that vehicle for such in-touchness. The "in-touchness" is reciprocal as "same determines other while being determined by it" (TI, p. 128). "Same determines other" means that we take what is offered around us and determine how we will use it. Simultaneously the other is not simply put to our devices but has some "say" in how it is used; it does not easily yield to our plans. (Ethics and exteriority will arise in the face of that in the world which entirely refuses our using of it: another person.) This "living from" is accomplished through

> the body whose essence is to accomplish my position on the earth…to give me as it were a vision already and henceforth borne by the very image that I see. To posit oneself corporeally is to touch an earth…the touching finds itself already conditioned by the position, the foot settles into a real which this very action outlines or constitutes… (TI, p. 128)

What visceral images Levinas provides? We touch the earth with our bodies and are as conditioned by that touching as we condition the earth through our touching. In the former (we are conditioned) we find that the world is not easily appropriated. Levinas writes that "[t]he body is a permanent contestation of the prerogative attributed to consciousness of 'giving meaning' to each thing; it lives as this contestation." (TI, p. 129). Our bodies are the site of contestation; contestation is a physical, material experience, not merely an intellectual understanding of the difficulties of totalization. At the same time the world contests and conditions our freedom to act in it. As such "[t]he world I constitute nourishes me and bathes me." (TI, P. 129) The body will be important to understanding how aesthetics can have a role in the development of ethical consciousness even though, as is clear, Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity* links the body entirely with interiority and totalization.

What are the processes with which a person crafts a self? Levinas presents a set of dualistic partners (saying/said, expression/action, sensible/symbol) which I would argue are used by a person to fashion a self but also contain the possibility of experiencing exteriority (that which sets up the conditions for fulfilling the Metaphysical Desire and ethics). Each of these dualisms is characterized by one partner (saying, expression, sensible) existing in a state prior to material manifestation, prior to our congealing them into something we do (said, action, making of symbols). That is, saying, expression and sensible are not actions in the world but states of being that lead to acts in the world (said, action, making symbols). They contain a potential for anything (a kind of infinity state which is the opposite of the state of totalization in which we, for the most part, live) before they are brought under the control of the self to appropriate the elements of the world useful to the self's construction. In what follows I develop Levinas's description of these dualisms.

Saying/The Said

In *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, Levinas opens with the concern that a person's interest in transcendence (in being other than that person's being) can quickly become self-interest in which, once again, the person sees the world as a place s/he co-opts for personal interests rather than in responsibility for the Other. He notes that when a person wishes to transcend, it is a wish to "[pass] over to being's *other*, otherwise than being. Not *to be otherwise*, but *otherwise than being*. And not to not-be…not.… equivalent to dying." (OTB, p. 3) A person wishes to be otherwise than who s/he is, to be more than oneself and yet, also, still oneself. Each of us

has the tendency to meet the moment of transcendence, of being *otherwise than being* by filling the ensuing "void…with the mute and anonymous rustling of the *there is*." (OTB, p. 3) (Levinas uses the locution *il y* a as a shorthand to bring this to mind.) The world that already exists (il y a) forecloses uncertainty as each of us experiences being otherwise than being. "Being's essence dominates not-being itself." (OTB, p. 3) If "not-being" is the possibility of connection outside each self, then invoking being's essence reasserts itself as the locus and lodestone of existence, thus "filling up every interval of nothingness ["otherwise than being"—Ed.] which would interrupt [Being's] exercise.…essence is interest." (OTB, p. 4) We become grounded in forwarding each of our own self-interests, thus avoiding transcendence. This is the irony of the totalizing tendency. Without having a self we cannot transcend it but in the moment of transcendence each of us tends to return to and strengthen the self as the bastion of who we are, thus losing the opportunity for fulfilling the Metaphysical Desire of connection.

This does not mean it is impossible to transcend the self, only that it is difficult. What is to be done in the face of such intransigence? It is, I would argue, to begin to recognize the processes whereby the foreclosing of *otherwise than being* occurs. Levinas begins this recognition with the distinction of "the said and the saying." It is an

> inescapable fate…[that] being immediately includes the statement of being's *other* not due to the hold the *said* has over the *saying*…but…of a theology that thematizes the *transcending* in the logos…congeals it into a "world behind the scene."(OTB, p. 5)

This "world behind the scene" is not the metaphysical world but a theological phantasm that avoids confronting the divide between self and other, so necessary for an ethical relationship. At one point Levinas invokes Kierkegaard by referencing the "fear and trembling" this instills. Levinas is telling us to embrace this fear and trembling inspired by a focus on what each of us is not in this world. Levinas is emphasizing that *the saying* and *the said* are not transcendences to some ethereal place but both are connected to our material life together. This move to "being's *other*" removes each of us from contact with the other and, thus, from the possibility of that connection we seek outside ourselves. Prior to *the said* (which are statements each of us utters to communicate the sense we make of the world) is *the saying* which is "[a]ntecedent to the verbal signs

it conjugates…a forward preceding language…the proximity of one to the other…the original or pre-original saying…[that] weaves an intrigue of responsibility" (pp. 5–6). *The saying* is not words themselves but that which precedes putting into words our sense of the world. In the moment of "making sense" each of us already is making the world into something understandable through languaging the world into being and therefore foreclosing that moment of *otherwise than being* as words focus the world on what we already think we know of it, rather than being available to it in a naked manner. But, and I think this is central to Levinas, the capacity to be with the not-being, *the saying*, is what gives rise to our responsibility for an other, not as an extension of my or your-self but a being in her/his own right, thus "weaving an intrigue of responsibility." It is each of our tasks to become aware of *the saying* not for the purpose of controlling it but precisely in order to experience what it means to not be in control, ethically or otherwise. Control becomes an illusion whereby each of us thinks we can, in this case, act ethically (which means acting for another) when in fact each of us is acting each for ourselves, thus only acting in each of our own self-interests. (This is the irony of most ethics systems and education: a focus on the self acting for another forecloses, for Levinas, the possibility of ethics.)

It is not that *the saying* does not "move into language" as "saying and said are correlative of one another." *The saying* and *the said* are dialectically bound the each other so that the movement from prelanguage to language does not leave the prelanguage entirely behind (OTB, p. 6). "The correlation of the saying and the said [is] the subordination of the saying to the said, to the linguistic system and to ontology" which "is the price that the manifestation [of the saying] demands." (OTB, p. 6) Subordination does not mean disappearance but only a lesser status. Levinas is invoking a dialectic that gives equal place to both partners in the dialectical dance. The *said* (the conventional ethical thinking) ignores the *saying*, that which calls out to us truly from the other side. We must listen for *the saying* even as it congeals into concrete language that anchors it and makes it static. Without such awareness and even vigilance we will lose our access to *the saying*. As Levinas puts it, "We have been seeking the *otherwise than being* from the beginning, and as soon as it is conveyed before us it is betrayed in the said that dominates the saying which states it." (OTB, p. 7) "Betrayed" is strong language but this is how precarious is an ethical life.

Levinas proceeds to present us with a "methodological problem": "Whether the pre-original element of saying (the anarchical, the non-original as we designate it) can be led to betray itself by showing itself in

a theme [*the said*]…and whether this betrayal can be reduced." (OTB, p. 7) In order to avoid such betrayal or, at the very least, reduce it, "[t]he *otherwise than being* is stated in a saying that must also be unsaid in order to thus extract the *otherwise than being* from the said in which it already comes to signify but as *being otherwise*" (OTB, p. 7). To avoid congealing that which is Other into that which is known and allow the Other to "speak," we must let go of holding on to what we know.

How are we to accomplish such a letting go? Levinas offers the "pre-original vocation of the saying, by responsibility itself" (OTB, p. 6). "Vocation" suggests that *the saying* has a calling that exists before we are aware ("pre-original"). This calling is a source of motivation for responsibility which exists whether we will it or not. While we might ignore responsibility for the Other that does not make it disappear. It is at this moment (this "pre-original vocation of saying") that ethics begins. As with any precognitive state, we cannot will it into being (otherwise it would already be cognitive) but we can become available to it. The contention of this book is that the aesthetic consciousness is particularly available to becoming available to *the saying*. Many artists report "knowing" what he or she is about to make wholly prior to making it. Buber describes this as the "eternal source of art":

> [A] man (sic) is faced by a form which desires to be made through him into a work. This form is no offspring of his soul, but is an appearance which steps up to it and demands of it the effective power. The man is concerned with an act of his being. (1958, p. 9)

Bringing an artist's craft to bear upon the already-known-but-not-yet-known is an important component of the artistic process. Reducing betrayal of *the saying* seems in striking parallel to Buber's description of the artist. In the second chapter I will elaborate the aesthetic character of ethical life and develop the arguments further that ground this contention. For now, I offer this as a way in which the artist's way is not dissimilar to living ethically.

There is still another character to *the saying*: "primordial enigma" (p. 10). Primordial suggests something before time and form. Enigma suggests that *the saying*, given no form, presents a question that has no answer. Given conventional ethics' focus upon answers to ethical difficulties and questions, this is yet another instance of Levinas's different approach. Levinas is comfortable with uncertainty and an openness to ambiguity. In this ambiguous atmosphere, Levinas asks, "How can transcendence

[*otherwise than being*] withdraw from [being] while being signaled in it?" (OTB, p. 10). As *otherwise than being* occurs (the hope of the Metaphysical Desire) a person is, yet, called back to her/his concrete being and, so *otherwise than being* becomes simply more of the same, thus truncating, at best, the hoped for transcendence. Levinas, however, has an answer to this difficulty. He writes:

> The non-present {*the saying*] is in-comprehendable by reason of its immensity or its "superlative" humility or, for example its goodness which is the superlative itself. The non-present…is invisible, separated…the present is a beginning in my freedom, whereas the Good is not presented to freedom; it has chosen me before I have chosen it. No one is good voluntarily. (OTB, p. 11)

The saying is immense, it is humility in the face of the immensity, and it is the possibility of goodness which is not something we choose but it chooses us.

This notion of goodness choosing us seems quite important. So much of conventional ethics is about making good choices. Levinas is having us notice that when we make these choices they are not easy precisely because they demand of us and our freedom is limited by their demand. In the contemporary world with the great emphasis on freedom of choice and individuality, Levinas's ethics is quite opposite to how we value our living. What makes it important, however, is directly related to my earlier discussion of motivation in relation to Levinas's thinking. It is the very invisibility of the preoriginal saying, what is "not-yet" that grounds the possibility of the motivating connection to an Other for her/his own sake, not for my sake. This is not the purview of only the most "advanced" ethical people. Levinas is offering us a view into each of our own possibilities that already exists because we are all, already, aware of that which precedes, antedates what we know.

This relation of *the saying* and *the said* leads Levinas to another of the dualisms which inform his thinking, that is *sensibility* and *signification* (or as he also states it *the sensible* and *the sign*).

The Sensible and the Sign

Levinas writes of the sensuous lived experience in regard to his ethics. (The sensuous lived experience is a central character to what it means to

be living aesthetically.) He wants to emphasize time as core to ethics and time is about the passage of time, about change and process. As such he writes as follows:

> Things are discovered in their qualities but the qualities are in lived experience, which is temporal.…The sensible qualities—sounds, colors, hardness, softness—are attributes of things; but they also seem to be lived in time in the form of a psychic life, stretching out or dividing in the succession of temporal phases, and not only lasting or being altered in the measurable time of physicists. (OTB, p. 31)

Time is a matter of a flow of continuous "nows" ("now" is constantly invisible because it is constantly giving way to new "nows"). We can "look" into the future to imagine ourselves in other ways. As we do so the "nows" proceed without our noticing. The flow of time is constant and inexorable, at least from a lived experience perspective. *The saying* is like that, constantly unfolding *unseen* and yet at the ground of our *being said* i*n* the world. *The sensible*, too, is a matter of presence (primordial) versus noticing the qualities and making sense of them, using signs to do so. Of course I cannot make *signs* that signify what I am experiencing, the *saying* becoming *the said*, without "knowing" what does not exist (*the saying*, *the sensible*) but I also must understand that as I freeze *the sensible* and *the saying* into particular signs, significations, *the said*, *the sensible* and *the saying* is still itself, what cannot be known and said. If the congealing of *the saying* and *the sensible* into *the said* and *the sign* forestalls that life of contact with something outside myself, then attempting to notice the unfoldingness of experience, its sensuous life, is to hazard the possibility of becoming aware of another as Other, rather than as an extension of me. That is what I think Levinas is portraying and is what I think artists do in their work.

We must be clear of the dilemma that ethics can be lost to us. Levinas describes the transition from *the saying* and *the sensible* as a coagulation of time. The transition from *the saying* "constitute[s]…the irreversible, coagulate[s] the flow of time into a 'something,' thematize[s], ascribe[s] a meaning…take[s] up a position with regard to this 'something'…re-present[s] it to itself, and thus extract[s] itself from the labile character of time." (OTB, p. 37). That is, what begins in ambiguity and openness quickly becomes solid and knowable but in a way that can discredit the origins of what is known (and, thus, compromise the possibility of ethics). Given the use of the terms *saying* and *said* we must understand Levinas's

focus upon language as the location of his analysis. As such Levinas connects *the said* and *the saying* as a way of keeping the openness between the two partners. He does not "give priority to the said over the saying." It is necessary "… first to awaken in the said the saying which is absorbed in it." (p. 43) We can see that it is always possible to "know" that which precedes what we think we know (knowledge being the congealed names we use to name the world and make it our own). Levinas tells us that "*thus absorbed, [we] enter into the history that the said imposes.*" Our task is to know that there is a history that precedes what we know. This history, this primordial enigma has a meaning. Our task is to

> … go back to what is prior to this correlation…the active form of the said?… We must go back…on the hither side of the comprehending activity or passivity in being, the said, the logos…[this] involves a positive phase: to show the signification proper to the saying on the hither side of the thematization of the said. (OTB, p. 43)

The positive phase recovers our connection with the *saying*, the *sensible* that underwrites the *said* and *signification*.

This is the great difficulty with a Levinasian ethics. How do we do this? We find ourselves in the inevitable circumstance of turning *saying* and the *sensible* into concrete representations that remove us from the immediacy of them. In so doing, to reiterate, we lose the possibility of transcendence and, therefore, lose connection outside ourselves and, therefore, lose that ethical life that lives in radical alterity. We shall see that it is possible to not remain outside the ethical life but it is not through the usual means of cognitive, logical rationality which seeks to label, locate, and know.

Levinas summarizes, in the midst of *Otherwise than Being*, the essence of his ethics. He writes:

> Saying states and thematizes the said but signifies it to the other, a neighbor, with a signification that has to be distinguished from that borne by words in the said. This signification to the other occurs in proximity. Proximity is quite distinct from every other relationship, and has to be conceived as a responsibility for the other. It might be called humanity, or subjectivity, or self.…Nothing is more grave, more august, than responsibility for the other. (OTB, p. 46)

Here we find all of Levinas's ethics themes: the saying that is presaid, the primordial enigma; the presence of another person (ethics is always,

only between two people); proximity, an almost sensual image, is the location of this other person (distance will not do); and the birth of responsibility for this other person. Note that Levinas calls "responsibility for the other" "grave" and "August."

These are not light words and they carry to us the importance of this responsibility. It is not merely one ethical "good" among many but the core ethical good. Why is this? To reiterate from earlier in this book, the fundamental desire is connection outside of oneself and the discovery of this connection carries with it, surprisingly, goodness (of which you can never have too much) that is not freely chosen but is taken up in the difficulty of having been chosen by responsibility and goodness. That is, what I thought I wanted (connection) turns out to carry with it a demand I had not expected: The demand to take care of the Other, to protect her or him (even these are congealed categories that might interfere with living ethically), secure the world for her/him, notice and care for the fragility of the Other. Unlike feminist ethics in which there is a requirement that the cared-for acknowledge that care has been given, here there is no such requirement. There is only that I have been called, at last, to be present in all its difficulties (especially the difficulty of wanting my self to be fulfilled but this will not, in a Levinasian sense, be ethical at all since it is still "all about me").

Levinas makes a point at several moments that is important at this juncture. Levinas refuses the notion of politics as having to do with ethics. It is not that it is unimportant. It is important. However, politics requires the aggregation of a group of people under a banner (a *said*) that already takes each person's *saying* and congeals it into a category that denies the origin of the *said*. This is necessary if politics is to successfully achieve its ends and these ends are certainly legitimate. But they are not ethics per se. Similarly, Levinas leverages a pursuit of justice but reads backwards to what is truly ethical. Given today's strong focus on social justice in many social spheres, Levinas's discussion of justice is particularly pertinent.

What is the origin of justice for Levinas? He writes that the saying that leads to the said is "the putting together of structures which make possible justice and the 'I think.'" (p. 46) Justice requires "clarity…thought aims at themes." But we can only achieve these themes on the basis of a "prior signification proper to saying…antecedent to ontology." Levinas aligns the *said* with an object that is constructed on the basis of this *saying* and the *saying* is the subject which practices this congealing act. Justice is connected with ethics (but not in the political way) when we understand that

> The plot of the saying that is absorbed in the said is not exhausted in this manifestation. It imprints its trace…hesitates between…on the one hand structuration [justice—Ed.]…and, on the other hand, the order of [a] non-nominalized…other in which the said remains…a proposition made to a neighbor. (pp. 46–47)

The *saying* remains open even when it is thematized in the *said* as justice. The *saying* remains suspended between the structuration (justice) necessary to the *said* as language orders the *saying*. This moment, however, is offered to a "non-nominalized…other" who has not yet made into a thing, a *said*, a *sign*. "Non-nominalized" means not yet named, not yet subsumed within a pregiven sign, said, or category. The other is a more than just a name we give, more than just any kind of person; this other is a *neighbor* who lives in proximity and shares the earth in a very local condition. This other is not just any person with particular attributes (required by a political view) but a real person who exceeds all the *saids* I might impose upon that person. This other lives in a real space, real home, real neighborhood with attributes both seen and unseen (and yet causative of a certain kind of life). It is in this space that ethics is born.

This focus upon proximity and neighbor is the bridge from this one side of Levinas's ethics. This side has told the story of the self coming into being. It is important to remember that it is "coming into being," not the status of a being. Levinas's ethics is grounded in a constant process, a back-and-forthness between totality and what I will explore now: infinity. These are not exclusive categories but are necessary to the existence of each other. There can be no ethics without a self to be ethical. There can be no self that is complete unto itself. It only finds completion in another who becomes an Other. Without this, the self is alone, lonely, and unfulfilled.

Infinity

The "totality" section of *Totality and Infinity* is titled "Interiority and Economy." The "infinity" section of the book is titled "Exteriority and the Face." Could there be more different construals of life? While the self is built on institutionalizing the self through economic actions, ethical relation is built on something wholly human, having nothing to do with the institutions, social, and otherwise, within which we live. Levinas provides a précis of the move from interiorization to exteriorization, totality to

infinity. He writes that "I" am "able to see things in themselves…represent them to myself, refuse both enjoyment and possession, I must know how to give what I possess" (TI, p. 171). Recalling that for Levinas the making of a self relies upon enjoyment and possession of the world, he is noting this enjoyment and possession can cut a person off from others. To move toward the ethical, a person must refuse the enjoyment and possession, instead coming to "know how to give what *I* possess."

Giving away without reserve is the beginning of ethics, but not yet its end. Levinas continues, "Only thus could I situate myself absolutely above my engagement in the non-I….I welcome the Other who presents himself in my home by opening my home to him." (TI, p. 171) For ethics to exist I must open my home to the Other with home being both a metaphor for the self but also a necessary actual stronghold the self needs in order to build a self. One must share this safe haven as the Other asks to enter my home. In this generosity exists the possibility of ethics. Levinas continues, "The calling into question of the I, coextensive with the manifestation of the Other in the face, we call language." (TI, p. 171).[1] Language calls the *I* into question by offering an explicit invitation to the Other. As I hear myself do this I interrupt my hypnosis upon myself. To the emergence of language as a vehicle for ethics, Levinas adds education, writing,

> The height from which language comes we designate with the term teaching. This voice coming from another shore teaches transcendence itself. Teaching signifies the whole infinity of exteriority. (TI, p. 171)

"The height from which language comes" references the exteriority of the Other whose "voice com[es] from another shore," teaching "transcendence," or the metaphysical. This "teaching signifies the whole of exteriority," signifies ethics. But teaching does not simply signify (is not simply something that represents this whole). Rather, "the whole infinity of exteriority is not first produced, to then teach: teaching is its very production." (TI, p. 171) Teaching produces ethics and we are taught by that which is exterior to us. Furthermore, "[t]he first teaching teaches this very height, tantamount to its exteriority, the ethical." (TI, p. 171) In the teaching which produces this knowing, Levinas invokes the words "height," "exteriority," and "the ethical." This is significant as for Levinas, the relationship to the Other (which constitutes ethics) is a relationship of uneven height with the Other above me. The Other is removed from me in an heteronomous relationship. This passage provides the bridge we

need from interiority and the economics of making a self (totality) to seeing that there is that which is exterior to us which is infinite (beyond our categories, our control and our ability to use) and which is above us. And, notice: All of this "comes from another shore" (the shore of Metaphysical Desire) which is "transcendence itself." We began in Metaphysical Desire and here we find its fulfillment. It is not, however, a satiation that ends our Desire but only increases our Desire for connection as you cannot have too much connection, too much goodness.

This is how Levinas brings totality and infinity together in order to reveal the source of ethics as well as that which constitutes the ethical relationship. There is more to be said about infinity and the face which will detail what it means to be in ethical relationship. We shall find here a kind of poetry of living which is, I submit, both an aesthetic move (knowing through our body, senses, emotions, and intuitions) and a move that does not draw on language as its vehicle even though we are using language to point in its direction. I turn to Levinas's notion of "the neighbor" with whom I live in "proximity." I will then turn to the quintessentially central notion of "face."

Face, Proximity, Neighbor

Levinas approaches *face* through a discussion of *proximity* to a *neighbor*. Of *proximity* he writes,

> proximity…is an immediacy older than the abstractness of nature. Nor is it fusion; it is contact with the other. To be in contact is neither to invest the other and annul his alterity, nor to suppress myself in the other. (OTB, p. 86)

Proximity is immediate (there is no time to think, it simply exists, is). Proximity is not fusion; I do not lose myself in the other (thus totalizing and making other same). This must be so as the ethical relationship is grounded in that desire for connection and if I lose myself, then I lose the opportunity for connection just as if I make the Other into something I already know removes her/his alterity and, again, loses the capacity for connection.

What is proximity like? Proximity to a neighbor does not begin in something conscious and planned. Rather,

> The neighbor concerns before all assumption, all commitment consented to or refused. I am bound to him (sic), him who is, however, the first one on the scene, not signaled, unparalleled; I am bound to him before any liaison contracted. He orders me before being recognized. (OTB, p. 87)

What are the characteristics of this relationship? The neighbor, as a human being, is not the assumptions I make of her/him, not the commitments we have constructed. S/he is not even "there" yet, preceding me "on the scene" and "I am bound to him before any liaison contracted." That is, the possibility of neighbor exists before a real, flesh and blood neighbor appears. In heteronomic fashion, "he orders me before being recognized." That is, I am below her/him, I am called into responsibility before her/him before I know anything. This relationship to a neighbor, this proximity, is "an obsession, a shuddering of the human" in which "I am first a servant of a neighbor, already late and guilty for being late." Levinas is telling us that our relationship to the other is all one way and all consuming (an obsession) as I am "commanded, without interiorizing by representation and concepts." In short, I am commanded to not totalize through "representation and concepts" which would make of the other a person no longer separate from me, no longer other but simply and extension of me.

In an ethical relationship, Levinas tells us, I do not ask myself: "What then is it to me? Where does he (sic) get the right to command? What have I do not to be from the start in debt?" (OTB, p. 87). All these questions focus upon myself forming myself through my using of the world for myself. There is not, in them, the capacity for even beginning to address the Metaphysical Desire for connection. In this situation Levinas addresses the concern of how a person could experience this proximity that is before knowing, before cognition. (It is in this that I will be showing, in Chap. 3, that aesthetics and aesthetic consciousness is one avenue for this proximity and describing, in Chap. 4, some ways I cultivate this awareness.) Levinas asks, "Does proximity do with representation, ontology, logos?" (OTB, p. 87) That is, can I have an awareness of proximity, of the Other which speaks for her/his being (ontology), without translating it into a representation of the proximity and the Other, especially in the form of "the word" (logos)? To "receive the given…[as] the precursor of every relation" (OTB, p. 87) we must resist the impulse to name and represent. In this way I must become present to that which was there before my impulse to name and represent.

Levinas, putting the above in the form of a question, reveals the difficulty we have in being ethical. Recall that the conventional systems all require a cool state of mind grounded in forms of reasoning through naming and logical processes. Here there is no "state of mind" but, rather, a presence to the Other that precedes logic and reason and labeling, all of which redound upon the person doing the ethical thinking. "I" remain at the center of conventional systems. In Levinas it is the Other who is the ethical life. I do not, as already noted, disappear but neither do I take the Other and make sense of her/him. Rather, I encounter before I encounter. And this encounter comes with an "extreme urgency" which "jostles the 'presence of mind' necessary for the reception of the given… in which a phenomenon appears" (OTB, pp. 87–88). Levinas connects this "extreme urgency" with "obsession" and, in a recursive move, brings us back to that which is before cognition and yet is quite "real." *Proximity* is "known but is not a knowing." (OTB, p. 88) That is, it is known but without congealing into making sense in familiar ways.

When I acknowledge the neighbor I cannot be "indifferent." I can, of course, "take hold of [myself] for a present of welcome" but in so doing I have "already taken [my] distance, and miss the neighbor." (OTB, p. 88) This neighbor is no longer other than me. I have brought her/him over to my side and make her/him decipherable through the "present of welcome." The present, conventionally, seems appropriate but in fact it already freezes the other into my image and I no longer can see the Other in her/himself. My present overtakes her/him.

To be preferred is a state of not yet "knowing" that Levinas names the "face of the neighbor." He writes, "The face of a neighbor signifies… an unexceptional responsibility, preceding every free consent, every pact, every contract. It escapes representation; it is the very collapse of phenomenality." (OTB, p. 88) Levinas is fighting the tendency to represent, to turn something into a phenomenon. He is describing a leaving of the Other as the Other, not "an" Other which would make of the Other simply something among that which I already know. In contrast to this Levinas writes, "This *way* of the neighbor is a face….The disclosing of the face is nudity, nonform, abandon of self, aging, dying, more naked than nudity. It is poverty, skin with wrinkles which are a trace of itself." (OTB, p. 88). This is not the conventionally beautiful face but a real face "ageing, dying…naked…poverty, skin with wrinkles." I must be willing to be present to *this* face and not some face I wish was present (not some neighbor I wished was present).

Such a situation is not constant even if it grounds the ethical relationship. As soon as I notice this situation "[m]y reaction misses a present which is already the past of itself." A "present which is already a past of itself." The present moment already is no more but I am dwelling in that present which has become past when I categorize and make sense of the other. I have ceased being with the other or present to the other. This "past *of* the present"

> [alters] my contemporaneousness with the other….The delay is irrecuperable…My presence does not respond to the extreme urgency of the assignation. I am accused of having delayed…the neighbor reveals himself and delivers himself in his image…it is precisely in his image that he is no longer near. Already he allows me an "as for me,"…the contact is broken…the other appears to me as an entity in plastic form. (OTB, pp. 88–89)

"The delay is irrecuperable"—I cannot ever retrieve what has occurred with the Other while I was away in the past. As I am away there is, simultaneously, an "extreme urgency" for the connection to occur (the "assignation"). And while I am away I am "accused of having delayed." In my departure into the past the neighbor disappears from me, "is no longer near" and "the contact is broken." The possibility of connection is, for the time being, lost. This situation is inevitable. We vibrate between the interior (self) and the exterior (radically Other) as a "natural" course of life. However, this does not mean that the Other does not still have a hold on us in our desire for connection. How is this possible?

It is found in the face, "a trace of itself, given over to my responsibility." (OTB, p. 91). "A trace of itself" suggests the evanescent character of an ethical relationship. But in recognizing even that trace it is

> as though I were responsible for his mortality, and guilty for surviving. A face is an anachronous immediacy more tense than that of an image offered in the straightforwardness of an intuitive intention. In proximity the absolutely other, the stranger…is uprooted, without a country, not an inhabitant, exposed to the cold and the heat of the seasons. To be reduced to having recourse to me is the homelessness or strangeness of the neighbor. It is incumbent upon me. (OTB, p. 91)

I understand this face, this trace as "homeless" and "the stranger… uprooted, without a country…exposed to the cold and the heat." But what is "incumbent upon me?" It is incumbent upon me to not withdraw

into my selfness and need, but to acknowledge the need of the Other. The connection I experience is replete with guilt, with shame, with my sense of my own inadequacy and the face is homeless and strange. The face is not easy; the face will not yield to my sympathies or empathies. Or if it does, this will disturb the possibility of the ethical relationship. This may seem unusual as many approaches to ethics (especially the feminist approach) require an empathetic stance and here empathy is explicitly dismissed. But here, to "think ethically" is not to "fix" the person, to provide what we think the person needs but be humbled by the beauty of the Other who is fragile. Empathy and sympathy are oft-used words to talk about this but Levinas does not mean for us to invoke either one. Both empathy and sympathy are possible only when we translate the Other into something we already understand and keep our self preeminent (thinking to oneself: at least I am not in that condition).

If not empathy and sympathy then what? Levinas suggests passivity. In the "passivity of obsession" "consciousness no longer veils the unassumable assignation which comes from the neighbor…it puts into question the naïve spontaneity of the ego." The ego can turn the Other into a theme that binds disparate elements of experience together (thus obliterating the Other). But in so doing, the ego has already

> slipped away from its responsibilities to which I…am bound and for which I cannot ask replacements….It is the obsession by the other, my neighbor, accusing me of a fault which I have not committed freely, that reduces the ego to a self on the hither side of my identity, prior to all self-consciousness and denudes me absolutely. (OTB, p. 92)

"A fault which I have not committed freely." I did not wish to fall back into my ego but this is both natural and inevitable. But my neighbor insists I pay attention and move to "the hither side of my identity" which "denudes me entirely." Just as the neighbor is seen in her/his nakedness, nudity, and poverty, so I know this about myself, but only when I acknowledge the proximity of the neighbor in her/his radical alterity. In contrast, empathy and sympathy are ways of shoring up the ego, of protecting it from its own inadequacy and from that accusation. Only when I become open to the accusation and realize the necessary passivity which will not displace the other, become "absolutely denuded" can I begin to be "sincere."

> This passivity is the way opposed to the imperialism of consciousness open upon the world. (OTB, p. 92)

Imperialism is a strong word that indicates what happens when we act upon our knowledge: we take over the other and never see her/him. It is in the seeing-by-giving-up that the Other begins to be present. Culturally we are afraid of being passive. However, passivity is not a "congenital and lamentable powerlessness," not a "troubled tranquility." (OTB, p. 92). I give up something which might be understood as "the sadness of flowing away of things" but, at the same time, it is precisely in this that the ethical relationship is born. Levinas describes this as "the most lucid humanity of our time" as it brings us "insomnia" in which we are truly there for another by not pretending that we know the other.

I will attempt to summarize the above discussion knowing that this runs the danger of turning the *saying* into *the said*. Ethics is the relationship between two people such that one person, who has been laboring, through a transformation of *saying* into *said*, to gather the world to him/her as a resource for the creation of a self finds that the world is not easily cooperative. Resistances are experienced. Given the Metaphysical Desire for connection and the calling to one for goodness, encountering an other who entirely resists one's imprecations, there is a sudden feeling of the emerging/emergence/infinity of an Other who cannot be brought within the fold of the self. This other becomes an Other through my encounter with the face of the Other who is, always, in proximity to me. The relationship of responsibility is born and borne and I am called upon to bring the world to the Other, to serve the Other who is beyond the *said* I might impose. It is this recognition of the infinity of the other which is always fragile as it can "fall into" becoming just another *said* that drives my actions (for ethics is, in the end, about action).

This synopsis presents the profound difficulty of not presenting a way into ethics as in a path to follow or "something to do." Given Levinas's emphasis upon passivity and "not knowing" ethics must begin not in doing but in being present, in being prior to there being a being that is capable of being present. There is the starting in wonder and not in answers. As I turn to aesthetics and the practice of art, it is with these qualities that I am working. In what follows I am not presenting a system to vie with other ethical systems but a way into living ethically, being ethical in a noncognitive immediate manner

With this in mind I turn to aesthetics and its relationship to ethics.

Note

1. This presents a challenge to Levinas' ethics since language is used to designate and categorize an other, "making other same" which is against the arising of ethics. Nevertheless, Levinas appears to rely strongly on language as the entrance to ethics.

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CHAPTER 3

Aesthetics, Body, and Ethics

Abstract In this chapter, Blumenfeld-Jones presents some philosophers who engage with the idea of moral imagination. He includes Levinasian comments on their work. These philosophers are John Dewey (through Steven Fesmire, John Dewey and moral imagination: pragmatism in ethics. University of Indiana Press, Bloomington, 2003), John Paul Lederbach (The moral imagination: the art and soul of building peace. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010) and Mark Johnson (Moral imagination: implications of cognitive science for ethics. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994). Bumenfeld-Jones also presents objections to the ethics/aesthetics intersection as well as objections to the arts. This is followed by a discussion of how Levinas is, at base, aesthetic and grounded in the body, emotions, intuitions, and imagination, especially through his invocation of sensibility. Blumenfeld-Jones finishes with a discussion of the practice of art and how it is parallel to ethical consciousness and can function as a base for addressing and enlivening ethical consciousness.

Keywords moral imagination • dramatic rehearsal • interiority • aesthetics • beauty

In this chapter, I develop the idea that aesthetics, in particular the process of making art, can contribute to the development of a Levinasian consciousness. I will present more of Levinas's thinking on sensibility in

D.S. Blumenfeld-Jones, *Ethics, Aesthetics, and Education*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55607-3_3

particular as the key to my presentation, as well as his objections to the arts and why I think he is wrong. I will present various philosophers who are willing to entertain the possibility of an aesthetics/ethics intersection. I will, in the midst of these discussions, suggest how Levinas might have responded to their ideas. Finally, I will return to Levinas to explore how his thinking is actually aesthetic in character and present an artist's perspective on thinking as a template for ethical consciousness.

In my exploration of aesthetics, I approach it from a bodily approach to art-making for developing an ethical consciousness. By "bodily aspect of art-making" I do not mean the art-form of dance per se, although dance is a bodily art-form. Rather, I mean that when making art, whether it be painting, sculpting, crafting, composing music, writing poetry, or other forms of art-making, the artist's body is an important component of the art-making. The body is important in the sense that the artist experiences the world through her/his body and this experience becomes the ground out of which s/he creates the actual "object." In the mediation of the artist's body in regard to experiencing the world lies the potential for developing an ethical consciousness. In making such assertions, I do not mean that artists are moral people nor that a particular person's mode of making leads that person toward a moral stance of the kind described in this book. Just so for all of us: we live through our bodies at all times, even when we are engaged in activity that seems to not be about our bodies, even as I type these words and you read them. We are not "necessarily" ethical because of this but our bodily knowing is part of our ethical knowing. This will be developed in this chapter and in Chap. 4 in which work to enliven ethical consciousness, bodily modes of knowing and doing will be important.

Where to begin this exploration? I will begin in skepticism as a way in, for, I would argue, it is best to confront the objections first in order to see what merits they have, and take them into account as a more "positive" story is told.

Is Art Acceptable as a Site for Ethics?

We will begin with general objections to thinking about art as a site for ethics and start, initially, with some simple objections. First, art is about artifice. Artists make things that are not "real" in the sense in which a locomotive is real or a sandwich is real. Artists make objects from their imaginations which are meant to stimulate our imaginations as we receive the art. Ethics is about very real situations in our lives: people starving, people

dying in what "just war theory" calls unjust wars, people being degraded by other people in many ways, and more, all of which are concrete and devastating. If art is about artifice and being artificial and ethics addresses very real, problematic situations, art appears to be a mismatch for ethics.

Second, the English word "art" derives from the Latin *ars* which means "skill method, technique, conduct, character" (from University of Notre Dame's on-line Latin dictionary). In this definition, the emphasis is upon actions without connection to the content of those actions. So, art could as well be made about and through what we might construe as unethical thinking, behavior, or intent and remain art (See Janet Wolff's study *The Social Production of Art* (Wolff, 1993) in which she examines the ways in which art, as made by the great artist solo, is really a production of all of society with those workers whose contributions to the artist's work are unseen and economically unrewarded. See Walter Benjamin's infamous statement that all works of art are, really, works of barbarity (Benjamin, 1969), as they are bought and sold by those who also buy, sell, and exploit many to accrue the wealth to buy the art or own the art or commission the art). Art is, at best, amoral and may even be immoral. At least this is the argument. And, in both these notions, artifice (artificial) and skilled execution, there is a distancing from what I might call "ordinary life." Art stands outside what is real and, therefore, can provide little help for ethics.

In a way, it is this distancing to which Levinas objects. Levinas discusses, briefly, "poetic activity" in the context of being concerned about how discourse can bring us into the presence of the Other. Discourse is lodged within the expression/action dyad in which expression is the primordial potential that congeals into taking actions in the world. We express ourselves and then we act. Expression is "originality" which "breaks with every influence" and is "foreign to all compromise and contamination." (TI, p. 202) Levinas declares expression to be "the straightforwardness of the face to face" which *is* the ethical relationship. (TI, p. 202) He continues:

> Expression does not consist in *giving* [emphasis in the original] us the Other's interiority. The Other who expresses himself (sic) precisely [takes action through such precision, transforming the openness of expression into the directedness of action – Ed.] does not *give* [emphasis in the original] himself, and accordingly retains the freedom to lie. (TI, p. 202)

Even if the Other lies, Levinas tells us that this ability to deceive "presuppose[s] the absolute authenticity of the face." (TI, p. 202) "What

we call face is precisely the exceptional presentation of self to self" through the agency of language. (TI, p. 202) These expressions, however, as they become actions (actual things said) can become "intoxicating equivocations…incantations…prayer becomes rite and liturgy, where the interlocutors find themselves playing a role in a drama outside of them." (TI, p. 202).

All of the above sounds strongly aesthetic but Levinas summarizes this description as "poetic activity" rather than ethical life. In writing of poetic activity, he writes that "poetic activity…influences…unbeknownst to us… envelop[s]…beguile[s]…as a rhythm…in a dionysiac mode the artist… becomes a work of art" as "opposed [to] each instant dispel[ing] the charm of rhythm…" In contrast, "Discourse is rupture and commencement, breaking of rhythm which enraptures and transports the interlocutors…" Discourse is "prose," not poetry (p. 204). Notice that poetry is covert, acting outside our ability to reason, acting "unbeknownst to us," and "beguiling" in a "dionysiac mode" through its "charm." Levinas counterposes poetry and prose, favoring prose as creating the kind of rupture necessary to dispel the spell under which the self sways in thinking itself self-sufficient. Poetry is simply too enchanting. When we couple this with the notion of art as artifice and as focus upon skillful execution without concern for what is being forwarded, we encounter the argument that a focus upon poetic activity blocks ethical life.

I must be clear here. Levinas, echoing Plato, asserts that art, like rhetoric, can never be a location for ethics. Given this book, it is obvious I think he is incorrect. Levinas does not distinguish between the process of making art and the experience of encountering art. In the following chapter, I am distinguishing between *the practice of art* and *the making of art for the purpose of making art*. That is, *the practice of art* is thinking/being-in-the-world in the way an artist is in the world. These processes which move us toward developing an "aesthetic consciousness" have parallels with Levinas's description of the ethical relationship or, in another way of putting it, living in ethical consciousness. On the other hand, it is clear that *making art for the purpose of making art* is a professional and career concern that does not necessarily lead to the capacity to live ethically. As I trace this part of his argument, I want to show in what ways an *aesthetic practice* can be directly linked to ethics. Here I will rehearse Levinas's arguments against art in order to show how he has not correctly understood the potential of art-making.

Levinas launches upon his discussion of art by distinguishing language (*signs*) as a verb rather than a noun. That is, a verb takes action in the world and a noun is an object. Ethics is a matter of constant presence and re-presence to the Other, not a thing (noun) to which I can point.

> … the dynamism of entities is designated and expressed by verbs…the red reddens…predicat[es] the essence of the red, or the reddening as an essence…*Essence* is not only conveyed in the said, is not only "expressed" in it but originally…resounds in it qua essence….Essence is not only conveyed, it is temporalized in a predicative statement. (OTB, p. 39)

This freezes the "dynamism of entities" into congealed objects. Art, when we are only concerned with the final product, also can be understood as frozen, congealed "saids" which is antithetical to ethics. The *saying*, the *sensible*, is the location of a fundamental essence, not yet known but sensed nonetheless. Our task educationally, is to help people develop this sensing capacity. Equally so, the Metaphysical Desire for connection desires something outside itself that is fundamentally separate and, in that sense, an essence not yet redeemed in language. When encountered, there is the possibility of freezing the essence into what is already known *or* staying open to its unknowability.

When Levinas turns to art, he labels it as "the pre-eminent exhibition in which the said is reduced to a pure theme…reduced to the Beautiful." (OTB, p. 40) However, he also notes that art is always seeking new sounds, new colors, and new possibilities which are not congealed into already known substances. Further he notes that "in the inexhaustible diversity of works…in the *essential renewal* of art colors, forms, sounds, words, buildings…recommence being…the essence they modulate is temporalized." (OTB, p. 40) This is parallel to his description of an ethics grounded in *the saying* and in *the sensible* (both of which are reliant on an ever unfolding time). His concern with art is that "every work of art is…without a world" and the need of the artist to label the art, to provide, in some cases, exegesis—in other words, in one way of another, to guide the art-experiencer in particular directions and, thus, congeal the unknowable into the already known.

I do not dispute Levinas's concern about *art practiced for the purpose of making art*. But, as I will argue in Chap. 3, Levinas misses an important component of his own discussion that appears to me to be very much *the practice of art*. It is, perhaps, paradoxical to invoke art (rejected by

Levinas) in the aid of a Levinasian ethics but this paradox is precluded by the fact that Levinas did not practice art but philosophy. In this, he does not understand what it is to make art, to see aesthetically, to live among uncertainty (which is core to his ethics).

On the other hand, and confusingly, the Greeks of Plato's era connected art and ethics. They did so by stipulating three areas of inquiry: epistemology (inquiry into true knowledge), ontology (inquiry into the meaning of existence), and axiology (inquiry into both what constitutes goodness [ethics] and what constitutes beauty [aesthetics]). In the history of Western philosophy, the questions about aesthetics have usually been deemed to be less important than questions about ethics and less frequently explored and when done so, little or no energy devoted to their intersection. I come back, however, to the Greeks gathering them under the one banner of axiology. So, clearly the Greeks thought there was a connection between "goodness" (ethics) and "beauty" (aesthetics). Moving toward more modern times, obviously, the English Romantic poets, perhaps especially Keats, saw a direct connection, thus Keats's notion that truth and beauty were directly related, such that what was beautiful must also be true and truth is always beautiful. I would argue, however, that even when this relationship was voiced there was little effort to understanding in what ways they are related. That is, of course, the fundamental task of this book and, especially, this chapter. So, how can we reconcile Levinas's and Plato's rejections with the Greeks connecting ethics and art and Keats's notion? Surely, if Levinas and Plato are correct, then we should not move in this direction.

My basic argument is as follows: while no piece of art might be directly connected with goodness, the act of making art holds the potential for enabling the maker to develop her/his ethics consciousness toward the kind of ethics described above because, using another Levinasian idea, art has to do with sensibility and, according to Levinas, so does ethics. Further on, in the chapter we will explore the relationship between imagination and moral life and find that not only does art have something to do with ethics, it can be seen as crucial to the development of the very ethical consciousness we desire to foster.

I will begin my "positive" exploration of the intersection of aesthetics and ethics by examining some scholars' notions of what is termed "moral imagination" as a stand-in for aesthetics. I will move from versions of moral imagination that are cognitive and, therefore, problematic from an aesthetic perspective toward a version of moral imagination that is strongly

aesthetic. The purpose of these discussions is to clarify what constitutes moral imagination and aesthetics and what does not. Along the way, however, we will find some notions that will be useful to us.

Moral Imagination and the Aesthetics/Ethics Intersection

A new scholarship in ethics has developed over the last 30 years or so (a serious and sustained scholarship although John Paul Lederach asserts that Edmund Burke used the term hundreds of years ago). This work begins in a different starting place from that of Plato or Kant. Unlike both Plato and Kant who rely on reason, this new scholarship features the term "moral imagination," challenging the notion that reason leads us toward warranted ethical conclusions and actions. In employing the term "imagination" there is an implied possibility for "art" as either a component of moral imagination or as a location for understanding how imagination functions ethically. While the arts do not exclusively "own" imagination, they are an acknowledged site of the play of imagination as well as a site of understanding how to systematically develop imagination. It is these connections (the more or less natural relation between them and art-making as a disciplined practice) that lead me to suggest the intersection between the arts and ethics in a way not often considered and certainly not considered by most, if not all, philosophers. I begin with Stephen Fesmire's work on John Dewey and moral imagination. I do so as Dewey has exerted such powerful influence on education thinking that we cannot ignore what he may have to teach us about moral imagination. As you will note, I think the notion of "moral imagination" applied to Dewey does not make sense as a full-blown embracing of the idea. Indeed I will try to show how rationalist and cognitivist are Dewey's notions (at least as reported by Fesmire) such that it does not make sense to seek an aesthetic understanding of moral imagination. I will follow this with a discussion of John Paul Lederach's book on moral imagination and peacemaking, primarily because Lederach provides a more generous view of imagination, gives something of an historical overview of the term, and unlike Fesmire (and presumably Dewey) begins to lean toward a more robustly aesthetic view of moral imagination. This will be followed by an extended discussion of Mark Johnson's work on moral imagination. It is Johnson's work which stimulated me to connect aesthetics and ethics and he provides what I consider a very strong

accounting of the intersection while still remaining outside a developed understanding of the aesthetic and the arts. I will finish this section of the chapter with a discussion of one of his critics. Finally I will return to Levinas and how we can leverage moral imagination as an aesthetic act (bodily/visceral, emotional, sensual/sensory, and intuitive) in aid of the development of an ethical relationship with the Other.

Stephen Fesmire, in his book *John Dewey & Moral Imagination*, ironically, begins by presenting arguments against an imagination that, according to Edward Tivnan, is used to "keep the peace."

> … when values clash we must learn to keep the peace, unstable as this peace must be in a democracy, by developing the empathetic ability to "imagine the world from the other side of the barricade." Tivnan reduces moral imagination to the peacekeeping function of empathetic leaps….Thus, says Tivnan, "by developing your moral imagination, you will be less likely to burn your adversary at the stake for fear that no matter how strongly you feel that the death penalty is right, say, or that affirmative action is unjust, you may actually be wrong." Again, imagination plays a partial role; it does not penetrate deeply into moral life. (Fesmire, p. 63)

I would argue that Fesmire is incorrect in labeling imagination as partial and as not penetrating deeply into moral life. It can be no more partial than rationality as either one of these "mental" dispositions accounts for but one dimension of our humanness. All dispositions are partial. All dispositions can be used to inquire into our moral life, but differently, rather than one being "deeper" than another.

Fesmire continues by elaborating Dewey's notion of imagination. He writes that there are two imaginations for Dewey, "empathetic projection" and "creatively tapping a situation's possibilities." Dealing with the first of these, "empathetic projection" Fesmire describes this as follows:

> Taking the attitudes of others stirs us beyond numbness so we pause to sort through others' aspirations, interests, and worries as our own. This should be distinguished from the common misguided habit of projecting our own values and intentions onto others without respect for differences. (p. 65)

What are the difficulties with this form of imagination from a Levinasian perspective? The argument that we can have "sort through other's aspirations, interests, and worries" assumes that I can know another person without using my own categories of understanding. Fesmire, and Dewey,

assume that I can avoid "projecting our own values and intentions onto others without respect for differences." However, Levinas has made it very clear that the move of interiority is precisely to do that in order to build the self. Ethics begins in my acknowledgement that the Other escapes my capacity to know her/him in the way of "sorting through" her/his "aspirations, interests, and worries." I will, naturally, impose my own categories upon those, especially if I am not vigilant to know that I do not know. Levinas teaches me that I cannot assume I could sort through anything without doing violence to the Other's integrity as a being and without relinquishing my seeking connection. In order to feel the Other through in an empathy state as described, I must use categories as tools for making sense of the Other's state. In so doing, you are once again falling into a totalizing move. So, empathy linked to imagination only forestalls the possibility of an ethical relationship.

Fesmire's, and Dewey's, second form of imagination is "creatively tapping into a situation's possibilities." Fesmire notes that Dewey cites Shelley, the poet who wrote, "Imagination…is the chief instrument of the good" (p. 65). It accomplishes this through "cognitive, concrete, contextualized…makings [which] result in expressive objects" (p. 65). This appears more promising from an aesthetic perspective but, again, the introduction of the cognitive belies the aesthetic dimension of imagination. This becomes much clearer when Fesmire presents the centerpiece of Dewey's approach to moral imagination, found in "dramatic rehearsal." Dewey describes dramatic rehearsal as follows:

> Deliberation is a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action….[It] is an experiment in finding out what the various lines of possible action are really like…Thought runs ahead and foresees outcomes, and thereby avoids having to await the instruction of actual failure and disaster. An act overtly tried out is irrevocable, its consequences cannot be blotted out. An act tried out in imagination is not final or fatal. It is retrievable. (Fesmire, p. 69)

Here we can see how imagination is not an aesthetic imagination but simply the capacity to envision various entities and their relations to each other. From an aesthetic perspective, how is it possible to foresee outcomes unless one is actually acting? That is to say, from an artist's perspective, until I actually make the art I cannot know what it is. As E.L. Doctorow put it, "I write to find out what I am writing about" (interview on NPR).

Doctorow is saying that until you attempt to fully realize the imagined world, you cannot know that world. In parallel fashion, avoiding the consequences of an act does not provide you with knowing that act. Dewey's language is dramatic: words such as "an act…is irrevocable," "consequences cannot be blotted out," "an act…final or fatal." There is an attempt on Dewey's and Fesmire's to control the outcomes of one's actions or, at least, make them as safe as possible. In reading Levinas, I do not come away with a sense of safety. Rather, once the responsibility is borne, all actions are hazardous. The world is neither easy nor calculable.

Fesmire continues, in his description of dramatic rehearsal to apotheosize it as "crystallizing possibilities and transforming them into directive hypotheses" in which "rehearsal illuminates, opens up a situation so it is perceived in a new way" (p. 70). While I have argued (2012) that art is a form of research, it is not this form of research (hypothesizing followed by experimentation followed by conclusions). The making of art is a more inchoate process and product that does not easily reduce to calculable or definite products that can become the template for action.

This becomes clearer by examining Fesmire's discussion of imagination itself. He writes that imagination is "a *creative* exploration of *structures* inherited from past experience which thereby allow[s] the future…to guide and interpret the present" (from Thomas Alexander). Fesmire does not explain any of these terms (what constitutes "structures," what does it mean to creatively explore, what does it mean to have the future guide and interpret the present?) so it is difficult to understand what constitutes imagination. Fesmire provides an example to illuminate the play of imagination. He writes of a dramatist who "configures a present line or verse with a rich aesthetic sense for possible meanings" and "develops conflicts and contrasts among characters and contingent events until these instabilities are resolved" (p. 78). He then links this to moral imagination: "[m]oral imagination is…an expansive field of possible behaviors [that] can be disclosed and conflicts brought to successful issue" (p. 79). This construes the open-endedness of an aesthetic experience. Such experiences do not typically find conflicts are brought to successful issue. A film, a dance, or music ends, or we stop looking at a painting or finish a novel or poem: we do not, in these endings, find resolution of conflicts. Often we find continuing confusion but it is now fruitful confusion that does not teach us how to live morally but gives us an experience upon which to think about ourselves and our relationship to others and the world around us. Art thrives on ambiguity. Picasso's *Guernica* does not tell us how to think

about war specifically, the Spanish Civil War and the massacre at Guernica. It only makes possible confronting it. How does Van Gogh's *Peasant Shoes* or Bill T. Jones's *The Breathing Lesson* effectively lead us toward a more ethical world? Neither is what might be termed "message art" or have the image of a story with a moral meant to instill in us proper ethical behavior. In short, none of these examples teach us how or what to think but they do stimulate us to think. This "thinking" has something to do with our bodies, with our viscera, with an aspect of human imagination which is not, necessarily located in our cognitive abilities of discrimination and logic.

In sum, whereas Fesmire rejects this form of imagination as partial and not adequate to the task of ethical life (perhaps useful but not adequate), I am making it central. When Fesmire features as central to moral imagination Dewey's idea of "dramatic rehearsal" this is also problematic. "Dramatic rehearsal" carries with it the notion that a person could know fully the details of a situation in which s/he is not living, that there is an ability to know sufficiently in absence of the reality of the situation, the qualities and dimensions of that situation and through an act of rehearsing, what it would be like to be in that situation, and what would be the morally correct act. This seems problematic for the notion of "imagination" as it is almost rational and "mental" in character and therefore does not actually leverage the aesthetic dimensions of imagination. I do not argue that it *cannot*; only that as presented it does not.

The work of John Paul Lederach can act as a bridge to what I consider the most salient exploration of moral imagination (that by Mark Johnson). Lederach notes that across the literature, he finds three "points of convergence" for moral imagination. First, "moral imagination develops a capacity to perceive things beyond and at a deeper level than what initially meets the eye…attentiveness to more than is immediately visible" (pp. 26–27). He cites Guroian who describes the quality of what Guroian terms *awakeness* as "a power of perception, a light that illuminates the mystery that is hidden beneath a visible reality" (p. 27). I am arguing for a different view of imagination that begins in the visible and stays in the visible (as one species of the sensory/sensual) rather than seeing beneath it. Further, given Levinas's emphasis on "not knowing" can we really assert that there is mystery we can come to know? It is, perhaps, the mystery of the mysterious; the fact that we cannot know that might capture our ethical attention. Over against such positive espousals of moral imagination, I am arguing for a negative emptiness that is the fecund location of ethics.

Lederach provides another point of convergence: "the necessity of the creative act." It is this "creative act" which is at the heart of what I want to assert about the aesthetics/ethics intersection. Saliently, Lederach points through the arts to the cultivation of moral imagination. He writes that the arts can be understood "not as the domain of professional artists, but rather as a frame of reference for understanding a defining characteristic of the moral imagination: the capacity to give birth to something new that in its very birthing changes our world and the way we see things" (p. 27). From a Levinasian perspective, this "something new" is the giving up of control over materials (in the arts and in the leveraging of resources in the world) in order to allow the world to speak to us. The artist is not so much "giving birth" to something gestating inside her/him but is, rather, getting out of the way of that which emerges. To reiterate Doctorow's statement about his own novelistic art, "the writer writes in order to know what he is writing about." There is no birthing here unless we remember that when a woman gives birth to a child that child is not the product of her shaping efforts and never will be. That child is her/himself developing within the world. The mother and the father may provide the conditions within which the child strives to form her/himself but these parents cannot control who that person is or how s/he develops. So, with this second characteristic of moral imagination presented by Lederach, we must be very careful to not overreach. Yes to art-making as a possible location of ethical life; no that it is about seeing deeper or into mysteries and forming something that is an expression of that seeing. If only it were possible to be that much in control. It is not and most, if not every artist, knows this. In fact, most, if not every artist revels in the lack of control, in the ways in which the art speaks back and demands. Again, thinking of the novelist, many novelists report that their characters demanded certain events to occur that the book unfolded not under their control but under its own control. With these provisos and understandings, we can tentatively accept Lederach's second characteristic.

A third characteristic, drawn from the literature is moral imagination as "transcendence." "It breaks out of what appear to be narrow, short-sighted, or structurally determined dead-ends" (p. 27). Lederach then proceeds to provide some examples of such breaking out, such as a fairy tale character transcending.

> what appears as predetermined disaster or the need to open a wider range of possible actions in decisions facing the NASA space program, or a car

> manufacturer, or an anthropological method of study, the exercise of moral imagination…breaks out into new territory and refuses to be bound by what existing views of perceived reality suggest or what prescriptive answers determine is possible. (p. 27)

We might take this as a different description of the Levinasian interiority discussion in regard to the making of a self. We might take "existing views of perceived reality" and "prescriptive answers" as analogues to the notion of labels and categories as the basic way we sort the world in order to make use of its resources. Lederach cites Babbitt who writes that moral imagination sets in motion the "bringing about of possibilities that are not imaginable in current terms." (p. 27). What is it that is not imaginable from a Levinasian view? It is precisely that the Other is eternally unimaginable. All "current terms" are the categories and labels which "make other same," thus binding that which might exceed my understanding within the horizon of my understanding. In so doing, I have overtaken the Other, made the Other simply other. I cannot stress too strongly the necessity of yielding or giving up in order to allow the Other to be there and not care if it is there or not. The art-work that emerges from the artist does not care whether it exists or who brings it into sensory being. It is agnostic as to its origins. In a sense, we must say that the art-work need not exist at all. If I, as an artist, bring an art-work into the world to share with another it is not myself that is sharing the art-work but, rather, the art-work which is sharing itself. This may seem to give independent life to the art-work, as if the artist is doing nothing. Of course, the artist is active and "makes." But, to repeat, the artist is not making something over which s/he has control as to what it will be. It speaks back to the arts, demands of the artist, has a separate life from the artist. This is the great joy of making art, that it is not simply a transmission from mind to paper, canvas, air (music), motion, marble, or words. It is not simply a transcription of what already exists full-blown in the artist's mind and being. As it moves out from the artist, it takes on its own life, has its own demands, reveals itself and the artist follows the emergence of this "thing." Just so, the Other is entirely separate from me. It must be so, following Levinas, if I am to experience that connection to something outside myself. Many artists will describe the marvel of seeing the art-work emerge, a wonder at what is appearing. If we speak, therefore, of transcendence, as does Lederach, it is not a transcendence of mundane things (a better car, even an innovative car) but, rather, the transcendence of the self, at last. Lederach is useful

in providing this term and provided an entrée into the act of art-making through it.

Lederach shows a beginning understanding of the aesthetic when he writes of writing haikus as a model for moral imagination. He writes,

> Basho, the famous Japanese master of Haiku, once remarked, "[H]e who creates three to five haiku poems in a lifetime is a haiku poet. He who attains to ten, is a haiku master" (Yasuda 2000:25)….Haiku…will take you on a journey through difficult terrain in search of a place with great promise but where it is hardly possible to live except in short, extraordinary moments. It is the place where simplicity and complexity meet. I happen to believe that this is also the place where the heart of peacebuilding pounds a steady but not often perceived rhythm and where the source of the moral imagination finds inspiration. (p. 67)

When Lederach writes of a "place of simplicity and complexity," he begins to bring to the fore an aesthetic view. Making art involves, first, finding "vocabulary" (sound, motion, words, form) which appears in a kind of complex messiness. The task is to maintain the honesty of the complexity of reality while finding in and among the vocabulary "throughlines" that draw the materials together in a particular way. No matter how nonlinear a particular art-piece might be (haiku is often nonlinear in terms of ordinary logic), what makes it successful is the way a receiver of the art can "feel" the cohesion of the piece that "makes sense" in terms of the piece itself. It resolves into a kind of simplicity of presence to the situation while retaining the complexity of human affairs. There are no "answers" in art (but as we shall see when exploring Mark Johnson's work, there are no answers in ethics either). In this citation from Lederach, we can begin, already, to feel what aesthetics is in regard to ethics and Lederach draws that direct connection.

Following upon this, Lederach enters a direct plea for aesthetics through the invocation of intuition as an important component of, in his case, peacebuilding work. He writes, "Knowing and understanding conflict does not take place exclusively, nor perhaps primarily, through processes of cognitive analysis…Knowledge and…understanding and deep insight are achieved through aesthetics" (p. 69). He points out that aesthetics can be defined as "being sharp in the senses'…Sense creates meaning" (p. 69) As he proceeds, he calls for a turn to art as an important way into finding solutions to difficult problems.

While this is a fine call, I need to point out that my approach to aesthetics and ethics is different, based as it is in Levinas. This is not about finding solutions through other means in an artful manner. Rather it is about cultivating a relationship to the world that is aesthetic in character and enlivens Levinas's notion of "sensibility." I do not come to know what to do, but I come to be. In that being the state, whatever I do will be grounded in the ethical if I am oriented toward the simultaneity of the ethical. In this construal, aesthetics is not an instrument that leads to a particular outcome (an ethics). Aesthetics is a way of being that permeates one's life. Finding solutions (such as finding solutions to ethical problems) is a bit like making an art-piece. The end is valued and the means, while it may appear, at this time, as being superior and excellent, can be supplanted by another means should that other means be more valued (for whatever reason). I stop short of such an outcome and reside within the process of aesthetic consciousness that need not eventuate in products of any kind. In this case, aesthetic consciousness and ethical consciousness are inter-mingled.

This brings us to the work of Mark Johnson. In his 1993 book *Moral Imagination*, Johnson lays out what he considers to be "misguided views" of ethics, those of moral absolutism and moral relativism and then develops the idea of moral imagination, perhaps more robustly than other writers. His work will end in the same place as Lederach (that the moral imagination is important to cultivate through aesthetics) but gives a much fuller account of what that means.

Johnson addresses moral absolutism as follows. "Moral absolutism asserts the existence of universally binding; absolute moral laws that can tell us which acts are right and which are wrong. It assumes that imagination is 'merely' subjective…[with] no place in a morality of laws." (p. 3) He finds moral absolutism to be "morally irresponsible" asserting as it does that we "think and act as though we possess a universal, disembodied reason that generates absolute rules, decision-making procedures, and universal or categorical laws by which we can tell right from wrong in any situation we encounter." (p. 5) He states, further, that "I do not mean to deny the existence or usefulness of very general moral principles. Such moral ideals exist within cultures and are… important…" (p. 5) But this approach "misses most what really matters in morality…be[ing] morally sensitive and fully responsible to other people." (p. 5)

Of moral relativism, he writes that it

> argues either that there are no moral laws of any sort, or else that if there are moral laws, they could have force only relative to a particular cultural group and within a particular historical context.…there are no *universally* valid moral laws…that all standards of evaluation are utterly contingent and culture-specific. If moral relativists embrace imagination, they do so only because they regard it as entirely unconstrained, as opposed to reason, and as undermining…moral universals. (p. 3)

Further, moral relativism accepts "assumptions" of the Moral Law Folk Theory (described further on in the text below).

> One version [of moral relativism] claims that morality *is* a matter of following moral laws, but regards them as binding only relative to particular cultures or societies. The other version denies that there are any rationally defensible shared moral standards at all, and so it concludes that morality is irrational and subjective.…this argument…accepts…that there can be objectivity, rationality, and criticism only if there are universal moral laws. (p. 4)

Johnson asserts that there are universals but that they are arrived at through moral imagination rather than through moral reasoning and that an imagination form of rationality can be considered as objective. Over against the absolutist and relativist views of morality and mind, he writes that imagination is "neither subjective, unconstrained, nor irrational." (p. 3) Further, "Neither does the pervasiveness of imaginative processes in moral evaluation preclude…moral critique." (p. 3)

> Humans are fundamentally imaginative creatures whose understanding of experience is built up with the imaginative materials of cognition.…metaphors and other imaginative structures are what make criticism possible in the first place, for they give us alternative viewpoints and concepts from which to evaluate the merits of a particular moral position. They make it possible for us to envision the probably consequences of a proposed course of action, such as how other people are likely to be affected, how it might change our relationships, and what new possibilities it might open up (or close off) concerning how we can grow. (p. 3)

We must note some dilemmas with the above, dilemmas that I will claim are well addressed by thinking about aesthetics. These dilemmas are that Johnson clearly continues to favor "knowledge" as the avenue to moral

decision making. When he writes that using imagination yields "alternative viewpoints and concepts" for evaluating "the merits a particular moral position" he is focused on moral imagination providing information useful to our thinking and obtainable in no other way except through imaginative practices. Levinas has made it clear that knowledge (epistemology) is not ethics and does not lead us toward ethics, so we will have to be careful in how we take Johnson's work. But, continuing on, Johnson elaborates the basis for favoring moral imagination.

Johnson sets out what he calls the "Moral Law Folk Theory." He claims that the usual way of thinking about "how to be ethical" is through the use of reason to parse situations and make decisions based on moral or ethical principles. When it comes to moral reasoning, we believe that we have a split between mind and body in which

> It is our capacity to reason and to act upon rational principles that distinguishes us from brute animals…our freedom is preserved only in acting on principles our reason gives to us….Reason guides the will by giving it moral laws – laws that specify which acts are morally prohibited, which are required, and which are permissible. Universal reason not only is the source of all moral laws but also tells us how to apply those principles to concrete situations. (p. 7)

Johnson goes on to write that there are certain undergirding assumptions needed in order to make this construal likely. If a moral law is to apply directly to a situation, then our conceptualization of the situation must match exactly the concepts in terms of which the moral law is stated (p. 7). This, in turn, requires that the needed conceptualization must be unique, univocal, and literal in order for it to be applied to the situation. (p. 8) Thus, "Moral Law theory can never give us the laws it promises… Except for obvious unproblematic cases, the Moral law theory never did *that* either." (p. 12)

The above description is not actually the way people make moral decisions. Johnson argues that cognitive science has shown that the language we use to perform moral deliberations (and the language we use in general) is metaphorical in character, utilizing what are called prototype effects (meaning we use already existing socially agreed-upon schemas to fit new experiences into an understandable relation to our lives). This understanding of language ends in abundant empirical evidence that "narrative is a fundamental mode of understanding…Narrative is not just an explanatory

device, but is actually constitutive of the way we experience things." (p. 9) This conclusion contradicts our folk theory of moral reasoning, demanding a view of moral reasoning as imaginative through and through (p. 11).

This perspective strongly connects with Levinas while providing a way into Levinas which Levinas, as we have noted, rejects. In arguing for imagination and metaphors, Johnson is really asserting that we come to understand morally through imagination and aesthetic processes to deliberate about moral decisions. Note that it is not a matter that investigations of the imaginative structure of human understanding are going to replace moral laws with some other form of moral guidance that tells us what to do for this would stipulate that there are still ways to get to moral laws. The point is there are no moral laws (except, as already stated) in the most obvious cases in which situation, the law was not necessary in the first place.

Johnson expends a good deal of energy exploring what lies beyond a rules-governed ethics. It is worth our while describing and commenting upon his exegesis, especially as he, like Levinas, is interested in reestablishing the place of metaphysics in our thinking (Levinas admits to metaphysics while also having metaphysics undergo a profound transformation from a distant thunder of knowledge to a ground in our everyday lives). In fact, Johnson wants to explore what is to replace the notion of rationally derived rules recalling that Levinas is also anti-foundationalist in his rejection of rules of ethics. Johnson focuses upon the moral absolutism position to accomplish this task. He writes:

> Moral absolutism is obsessed with…grounding and securing moral objectivity…searching for a definitive set of determinate moral rules that come out of a Universal Reason…universally binding on all rational beings…unchanging across cultures and throughout history….Such rules are thought to issue from the essential structure of a practical reason…fixed for all time. Our understanding of the central concepts my change, but the concepts themselves must never change in their essence. Our understanding…may vary, or even regress, whereas the laws…must remain fixed and valid in their pristine state. (p. 79)

Moral absolutism is marked by a set of principles having to do with these rules or laws. Moral concepts are "univocal and literal" meaning they are focused on a singular goal, are highly well defined, have a "single definite meaning" in which they can be applied by "determining whether the necessary and sufficient conditions…actually obtain in experience…

they actually apply to the concrete situation." (p. 81). They are "defined by sets of necessary and sufficient conditions…by [a] set of defining features." (p. 81) There is no room for imaginative thinking as such thinking would "render moral deliberation irrational and…indeterminate." (p. 81) They are rank ordered so that if two rules are in apparent conflict, it can adjudicated which rule takes precedence. Moral reasoning must function from deductive logic such that "concrete cases" are "subsumed…under absolute moral precepts." (p. 82) People are "radically free" meaning they can and must "be capable of acting on the basis of…moral principles… independent of…contingent emotions, desires, habits, or obsessions." (p. 82) Putting all this in place will result in people doing the one right thing to do in any given situation.

Johnson contends that "something terribly important is missing" with these contentions. It has "very little to do with actual human deliberation." (p. 79) While there is something stable about fundamental human moral values and "there are a large number of clear, unproblematic cases where there is little or no question about what we should do" not "all moral reasoning works this way." (p. 80) For Johnson, "moral deliberation [is] expansive, imaginative inquiry into possibilities for enhancing the quality of our communally shared experience." (p. 80) Further, the derived moral rules and laws from the above set of conditions speak only to unambiguous situations. As we examine a situation, we find that it may not (indeed is probably not) exactly like a specific previous situation, that it partakes of multiple situations. While it may be predominantly about one kind of situation, it does not necessarily belong to the category of that situation. Since moral laws are associated with specific categories of situations, since real-life situations are not cooperatively neat and since we still must fit the new situation into our thinking in some fashion, we are confronted with what Johnson terms "prototype effect." In a prototype effect, any given situation may more or less well-belong to a previous set of situations. In this "more or less" fit, there is the possibility that the laws associated with a particular category of situations are inappropriate for *this* situation. If we apply the laws to it, we may get outcomes that are not ethically appropriate. Johnson presents the classical situation of a lie. If we "lie" to someone, there are supposedly, at least since Kant, a clear and appropriate response to the lie. Lies are always wrong and we must not perform them. However, we have multiple designations of "lie" ranging from clear-cut outright lying through white lies through to not telling everything even though asked a question which might require us to do so

but, legalistically we can assert that we did not lie, we just did not tell all we knew. Sometimes, in folk-wisdom, lying is a good thing and there are good reasons to perform a lie. If we function from principle, then lying is always bad. If we function from how we actually conceptualize lying, it is possible to see lying as the most ethical thing to do at this time. Since most of our moral dilemmas are complex, conflicted, and far from unambiguous in this way, a moral law approach offers little help in solving our real-life ethical problems.

In place of moral reasoning as described above, Johnson offers what he terms the "narrative context of self and action." Such a context has kinship to Levinas's phenomenological account of the development of the self and the self/Other encounter although, as we recall, Levinas's account is singularly prelinguistic although grounded in the language we use to express, eventually, the encounter. For all that, Johnson does offer an initial move toward a Levinasian perspective. In this perspective, human beings, rather than being construed as objective moral agents who subsume everything to practical reason and have a self "defined prior to its ends and independent of the contexts if comes to inhabit" (p. 151) (which is very close to Levinas's rejection of a self that is born knowing itself), Johnson has human beings as "socially constituted…historically situated…changeable…defined not only by…biological makeup…but also by its ends, its interpersonal relationships, its cultural traditions, its institutional commitments and its historical context." (p. 151).

This is not to say we are not flexible and are trapped by our traditions and history. "Each of us is living out a developing story over which we have a measure of control, however small, in forming our character." (p. 152) Levinas would agree to the degree that we are always in a state of becoming someone rather than being a fixed being that acts out of the same set of preordained conditions. Johnson continues,

> The 'self" develops…by inhabiting characters embedded within socially shared roles and by creatively appropriating those roles, even to the point of coauthoring new ones. I stress coauthoring, because all of this imaginative exploration…is carried on in and through complex social interactions in which practices and forms of relationship are communally constructed….I can only come to know who I am…by an ongoing process that is never complete during my lifetime or beyond. I am not reducible to the roles I internalize, but neither do I have an identity utterly independent of those roles. (p. 153)

Levinas would agree with much of the substance of this. However, he greatly emphasizes the encounter with the Other as constitutive of subjectivity. Recall that prior to this there is consciousness but not what might be called "real" action in the world until the encounter with the other. In this subjectivity, a person can act because s/he must act, because action is called for in the passive confrontation with the face of the Other. That is, the self is built out of interpersonal relationships rather than interpersonal relationships being just one, albeit highly important, context of selfhood.

Johnson takes the notion of "story" quite seriously. He argues that the minute details of everyday life are not mere happenstance of us that exist within already spoken for structures. Rather,

> What…distinguishes disconnected, unrelated, and episodic events falling randomly into sequences from meaningful actions…[are] supplied by cognitive models, metaphors, frames, and narratives…overarching ordering that transforms mere sequences of atomic events into significant human actions and projects that have meaning and moral import. Every one of us is actively plotting our lives, both consciously and unconsciously, by attempting to construct ourselves as significant characters within what we regard as meaningful life stories. (p. 165)

This notion is very like Erving Goffman's importation into sociological theory of the drama trope in which people live socially by adopting various personae and playing them out in social interactions. It is a useful trope in that it can reveal one way in which people do negotiate social relationships but, from a Levinasian perspective, it does not tell us why people would do such things. It is through Levinas's phenomenological account of the development of self/consciousness that we can understand what is at stake in adopting roles. Levinas also helps us see that this view, at least for ethics, fails to bring into play the meaning of the social relationships, aside from their use for individual benefit. Levinas might concur with Johnson's viewpoint but with the demurral that the "character" metaphor is too specific and almost ontological, thus problematic.

Continuing with a description of narrative, as seen by Johnson, we encounter an apt description, in a different form, of Levinas's description of the development of the self. Johnson lays out the terrain of narrative and, in so doing, provides a way of understanding self-development. He notes that our narratives provide the following materials for our self-development. They provide goals in the form of "events or states we desire

to realize…occasionally fixed, determinate situations…more often…ill-defined…not wholly conscious…we become clear about our goals, if ever we do, through a gradually dawning awareness that our dispositions and actions are moving us in a certain direction…" (p. 172). They also provide motives by embodying "reasons why" we act, again not needing to be fully conscious. They tell us something about the people involved in our lives (as characters in our narratives) and tell us how to act ourselves. Johnson claims that "the agent's identity emerges in and through…actions, but is not identical with them….[The identity] gives those actions a measure of unity and an identity as hers, or his, or ours." (p. 173) (Note that actions and identity are mutually constitutive: one does not precede the other but they come into being simultaneously. This is consonant with Levinas's description of the self-working in the world, living from…the world such that the self is developed in action but also brings a self, as it emerges, to bear on the world in which it is acting.) There are, also, contextual circumstances provided in the narrative which gives the narrative its specificity for this situation and not for some other situation. And "actions are embedded within morally significant contexts that determine their character." (TI, p. 173) Thus, the narrative provides the means whereby we recognize the moral character of what is occurring. Without the narrative, the actions taken would be supposedly neutral and free of moral implications. From a Levinasian point of view, this is not possible: we may ignore the contexts but that does not diminish their import or presence. Actions take place in interaction with others, so others are implicated in our lives. This is obviously Levinasian, although not sufficiently robust in its centrality. Narratives, overall, provide the means whereby our existence gains meaning as the narratives tell us how to think about what we are doing. Recall that for Johnson, we are creating these narratives as we act as well as drawing upon past narratives that help orient us. Levinas, I think, would agree that life does not just happen to us; we enact life as well, so the development of the self is an interaction, not a teleologically driven trajectory of which the end is already known. The particular description of narrative embeds this notion of ongoing construction and new ways of being in the world. Lastly, there is Levinas's sine qua non: responsibility. As Johnson puts it, "Agents are…*answerable* for what they do. We hold others, and ourselves, responsible because we recognize moral consequences of actions and because we feel our interrelatedness and interdependency in performing our actions." (p. 174)

There is, yet, the important question, of what exactly is "moral imagination?" As we have seen, this core concept is invoked by Fesmire as a primarily cognitive affair and by Lederach in aesthetic terms but there is not much detail as to what constitutes it. Johnson, on the other hand, provides a more concrete description that is built on language but not entirely beholden to language. He describes it as grounded in prototypes of experience that we use to frame ongoing experience. These frames "involve a broad range of imaginative structures, such as image schemas, various types of prototype structure, metonymy [in which one 'object' represents a whole class 'things,' 'ideas' and the like as if it can speak for the whole class of things even though it is limited in its own description – Ed.], and metaphor." (p. 192) Johnson claims that "knowing about the imaginative character of frames…is crucial" as these frames are "inherit[ed] from our moral tradition and apply to situations…if we are to be at all aware of the prejudgments we bring to situations" we can only do so through such knowledge. (Prejudgments are akin to Levinas's notion of categories and labels we use to make sense of the world around us.) Johnson is particularly interested in the metaphoric character of moral imagination, writing that it has "radical implications" by providing "insights" for moral understanding. These insights include considering that our language is filled with metaphors we generally do not notice as they have become such common knowledge that they have become "true." This means that our moral understanding is also structured through this taken for granted metaphoric character of language.

According to Johnson, we must come to recognize what specific metaphors are populating our particular moral perspectives. Johnson, as with Fesmire, occupies a more cognitive position than I prefer and stipulates investigation into these mental structures as necessary for coming to make moral judgments, as we confront how our culture is embedded within us. From a Levinasian perspective, this keeps the person locked within her/himself and, therefore, forestalls the possibility of ethics. Nevertheless, there is value in seeing our categories and labels as clearly as possible, not for wisdom but to recognize how they are binding us away from connection.

Johnson claims that self-interrogation provides self-understanding that is the beginning of wisdom. Further, by examining the actual metaphors in use, it is possible to determine, to some degree, "which parts of our moral understanding might possibly be candidates for moral uni-

versals." (p. 193) Johnson's previous work was in the notion that our bodily states provide us with understandings about ourselves in the world that show up in our language. He brings this to bear in this case when he writes, "Are certain source domains based on universal bodily experience? If so, then when they are used to understand a target domain that appears in every culture (e.g. community), they may well present experientially based cognitive universals." (p. 193) Johnson means, by this, that metaphors take a "target" as the "thing" to be "explained" in the metaphor and bring the target into close proximity with something quite different. In this interaction between two very different "things," something happens to the target domain such that new facets of it become illuminated and/or exposed that were previously hidden from us. Thus, if there is a common universal bodily experience that pertains to understanding community in a particular way, we may feel some confidence that community, understood in this way, is a common feature of many cultures even if it "sounds as if" they are not. Over against this, "we can discern where cultural variation is most likely to enter into a given level of metaphorical structure." (p. 194) Thus, metaphors allow us to examine what is common to all human experiences and what is specific to a specific situation and, thus, begin to build across cultures understandings that could eventuate in better cross-cultural understanding and, thus, better relationships that would lead to a better life for all. Such examination and analysis allows us, according to Johnson, to choose what metaphors we might want to change as well as what metaphors might be amenable to such change (ideal vs. real is the dichotomy Johnson presents to us). In terms of being a realist, Johnson asserts that

> the more basic a conceptual metaphor is, the more it will be systematically connected to other metaphors, and the more implications it will have for our moral reasoning. It is highly unlikely that our deepest metaphors can be changed, since the resultant cognitive disruption would be extreme.… [This is] only to note the emotional, social, and cultural costs of…large-scale change. (p. 194)

We must take Johnson seriously, in terms of the metaphor analysis since, if he is correct, then Levinas's focus upon language must be carefully assessed for what language says about us that is out of our control. Of course, Levinas, in using the trope "living from…" already asserts that we are not in control as we live from rather than control what we take. But,

Levinas surpasses that important insight since, if language is consciousness forming (as is asserted in much social theory, see *The Social Construction of Reality* by Thomas Luckmann and Peter Berger), then with ethics so dependent on language, we must know that the language we use already directs our attention in particular directions. This creates a dilemma for Levinas's emphasis on language as a site of rupture. But with Levinas's dualisms (saying/said, expression/action, and sensible/sign), the first partners all exist on a more bodily, precognitive level. This may provide a way before or around Johnson's insights about language. Indeed, in Johnson's more recent emphasis on embodiment and aesthetics (2015) there may be still more support for an ethics grounded in aesthetics and embodiment.

Johnson, near the end of the book, leads on toward the topic at hand: the relationship between aesthetics and moral imagination. He is so explicit about aesthetic processes that he offers, in the place of moral reasoning, the metaphor "morality as art," noting that "moral reasoning is a certain type of skillful imaginative activity." (p. 210) He is interested in "examining how far [moral imagination] is like aesthetic discrimination and artistic creation" which may yield certain salient understandings of our ability to make moral decisions (p. 210). Specifically, he writes that certain characteristics of artistic activity are important for moral imagination. These are discernment, expression, investigation, creativity, and skill (pp. 210–212). Discernment, he notes, is the ability to "frame" a situation in terms of what is important for that situation, to "notice what we do not [ordinarily] see, to imagine possibilities we have not imagined, and to feel in ways we might, but are not now, feeling," all of this for the purpose of "opening ---up to us new dimensions of our world." (p. 210) For art and moral imagination "there is no predetermined method (or algorithmic procedure), yet they are 'assisted' by general principles and constrained by the nature of our bodily, interpersonal, and cultural interactions." (p. 211) Expression, as a characteristic of both art-making and moral imagination, denotes the giving of "definition, individuality, and clarity to emotions, images, and desires." (p. 211) Art (and moral imagination) becomes "a form of self-disclosure and self-knowledge." (p. 211) In a parallel and related fashion, both art and moral imagination are a form of knowledge as we come to know features of our world better and in new ways, exploring "various framings of situations, inquire into the motives and intentions of others, and explore possibilities for constructive interaction that are latent within situations."

Lastly, there are creativity and skill. Imagination expressed through the active making of things is central to both art and moral imagining. In both "we mold, shape, give form to, compose, harmonize, balance, disrupt, organize, re-form, construct, delineate, portray, and use other forms of imaginative making" (p. 212). He notes that "Certain people are particularly good at this sort of imaginative exploration and creation…as [they] appear to break the established rules of morality or law or propriety, going beyond canonical forms and practices to show us new ways of thinking, relating, and acting" (p. 213). In order to successfully negotiate such creativity, skill is needed which means

> the deliberate application of human intelligence to some part of the world, yielding some control over…chance or contingency…the person who lives by [skill] does not come to each new experience without foresight or resource. He possesses some sort of systematic grasp, some way of ordering the subject matter, that will take him to the new situation well prepared, removed from blind dependence on what happens. (Nussbaum in Johnson, p. 214)

Johnson goes on to write that skills are acquired through practice and, most importantly, that skill is not "merely knowledge of effective means" but, rather, an ability to interact

> with materials, forms, and ideas in which something determinate begins to take shape through the process of working with the materials of the art. One's conception evolves and grows by skillfully working the material…"the art activities themselves constitute the end." (Nussbaum in Johnson, p. 214)

There are, admittedly, actions the artist takes to make art but they are also dispositions a person can have toward all experience that attempts to move past the evident "givens" that interfere with our abilities to be open to the new. We could conceive these dispositions passively. That is, we are receptive through them as well as using them to make something (art-work or moral response). It is the receptivity response which serves us well for ethics and connects with ways of animating/noticing saying/expression/sensible.

Johnson is not without his critics. One of those critics, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (1994), provides an important caution. He argues that Johnson believes that imagination, when properly applied, will result in people living out a common code of good ethics. As Sinnott-Armstrong describes it:

> Johnson claims that all humans do (or should?) share certain "biological purposes," "cognitive structure," "social relations," and "ecological concerns," and this is somehow supposed to show that there will be an overriding presumption in favour of equal treatment, … we may not …use other people merely as means (objects or utensils) to ends that they would not or should not make their own …,there are moral principles [that] are reminders of important considerations that should be figured into our moral deliberations …,autonomy is … an ideal to be pursued … [, and] we are left with the basis for criticism that we had all along, namely, transperspectivity. (p. 384)

From Sinnott-Armstrong's perspective, Johnson is trying to give a new basis for familiar "Enlightenment ideals' and even 'rights,' but he never charts the steps from 'universal human experience' and 'needs' to ideals about our behaviour toward other people." (p. 384) Sinott-Armstrong's critique is strong as there is no proof that imagination, as imagination, will produce "ethical behavior." In fact, Robert Saunders (1962) argues directly that "imagination, like energy and power, is amoral. It is neither essentially good nor essentially evil….Good and evil are the inventions of society." (p. 12) Imagination is a value neutral act of the mind. I will return to the notion of imagination as a value neutral act of mind after providing some further perspectives on moral imagination.

Levinas might be in agreement with the above. He, too, is not thinking of universal law *or* the social calculus of consequentialism as described by Johnson. He does not appear to favor rationality. On the other hand, while from a Levinasian perspective there are neither universal laws in the Kantian sense nor knowledge that can lead us there nor a rational mind that creates such laws, there *is* human living which produces what, for Levinas, are universals, once we recognize ourselves at base. This self-recognition is the recognition of a self that is limited, self-absorbed, and unfulfilled, incomplete except as a construction (which, of course, is not done—we are always a "work in progress"). It is Levinas's notion of sensibility, combined with art from a certain perspective that provides the possibilities we seek.

I will finish this section with a summary of the usefulness and dilemmas of moral imagination. As already pointed out with Fesmire, the problems with moral imagination are its strong focus on the cognitive as well as, despite, protests to the contrary, its continuing valuing of reason as the final arbiter of moral understanding. While Johnson brings us a concrete analysis of the relationship between ethics and art-making, he, too,

remains somewhat "cognitive." That is, he sees these artist's capacities ways of coming to know about another and about ethical situations. This places the ethical situation at a distance rather than in the immediacy suggested by Levinas's *sensibility*. Despite this problem, Johnson does offer us something more concrete with which to reach into the arts for a way into developing ethical consciousness. He is deliberate in his employment of an arts-based metaphor (theater and literature, in the form of character roles and narratives). However, he also connects the usefulness of the arts with a continuing reliance on reason and a cognitivist approach which favors imagination as a tool for getting more information than would be possible through reason alone. This places the ethical situation at a distance rather than in the immediacy suggested by Levinas's *sensibility*. That is, it is not about "knowing about" the other that counts but, rather, a direct "knowing of," a "presence in" the Other. Our language makes it difficult to express these ideas without the idea of knowing coming to the fore but it is exactly this which must be of concern. Lastly, Johnson's notion of imagination is the sense that "imaginative structures" are about fantasies of reality: that is such structures are not "real" (recall that this is partly the basis for the Platonic and Levinasian rejection of art). We shall have to show that such structures, especially as "known" within the body are very real and that working with the body in particular ways can bring so-called reality into sharper focus than the mind cognizing reality can.

However, as has also been written, it is Johnson's opening up of the artist's way that provides the bridge we need and also, suggestions for educating for ethics. I am arguing that we must account for how the bodily encounter with art can contribute to this development of an ethical consciousness. First, there is the encounter with art as a spectator. We stand before a painting, *looking* at it; we *hear* music and the vibrations can quicken our heartbeat, we *feel the dancer as s/he moves* and this is part of the dance; we *hear the rhythms and sonority of words* as we listen to poetry (it is said that poetry must be read aloud in order to understand it). It does not happen in our "heads." It is through the body that art informs us and, therefore, might inform our moral imaginations as well. We need a way into our ethical life that is, as Levinas puts it, "pre-originary." While looking at art provides some of that, it is tenuous. It is my contention that a focus upon the practice of making art provides such a "way in," that this "way in" occurs on this "visceral level."

The above-discussed work can be summed up as using imagination as a supplement to rational decision making. As has been pointed out, in

general, imagination functions, in these approaches as ways of "picturing" various scenarios in a more robust way than parsing between logical assertions. They serve to place the person "in the scene" so that s/he can "feel" what various scenarios would be like. The missing element in this approach is this: there is no sense of what experiencing, via imagination, what a scene "is like" yields to the imaginer.

How is moral imagination, then, a bridge to ethics? We have already seen how Johnson provides the possibility that cultivating the kinds of dispositions of the artist may enhance the use of the imagination in performing ethical thinking and action. So, the artist *might* be a model for our consideration. But, as already noted, artists are not automatically "moral" people simply because they make art. It is here that Levinas, unbeknownst to him, provides the exact bridge we need between the arts and ethics: the notion of sensibility which is a bodily state, preverbal, presymbolic and yet the powerful connection to the Other. We must see that the artist is already practicing a form of sensibility. It is possible that if we turn our attention toward the artist's sensibility activity (as sensibility is described by Levinas) without being exclusively focused on the production of an art product (although it must be argued paradoxically that attention to the making of art is important to the cultivation of an ethical sensibility as described by Levinas) we may find the practice we seek for linking art and ethics. Therefore, we now turn to sensibility itself.

Sensibility and Body: Vehicle for Ethics

Levinas focuses a great deal of attention, in *Otherwise than Being*, on what he terms "sensibility." We will find that from within this arena, art is actually a "natural" fit for developing ethical consciousness, even if, in most cases, it is not used for such an interest. We must see in what ways sensibility works for Levinas and carries the weight of ethical awareness. These ways will suggest something of what we might do in our lives, to live ethically and some notions of what a curriculum devoted to developing ethical consciousness might require.

Levinas places great emphasis, in *Otherwise than Being*, on sensibility as a precognitive mode of being that brings one into proximity with one's neighbor, with an Other, and provides, prior to the making of signs and representations about that proximity and that reality, a primordial access to the Other. It is worth looking at Levinas's thinking in some detail as it is in this location I find the potential for aesthetics to be at work.

Levinas describes "sensibility" as follows. In *Totality and Infinity,* he turned to language as the opening of ethics that can both totalize the self through its employment as a system of categories but can also distance us in such a way that we might notice the Other. In *Otherwise than being,* it seems to me that he abandons this dualism to some degree by moving away from an emphasis upon signification. He writes that there is a kind of signification that is "prior to being," that "breaks up the assembling, the recollection or the present of essence" (p. 14). If the act of totalization is to assemble in recollection (through the use of language) and no longer be present to what is assembled and if this assemblage is taken to be the essence of that which is recollected (thus acting as if you can speak for the whole of what is recollected), then this approach to signification "breaks up" that totalizing move.

> On the hither side of or beyond essence, signification is the breathlessness of the spirit expiring without inspiring, disinterestedness and gratuity or gratitude; the breakup of essence is ethics. (p. 14)

Levinas describes this "prior" state as "beyond…said…a saying out of breath…it *says* before resting in its own theme and therein allowing itself to be absorbed by essence." (p. 14) To write "out of breath" references the connection of breath and spirit in the tradition of most wisdom traditions. Levinas is asserting that when we try to concretize and solidify that breath through acts of representation we miss that prior to that moment (which may be necessary) there is this moment of being "out of breath" in which resides that which is "beyond essence." It is, after all, what we strive for in this ethics, which we move beyond the totalizing seeking of essence in order to be truly present to what is. Levinas continues, "This breakup of identity…. is the subject's…subjection to everything, its susceptibility, its vulnerability, that is, its sensibility." (p. 14) Levinas, on a number of occasions, invokes "vulnerability" as one of the hallmarks of recognizing the Other as Other rather than as, simply, another other to be used. Here he is connecting vulnerability with sensibility, leading to sensibility being one of the markers of the ethical relation. Further, this form of being is also "passive" (another attribute of the ethical relationship), belonging to "a diachronic past which cannot be recuperated by representation…incommensurable with the present" (p. 14). That is, representation, designed to put into form what is not yet form, freezes the formless into something which is but a shadow of the original "thing"

which does not have "thingness" because it is not yet represented. This makes representation incommensurable with being present in the not-yet. Levinas concludes this passage with the following which is at the heart of the ethical relationship:

> The response [to this not-yet – Ed.]…is responsibility, responsibility for the neighbor that is incumbent, resounds in this passivity, the disinterestedness of subjectivity, this sensibility. (pp. 14–15)

Sensibility is "disinterested," that is, not interested in making sense of the Other but only being present to the Other. Thus is sensibility linked to ethics.

This sensibility is not cognitive. Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity* stresses the body in the formation of the self. In so doing, he opens a door to aesthetics. He stresses, as I have already noted "enjoyment" as central to the formation of the totalizing self. However, he writes of this enjoyment in a way that potentially can lead to ethics.

> The body indigent and naked is not a thing among things…nor is it the instrument of a gestural thought, of which theory would be simply the ultimate development. The body naked and indigent is the very reverting, irreducible to a thought, of representation into life…its indigence – its needs – affirm 'exteriority' as non-constituted, prior to all affirmation. (TI, p. 127)

Here he has the body "affirming" exteriority and it is in that recognition of exteriority that the Other exists, nonreducible to essences any longer, "non-constituted" and "prior to all affirmation," meaning prior to folding the Other into categories and schemes for one's enjoyment. The paradox of the body provides an opening for aesthetics. The body is connected to interiority through the pursuit of enjoyment but, here, also connected to exteriority. We could say that aesthetics as a possible dimension of ethics or way into ethics resides within that paradox. It will not be a "cure-all" for ethical consciousness, connected as it is with interiority but it also provides a connection to the Other without subsuming the Other to our schemes.

Sensibility is not yet ethics full developed. Recalling that in *Totality and Infinity* Levinas requires language, a system of representations, he goes on to loosen the hold of language by way of the saying/said dichotomy, clearly more interested in the process of expressing oneself than in the final

expression itself. Sensibility always involves the senses. I find in Levinas, therefore, despite his emphasis upon language, something important about the physical in relation to ethics.

Just so, too, art is grounded in the body and in making things physical and physically. The making of art always involves the body as the artist grapples with physical materials and with the material world, attempting through manipulation of art materials, to make sense of that material world. The "material world" is more than merely matter as the artist will focus upon the human experience and encounter and will manifest what s/he comes to know through the making of art in a product called the "art object" which is also physical, sensory, and sensual. Even in cases, such as conceptual art, where the art "product" is an idea, rather than an material object of one sort or another (music creates the material object of sound waves, dance of human motion, paint of marks on a surface primarily apprehensible through the senses), there is still the "idea" which the receiver of the art must find in her/his mind in the form of an *image* of some sort. Images are not words. They are mentally sensory experiences with bodily preapprehension. In other words, the senses and art are inseparable and inescapable. We must also remember that aesthetics derives from the Greek word *aesthesis* which means "of the senses."

In Levinas the physical appears, as I have noted above, in the many forms of precognition that underlie his ethics. This makes for an inevitable connection between aesthetics (body/emotion/intuition/imagination) and ethics.

Levinas's approach to the sensible also connects back to Johnson's notion that ethics/morality is not about knowing ethical truths about the world but is a series of imaginative renderings of possibilities. Just so, for Levinas there is no relation between "truth" and "goodness." He puts it this way:

> Truth can consist only in the exposition of being to itself…in which the part counts for the whole, is the image of the whole. The image…is a sensible image. But the divergency between the image and the whole prevents the image from remaining [fixed]….The image has to symbolize the whole. Truth consists in…being identified through new images. (p. 61)

Here Levinas informs us that image of what exists is only always partial and incomplete. Truth reduces what is to what can be symbolized and imaged. Truth emerges not in regard to what is but, rather to a set

of symbols that almost replace "what is" with "what can be said." The said becomes more real than the saying and the sensible which gave rise to the symbols in the first place. Thus, "A symbol…receives its determination in…sensible concretion. But [since the image only represents the whole] and is not the whole…knowing is…indirect and tortuous." (p. 61) Knowing, perforce "strip[s] itself of the halo of sensibility in which it nonetheless is reflected and abides….Intuition is already…an *idea*, of another this as this, *aura* of another idea, openness in the openness." (p. 62) That is, knowing leaves the "what is" behind. Reality becomes the idea we have of reality, rather than reality itself. It is not the case that we can do without images, symbols, and language. However, we should not be lost in these objects as if they are "real." They are "real" only in the way that they present concretions and are materially real. But what they "represent" cannot be spoken for by them.

> …If all openness involves understanding, the image in sensible intuition has already lost the immediacy of the sensible….sensible intuition is already of the order of the said; it is an ideality. An idea is not a simple sublimation of the sensible. The difference between the sensible and an idea is not the difference between more or less exact cognitions or between cognitions of the individual and of the universal. In an individual inasmuch as it is known is already desensibilized and referred to the universal in intuition. (*OTB*, pp. 61–62)

Levinas recognizes that this situation of the individual becoming lost through the said, the sign, translated into something universal, is inevitable. Nonetheless, in pointing toward it, he is informing us of the possibility of a different relation to reality and, therefore, the possibility of a different relation to each other and, thus, a possibility of a different ethics that helps us to stop at least for a moment and humbly note that *we do not know*.

This brings us full circle. I have explored, based on Chap. 2 aesthetics in general as viewed through various philosophers, brought Levinas back in to connect what is clearly embodied view of ethics, reconnecting Levinas back to the philosophers dealing with their own versions of ethics and aesthetics. For me, Levinas is the most satisfying of these, even though he seems to actively reject the relation of aesthetics and ethics. He is most satisfying because encountering his narrative, I feel the lived experience of interiority, the breaching of the wall which interiority builds, the coming

out from behind that wall to feel the radical alterity of the Other in her/his state of proximity, neighbor, and face. These words are not abstract but personal locations of what it means to live in the world with an Other. This personal character of Levinas that transcends idiosyncratic self-absorption (his narrative becomes our narrative) is what makes, for me, the most powerful rendition of what it means to live ethically.

I am not done. There is one last element of aesthetics to explore. I have argued that the practice of art is a location for the cultivation of ethical consciousness. I have now to show how this is possible by turning my attention to art itself. In so doing, I ask the question the Greeks implicitly posed: what is the relation between beauty and goodness? I will be changing voice at this moment, speaking to you as an artist.

Beauty, Its Dangers, Its Affordances

I start with a signal of danger, echoing Levinas's distrust of truth and its connection to goodness.

Beauty can be the seduction of truth. So Bertolt Brecht (1936) bemoaned and worried: theater goers seduced out of understanding their own lives as they swooned in the presence of sonorous words, flashing clothing, effects. Even the most drab play and setting might make us swoon with emotion that short-circuited our ability to connect these people with ourselves and to think. Brecht sought a theater that enabled people to confront their lives (social and beyond), to re-engage with activity that laid out a terrain of change. Similarly Toni Morrison (2007) put the problem this way in the afterward to her novel *Bluest Eye*: "many readers remain touched but not moved" (p. 211), meaning they may have had an emotional reaction but this reaction did not translate into doing something about the world. And yet, ironically, both Brecht and Morrison attempted this through work of moving people through great beauty, even though this beauty was singed with the appalling state of working class oppression in a state of war, in a state of beggars preying on each other and, in the state of a society thoroughly besotted with racism. It is an open question as to whether or not encountering what we might consider great art can move people to action. We will have to see what "great art" has to do with all of this. Years ago, Tom Barone and I (1998) made a point of featuring the play of great narratives (his Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* and mine I.L Peretz's *Bontche Schweig*) as important to the curriculum deliberation process as such literature came from an

engaged literature (Sartre) which could help people understand better where their commitments ought to lie and understand another's life and, thus, create curriculum with an understanding outside their own narrow existence. Each of these examples present beautiful work (writing, plotting, rhythms, and the power of theater). Each of them, as well, present lived experiences of the world that bring us up short in our own lives and help us to "think again." Certainly beautiful art is capable of stopping us for a while and interrupting our taken-for-granted states. But this is not, yet, ethics in the way that Levinas presents it, that encounter with Face as they remain more cognitive than physically immediate. What is needed is a telling of the tale of how the making of art can enable us to notice the world as if for the first time and notice ourselves in that world in the ways that Levinas describes.

The act of art-making is the process of engaging with our world through the making of objects with materials that, as products, express something about that engagement. Just as Levinas relies upon precognitive dimensions of our lived experience to notice the ways space, time and the Other become apparent to us as not ours to control, so the artist confronts the world, prior to knowing in conventional ways, partially in a state of innocence as s/he seeks some moment that is outside her/his ordinary understanding and presents the opening out of possibility for art.

Martin Buber helps us understand what the artist undertakes and this, in turn, can help us understand how making art can afford us the opportunity of opening ourselves to the world as Levinas describes it.

In Buber's classic work *I and Thou* he describes he writes of making art he links the *I–Thou* relationship to the practice of art. He writes:

> This is the eternal source of art: a man (sic) is faced by a form which desires to be made through him into a work. This form is no offspring of his soul, but is an appearance which steps up to it and demands of it the effective power. The man is concerned with an act of his being. (1958, p. 9)

Buber is informing us that the artist has a vision of a relation in the world that stems from an *I–Thou* relationship, which s/he confronts with her/his own relation to the world. This vision is but a possibility of something that will only become apparent in the act of making the art and this act can only be performed in the presence of the person responding with all of her/his being. If the person takes up this challenge, then a work of art will ensue. Buber goes on to write:

> The act includes a sacrifice and a risk. This is the sacrifice: the endless possibility that is offered up on the altar of the form. For everything which just this moment in play ran through the perspective must be obliterated; nothing of that may penetrate the work. The exclusiveness of what is facing it demands that it be so. (1958, p. 10)

Buber is saying that once the artist begins work, the form limits how the vision will be realized and this must be acknowledged. While the artist might want to put everything that comes to hand into the art, this will not make for art. Art is, of necessity, always a sacrifice, a loss. He goes on,

> This is the risk: the primary word can only be spoken with the whole being. He who gives himself over to it may withhold nothing of himself. The work does not suffer me, as do the tree and the man, to turn aside and relax in the world if It; but it commands. (1958, p. 10)

Once the artist accepts the sacrifice, s/he also accepts the demand that s/he confront the sacrifice and the vision with all her/his being. The artist experiences such a relationship when s/he commits to making art and the experience itself will not allow the artist to see the world, as merely materials bent to her/his will. (We do not want to romanticize the artist in this. Certainly, artists are ruthless and taught to be competitive and treat materials and ideas as economic forms rather than as aesthetic possibilities, but that is the sociological business of art and here we are thinking of the act itself.) There is a reward for sacrifice and risk of which Buber writes:

> I can neither experience nor describe the form which meets me, but only body it forth. And yet, I behold it, splendid in the radiance of what confronts me, clearer than all the clearness of the world which is experienced.… the relation in which I stand to it is real, for it affects me, as I affect it. To produce is to draw forth, to invent is to find, to shape is to discover. In bodying forth I disclose. I lead the form across into the world of It. (1958, p. 10)

Bodying forth art is an ineffable experience, not easily discussed or described but certainly concrete as the artist grapples with the form and the materials. In the act of bodying forth or making art, the artist is changed. Something is drawn forth and invented, which carries with it a discovery about the original vision relationship unknown prior to the sacrifice and risk. This discovery can only happen through the act of the art-making.

Just so, ethics has to do with finding appropriately ethically good relationships between people, between people and the natural world and between people and the humanly made world. Ethics is the exploration of what constitutes such relationships. Art is an exploration of relationships between the art-maker and the world and ethics has to do with relationships. Given these parallel courses there is, perhaps, some relationship between art-making and ethics.

In what ways might this be the case? As the artist researches relationships, s/he does so for many "reasons." Among these the artist builds a new self through what hermeneutics terms "transcendence," meaning as the artist interprets new information about his experience, s/he simultaneously becomes something new in his world because new understandings are developed which change him. The artist accomplishes this transcendence through the very act of making the art and the art, therefore, is a document of the experience undergone by the artist, the interpretations that evolve during the art-making and the art is not merely a representation of a conclusion. The art remains open to new interpretations, even by the artist and is just a way station of becoming something new and more. Whether those relationships explored and what is learned are deemed "good" or "not good," the artist affords us, the art receiver, the opportunity to engage ourselves, through our encounters with the art, with experiences of self-transcendence. We accomplish this as we enter into the spirit of unfolding something about relationship without, necessarily being told what to believe about that relationship. The product is not important except as a vehicle. It, in itself, is nothing but a vehicle but the quality of its outlines, dimensions, and details are crucial to providing a vehicle that helps us enter into ourselves.

Of these two aspects of art, making and receiving, I would argue that educationally, curricularly, and ethically, the making is more valuable and important than the receiving. The bodily act of making (painting is a bodily act, exemplified by Jackson Pollock but any artist notes her or his body in painting or sculpture, music is bodily act as the instrumentalist uses her body to create the sounds and certainly dance is body) provides potential leverage for developing an ethical life. While it is possible to conceptualize a body-oriented existence that does not achieve an ethical life, within certain parameters, body (and dance) holds possibilities for us. These parameters are an awareness of the possibility of this humility grounded ethical life of which Levinas writes. Buber was clear that you could not make the *I–Thou* relation appear at will but you could be available

to it through awareness of its possibility in your life. In saying this, art encounters (both encountering someone else's art or making your own) is outside of our consideration unless the receiver/maker of the art is simultaneously engaged and concerned with the ways the art encounter can help her or him think about ethical relationships. This does not necessitate the art being didactic but only that the receiver has the intention of receiving in order to encounter something that connects her/him to another not through fusion (Levinas rejects the idea of fusing with another as this is another version of "making other same") but through being brought up short by the sheer otherness of the Other and all that it entails as described in Chap. 2.

The artist, similarly, during the process of making, may discover something about ethical living simultaneously through her or his relationships with the materials and through engagement with the subject/topic/area being explored. This will not necessarily happen, I would argue, through an explicit consciousness of ethical living during the art-making process for such explicitness might interfere with the artist's process. The two might run parallel and art might be pertinent if the artist were disposed toward the linkage. It does not necessarily occur with such a disposition. And, most importantly, this focus upon art-practice and its relation to ethics does not mean that specific artists live ethically commendable lives. It only means there are possibilities that necessitate exploration.

Thinking about dance in particular, the viscerality of dance seems especially a possible location of the aesthetics/ethics intersection. As we experience in our bodies the relationships we are expressing and exploring through the making of the dance, we have the opportunity to feel what it feels like to be in that state. We learn something about it that goes deeper within consciousness (again with the intention of having such understanding, not be accident but by intention) because it is bodily. We intuit new states of affairs and we experience, if we are available to this, the emotions that might attach to the state of affairs. So, the process becomes a cognitive, intuitive, and emotional nexus all of which lends itself to our ability to think about/become aware of the relationship being explored. This comes to us by way of imagination steeped in a capacity to be present without prejudgment, noticing when judgment enters (naturally) our experience.

What is the place of "great art" with which I began this discussion? It is this: if a person is to experience the true potential of art-making, then s/he must act "as if" the making of art is a serious affair and s/he desires to make "great art." S/he must pursue the art-making as an artist would do

so. When Johnson enumerates the various characteristics of how an artist "thinks" (really acts), these characteristics are more than intellectual stipulations. Each of them contributes to noticing the possibility of expression eventuating in making art. The expression, that is the moment of some awareness that is ineffable and yet available to us. Art is not made without it. It is the sort of state described by Levinas. It is a kind of liminality, a suspension before awareness of specificity intervenes and brings us "back to the earth." We may have had a moment of Metaphysical Desire realized but we do not live in such a world permanently. However, as with Buber's *I–Thou* relationship which is always fleeting but, for all that, permanently informing us in new ways, so, too, the momentary fulfillment of Metaphysical Desire interrupts the internal dialogue that supports the ever-expanding self, giving us to the world rather than us taking from the world. But it is not merely a matter of being given to the world but having the hesitation to know we do not know and finding that lack of truth an important truth. Ethics, as I think Levinas presents it, involves a hesitation, not an action. Actions may ensue as the Other requires us to act on its behalf but these actions are not actions as the other side of "expression" for the purpose of building a self. The making of art is the immersion in the possibility expression and every art made is always temporary and changing. For the dancer or musician, every rendering of the same dance or music is always a new dance, a new music through which something else is revealed, if we are available to the constant malleability of the art. Unlike the conventional approaches with rules and set pieces of how to think ethically, here the task is to remain open to the unfoldingness that is still stipulated in the constant interiority/exteriority exchange. The terms are there but their realization is always new. They are not "values" we enact but moments we experience as we learn more even about values. In this unfoldingness, we find the mystery of ethics as well as its fulfillment. The work of relationship is never done, never spoken for (as with rules, imperatives, duties, rights, even caring). For a Levinasian ethics, this is more than enough. This is almost comforting.

The above is a bodily realization of what it means to make art. I have been trying to show that Levinas's ethics has a "viscerality" about it that is akin to art, as the practice of art provides access to *the sensible* as well as an understanding of the making of art as another form of interiority (totalization) that is not complete because of viscerality/*sensible*, therefore leaving the artist, or anyone practicing art, open to the possibility of the ambiguity of not knowing. While the artist's work lies, primarily, in his or

her construction of him or herself through the practice of his or her art, it can leave the artist knowing that s/he does not know all, that the emerging art speaks back to her/him and has insistences of its own "needs."

Art is admittedly not about saying but about doing, not only about expression but also about action and it eventuates in the said. But, also, art is not about a straightforward telling of something in a more or less attempt at a transparency that goes directly to ideas (a form of Levinas's totalization through categories and labels) but is about, the intersection of artist, materials, ideas, traditions in new ways that escape the artist's control. "Good" art (and, in this case for our purposes, art that serves those purposes) reveals the complexity of the world allowing the maker of the art to confront her/his own complexity and confusion. If art is not about saying but about doing then viscerality is about that doing that goes directly to the body and returning the artist to a state of saying and expression.

It is with this in mind that I turn to the last chapter. In this chapter, I will describe how I teach ethics and how I teach the possibility of ethics in a Levinasian spirit.

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CHAPTER 4

Levinas in the Classroom: Working Toward the Ethical Consciousness of Living in Relation with an Other

Abstract In this chapter, Blumenfeld-Jones presents various kinds of educational actions used to help learners develop ethical consciousness. These actions include didactic teaching of normative ethics and Levinasian ethics, creation of a Personal Ethics Statement as to how each person will create an ethical community in her/his classroom. This community will be designed not to teach people to be ethical but to help each person develop her/his capacity to live ethically through the actual practice of co-creating various ethical communities with the other learners (teachers and students) in the room. Following this, there is the creation of various "classroom rules" documents keyed to various normative ethical systems as well as a Levinasian system. Finally, Blumenfeld-Jones presents various aesthetic activities. Stories are shared about "I am more than I can tell." These help students notice that each of us exceeds categories and labels. Movement activities are designed to encounter what it means to be with the face of an Other and to be present to the world for purposes of presence and not totalizing.

Keywords liminal • personal • face • neighbor • Council • humilty • empathy

This chapter is devoted to education for ethics and, more specifically, education for a Levinasian ethics. I have left a discussion of education to

D.S. Blumenfeld-Jones, *Ethics, Aesthetics, and Education*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55607-3_4

the last in order to establish the parameters of such an education before offering a way of thinking about that education. In order to situate this chapter, I need to, first, elaborate the kind of education I am favoring. Following this, I will present various ways of entering into an ethical world educationally and, then, still more focused, ways of entering into educating for a Levinasian ethical life. In this latter part of the chapter, as I discuss various activities I use to bring this into focus, I hope the reader will see these not as hard and fast, narrow "little" things, but as images of what it means to live in a Levinasian manner and how these activities, therefore, can begin to open up this possibility. This is not a "cookbook" chapter but it is a chapter of application intersecting "theory."

What Kind of Classroom?

Classrooms and schools are communities of a certain type. They are not merely places to learn "things" regardless of the life lived in that community. They are not merely spaces for the transfer of knowledge. They are not merely another social institution. In them, the life lived in the global sense of living with others as human beings can be given that extends beyond the classroom and school. While this is also true of certain other social institutions (churches come to mind), in this case, we have the opportunity not to take up a particular way of life but to entertain many ways of life in a place where such entertaining and experience can be made safe for experimentation. Dewey once said that the philosophy of education is the most fundamental philosophy of all because it is about how to have a world. The challenge, then, is to have the opportunity to know what kind of world a person might want by encountering the possibilities of worlds and being able to make choices based on one's lived experience of the possibilities. Certainly, as has already been asserted, schools and classrooms may not be the only place in which this opportunity can exist but, unlike others, schools are specifically places for encountering a breadth of possibilities available to the learner once s/he has left the classroom.

What makes this place different from other places in which a person lives such as her/his family space, her/his workspace, and her/his social space? It is unlike these other spaces in that this space can act as a liminal space (Victor Turner 1979, from van Gennep). Liminal spaces are what Turner named "betwixt and between." They are often ritual space/time situations through which a person transitions from one social state to another. For example, societies that have initiation rituals to transition young people

into adulthood create space/time events in which a person drops her/his child personae by literally dropping all personhood for some time in order to replace it with an adult personhood. Judaism, for instance, has the Bar- and Bas-Mitzvah which is famously marked by the phrase "Today I am a man" or "Today I am a woman." The young person takes on the rights and responsibilities of adulthood on that day through a series of events designed to transition her/him and have her/him accepted into the adult community. In archaic cultures (described by Turner), young people may be taken away from the village for a week or more. They undergo a stripping away of who they are (may even be "buried" and reborn during that period) in order to be reborn into the new self. Marriages in many cultures involve acts designed to initiate the person into the marriage state. They are not only celebrations but also times for learning.

Similarly, we might think of classrooms as liminal spaces designed to provide a stepping back from everyday life, a kind of time-out from that life, in order to consider that life and to become, albeit slowly, a person capable of participating in adult life. This can happen through treating the possibilities of life at a distance. This is not to dismiss the centrality of home-life, work-life, and social-life as "places" in which a person absorbs ways of living and makes choices. But it is rare that such spaces represent the possibility of liminality (stepping back from living life in order to consider and experience in a more conscious way). In keeping with this book, this involves not only cognitive thinking but also bodily/emotional/intuitive thinking that is noncognitive. To that end, this chapter is devoted to presenting ways of such "stepping back" in order to begin to experience ethics in general and Levinasian ethics more specifically, not as something to "know about" but as a lived experience that can be brought into lived focus.

How Can We Enter Into an Ethical World? Conventional Systems Creatively Explored

Before presenting a Levinasian way of educating for a life of responsibility for the Other, I want to present the way I teach ethics in general. For me, it is central to present my learners with a world of alternative possibilities from which each of them might choose, including a Levinasian perspective. I do not want to present a world in which the only ethical way to live is the way I favor. It is important to present viable alternatives of which a Levinasian one is possible.

I want my learners to know what it means to "live ethically." Often, in my work in summer workshops with teachers, the participants begin with the notion that many of their learners are not ethical beings. The desire of the teachers, therefore, is to get tips as to how to make their learners more ethical. I begin with a different premise: their learners are all ethical beings. It is simply that the teachers do not like the ethics being practiced by the learners. Most of their learners are Egoist Consequentialists (consequentialists only interested in her or his own well-being), interested only in forwarding their own individual projects. We live in a society that is steeped in what I term "hyper-individualism," that is a focus first and foremost on the self and her/his needs/desires. Focus upon the welfare of a group is rare and when it happens, it is often an "othering" experience (canned food drives for the poor comes to mind) in which one is doing something for the less fortunate for a brief period of time. This is taken as doing one's moral duty. The idea, however, of connecting in a more sustained manner is rarely part of the ethical landscape of school. School is about each person learning what s/he needs for her/him to prosper. This feels similar to Levinas's notion of interiority and construction of a self. However, in the case of schools, this is not articulated as an actual act of self-construction but, rather, and often, as another opportunity for competition as food drives, generally, pit classrooms against each other as to which classroom will collect the most food, thus emphasizing winning over the idea of taking care of another. This is not offered as a critique of a morally bankrupt education. It is presented as one possible form of ethical living since living competitively is certainly one kind of ethical world as it puts us into relation to each other in a specific way.

The teachers who participate in my workshops come in with worries about cheating, taking shortcuts, and the like. They want their learners to "act right," to be obedient to the teacher's will, to be polite, basically to create a learning environment in which everyone can learn. The first task of myself and my partners in the workshop (Don Senneville and Mary Crawford of Foothills Academy) is to apprise them of two dimensions of their own thinking. First, we work with them to show them that, in the room with them, there is a variety of ideas of what constitutes ethical living. We do this quite simply: we present a moral dilemma and have small groups array themselves along a line on the floor, according to how they feel about the polar opposite positions dealing with that dilemma. We then ask each participant to speak to why s/he has placed herself along

the continuum in the way that s/he has. This begins to illuminate for each participant that there are legitimate disagreements about what constitutes ethical behavior. Second, we present them with the ethics systems presented in Chap. 2 of this book. We do so cognitively (direct teaching of the dimensions of each system) and then intellectually by having them, in small groups, discuss one particular ethical dilemma in the light of each of the systems.

Applying Conventional Systems to Ethical Dilemmas

In this work, we ask them to imagine that there would be very different responses to the same behavior such that, in some cases, what appears unethical in one system may be found ethically acceptable in another. We ask them to apply the principles of each system to determine the ethical status of the particular behavior and how we might deal with it. More specifically we ask them to, for instance, deliberate about what constitutes a common good and what kinds of behaviors we might expect each person to enact to maximize that common good, or what kinds of rules make sense to promote that common good. We ask them to think deontologically, applying the categorical imperative test, to examine the particular behavior and to keep in mind Kant's demand to preserve human dignity. We ask them to examine the behavior as a care ethicist as well as a virtues ethicist, and so forth. In this work, we are working at shaking their belief in what they think constitutes "being ethical" and to see that each of them is functioning from a system that is her/his preferred way of having an ethical world. Each person will feel more or less affinity with one system and can come to recognize how s/he is living a particular ethics that may not be universally accepted, even by their students. They can now see that there are no quick fixes to their ethical concerns. They are only different ethical systems colliding in the classroom.

This is not to insist that their students are, themselves, aware of these various systems or that each of them might be acting ethically. They have no more awareness of these possibilities than their teachers do. In fact, it is likely that they share their understanding of their ethical failings with their teachers and do not see their behaviors as trying to "get away with something." Our educational task, as I see it, is to apprise every one of the various ethics possibilities available so that a more informed choice might be made about how to live ethically in a consistent manner.

The Personal Ethics Statement

To this end, I take the next step with my own learners in the teacher preparation programs in which I have taught. I begin with the work as described above. I move on with them to the creation of what I term an ethics personal statement. In the box, you will find the instructions I provide for them to do this statement.

The Ethics Statement The central "ethical" question is: What is the good? This means, what is the good life and how do I go about living it? To answer these questions, you need to have a clear (or as clear as possible) sense of what it means to "be good." I encourage you to become clear about your answers to these questions and to not be afraid to state your position. Here are some very brief, possible answers to these questions to help you think about formulating your own responses.

The good life is one in which each person's happiness is maximized. Whatever we do should be pointed toward each person identifying what makes her or him happy and going about gathering the resources necessary to fulfilling that happiness. In order to ensure this, we need to see to it that everyone has equal access (not merely opportunity to access) to the material and personal resources of society so that happiness can be found for all. My happiness is contingent on your happiness. Thus, to maximize happiness means providing for you as well as for myself.

The good life is about living in peace. No matter what we do if peace is not present, then life is not good. We must work to eliminate war, violence, and anger. This must be the central occupation of life, important over material wealth and power.

The good life is about each person striving to achieve the highest goals he or she can set for him or herself. This striving is, naturally both for myself and against others. Although it may be against others, this striving will not damage anyone because each person has equal power in the situation to succeed. Competition is good because it produces energy for the group and for the individual and through competition, the highest achievements can

be accomplished. Human nature requires limits against which to push. Through such striving, all will benefit from the activities toward great accomplishment.

To begin constructing your statement I want you to reflect upon today's lecture on the various ethics systems and position yourself in terms of who you are as you answer the above questions about the "good." Please remember that you actually cannot be a mixture of systems, you cannot be eclectic. This is because, if you are willing, for instance, to consider the consequences of an action, then you cannot be a duty-governed person because you are willing, in some cases, to set aside the duties you had determined were always correct in the interest of consequences. So consequentialism trumps a duty orientation.

There are three parts to your Ethics Statement. In Part one, you should define, as clearly as you can, what is "good" and what is "bad," what is "right" and what is "wrong." You should be specific. Some of you may want to define these terms in the light of your Christian beliefs. Others of you will have different bases upon which to found your ideas. In all cases, please be willing to own your positions and not hide them behind vague statements designed to offend no one. While I may ask you questions about how these will play in the classroom, we all know that we cannot leave our beliefs outside of the door. The question becomes, what do we do with them as educators?

In Part two, having clearly defined your own ethical positions about "goodness," you will write about how these ideas will play out in your practice as a teacher. How will you use them to make decisions in school life and how they will inform how you interact with learners, colleagues, and administrators? Here, please be descriptive of what will be going on in your classroom as you model ethical life and encourage ethical life as central to your classroom and school practice.

In Part three, which you will leave until after you have received feedback from both your colleagues and I, you will turn your statements into rubrics. These rubrics, or short statements, can be used by you to remind yourself, when the teaching day is overwhelming,

of your core values. You will want these rubrics in order to hold on to yourself even when the school demands different agendas. It is not that you fight with the school. Rather you find out how to bring your ideas into being in a way that will not threaten and yet can become part of your teaching.

Here are some suggestions and questions which may help you structure your thinking and writing.

1. James Macdonald's two questions ("What is the meaning of human existence?" and "How shall we live together?") are important components of ethical thinking, especially the latter question. You might want to begin your statement with responses to these two questions.
2. Create a list of your most important ethical beliefs in the following form: "I believe X and here are some examples of how it appears."
3. What is the "good" for you? What can you do to promote it? Should you promote it? How will your classroom look and be as a "good classroom"?
4. Almost all teachers speak of love, care, joy, creativity, self-esteem, parental involvement, imagination, and so on. and believe they are promoting these qualities. That includes people you might deem to be bad teachers. If you believe in these values, what do they mean to you specifically?

It is important to recognize that by stating your beliefs and using rubrics, at least using them for yourself, you should not be indoctrinating students. You can represent a particular morality without imposing it. Indeed, you must not impose it. You must leave the situation open to alternative positions. You must know how you can state what is intolerable in another's position without destroying it or disallowing it. However, you should recognize that not all positions are equally acceptable. Bad ones may be based on poor information or inadequate thinking. As one moral leader among many, it is your responsibility to enable the person to think more clearly. It is not that they must, finally, agree with you. Rather they must found their beliefs on strong thinking.

The Ethical Statement, then, must be a guide to your own best thinking.

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As your teacher, I want you to understand that I may not agree with some of you on important issues. However, while I may represent one position, I do not impose it. On the other hand, while I expect you to stick to your own positions I want you to recognize, as I have noted above, that not all positions are equally good. As M.C. Richards (2011) writes,

> [A]n attachment to liking and disliking…obstructs learning and deeper enjoyment. The right to opinion must be honored without exception, but not all opinions are equally honorable. Though everyone is free to be who s/he is, ignorance and cruelty are not freedoms. (Richards 2011, Wesleyan University Press, p. 106)

It is my responsibility to help you see your position in the light of alternatives, to ask you to ground yourself in strong logic and clear reasoning and to be responsive to critique. I will be challenging you on points, raising questions, and asking you to think in more detail. I will ask you to cogently defend your ideas. This is because an ethics statement should be offered humbly as well as with conviction. If I were not to do this, we would have mere opinion and that *is* indoctrinating.

This is a complex and difficult assignment for many of them. I allow for a rewrite based on feedback, first from colleagues and then from myself. The idea is to make as clear a statement as possible as to who each person is if s/he is living in her/his best light.

Classroom Rules and Living Ethically

There is a third step to be taken. Notice that I insist that the teacher not indoctrinate her/his learners but afford each of them to have the opportunity to "know" what it is like to live in specific ethical worlds. To this end, I encourage them to consider how each of them will help her/his learners

encounter each possibility in a concrete manner. Too often, we teach our learners "about" something, but not what it is to live that something. In order to concretize each system, I ask them to consider how they might structure a classroom to live the truly consequentialist life (act or rules), to live the deontological life, to live the caring life, to the live the virtuous life, and also to live the Levinasian life. For example, for the act consequentialist life I ask them to imagine

- how each of them will bring her/his classroom community together to discuss what good will be maximized,
- how each person in the community will be an equal person always acting to maximize that agreed-upon good,
- how, whenever "trouble" arises, the participants in the situation will be reminded to consider how s/he is committed to maximizing the agreed-upon good and
  - in what ways what is unfolding is failing to do that and what might have to change for it be maximized and, finally,
- how to conduct regular classroom meetings to reexamine the agreed-upon good and the consequences of each person's actions.

While typically in classrooms, there are "classroom rules" or whole "school rules," in this case the class is brought together to determine the good to be maximized, determine what rules will aid in that effort, put those rules into play, reminding each person, in the midst of a problem off these rules and how they can be interpreted and, once again, hold regular classroom meetings to revisit both the agreed-upon good and the rules. The point here is for each person in the community to be an equal partner in establishing an ethical community (rather than have only the teacher be the enforcer of the rules and the good). In this way, rules-consequentialism (or act consequentialism) becomes a lived reality and each person is learning how to think in that way. What can be done for consequentialism can be done for deontology, for care and for virtue ethics. In all cases, the purpose is to have the community members live the reality of being a deontologist or a care ethicist or a virtuous person.

In keeping with this way of understanding and using classroom rules, we entertain the possibility of classroom rules oriented toward a Levinasian humility life. In this case, the "rules" are not "rules" but reminders of our humility toward others. They are such as: "The Face of the Other is always new." "Each of us is a mystery to be cherished, not a problem to be

solved." "Notice what you are not noticing." "Be still in your mind before you speak your mind." There are "behaviors" here ("cherishing," "noticing," "be still") but they are not the usual behaviors. We ask of the learners that they notice themselves and become open to those around them in a nonjudgmental way that does not seek to use another. One of the rules we adopted in the teacher preparation program I directed, we took directly from Mary Rose O'Reilly (1988), "Listen like a cow." (See further discussion of O'Reilly's work below.) Who knows what that really means? It is always a process in motion. It calls for attention and a certain slowness. In our world of quick judgments and mandates for "it should have happened yesterday" and the educational climate today of streamlining education to get students to a "place" more quickly, eschewing the time it takes to become educated (such that education no longer means to educe but to put inside learners "stuff"), this approach to ethical life is a slowing down, a taking time to notice, an absorption in the world around us. It is an aesthetic way of living ethically. This will become more clear as I describe some of the work I do with my students to develop this sensibility.

The Levinasian Ethics: A Different Kind of Education

This brings me to the Levinasian work. Here something other than talk needs to occur. Talk certainly needs to occur. But it will not be sufficient. And where there is talk, it will be of a very different character.

Introducing My Students to Levinas

Here is what I share with my students as I teach them about what I term "humility ethics."

A View of Ethics from a Place of Humility Most ethics are based on the use of moral reasoning to come to conclusions about what is ethically right to do. While reason certainly has its place in moral considerations, reason fails us on three counts.

- First, not all ethical dilemmas are solvable through the use of reason. We can see this to be true by the very simple test of

confronting a moral dilemma and realize that two or more solutions might come to mind for the self-same situation, both of which are equally credible.

- Second, and more importantly, ethical life is not simply a matter of knowing what is right (even if that were possible); it is also a matter of doing what is right. To do what is right requires being in a right state of living as well as a right state of mind (knowledge). Therefore, ethical life is not only a matter of knowledge (in western philosophy this is known as questions of epistemology) but also of *being* an ethical person (in western philosophy this is known as questions of ontology).
- Third, given that there are multiple, credible ethics systems and noting that we call each of them "ethics," there may be a state of life that precedes and grounds all of these systems which establishes more firmly what it means to "be ethical."
- Fourth, the Greeks distinguished three kinds of life concerns:
  - Concern for questions of knowledge (epistemology) such as "What can I know?," "How do I know that what I know is correct?," "What are the means whereby I know something?," "What constitutes true knowledge as opposed to false knowledge and what are the criteria for identifying truth from falsehood?," "What is truth?," and so forth.
  - Concern for questions of existence (ontology) such as "What does it mean that X exists?," "What is the difference between existence and non-existence?," "What is the meaning of my life?," "How do I come to be who I am?," and "What options do I have to be in my existence?"
  - Concern for questions of ethics and aesthetics, gathered under the one term—axiology.

Clearly, the Greeks saw that questions of goodness were different from questions of knowledge and questions of existence. Nevertheless, today we act as if knowing what is good is the same as doing the good and being good. It is this conflation which is mistaken.

Turning to the idea of "being good," we can acknowledge that *being* good brings in the person who is to be good by the use of the verb of existence (to be). A person *is* good. But what does this mean?

How is a person good? Who is good? Moving from this abstraction toward something that is lived we can say "*I* am good." Who is this "I?" Emmanuel Levinas wrote that the "I" is irreducibly alone and unique in the world. If we each think of ourselves and how we are in the world and who we are, we each will come up against this truth: all of the categories we might use to show how we are not alone (blue eyes, liking tostadas, being a man or a woman, living in the US, being happy or sad or depressed) do not account for the wholeness of who each of us *is*. Further, unlike the categories I use to make sense of myself, I know (because I experience this) that my identity is constantly shifting and changing. I am not the same from one moment to the next and, yet, most importantly, I am the same at all moments for I always know that I *am*. It is this which is of greatest importance. The content of my identity is not the various ways in which I understand myself or the ways I which I change but, rather, my identity as existing is the content of my identity. It is this sheer existence which establishes the "I."

What I can say about myself each of us can say about ourselves. No matter how submerged each of us may be in our cultural life (filled with identification categories that place us within the context of living and give us a place from which to live and upon which to establish that each of us exists) there is that about each of us that has nothing to do with these markers. These markers function to establish a "we" to which we belong. These markers anchor us in society (and this is important). However, these self-same markers can never obliterate the sheer existence which each of us possesses. They can never displace that existence or speak for it. Existence is all any of us have in common in a firm way.

This idea that existence is all any of us in common is the ground upon which to establish an ethical life. Whereas most approaches to ethical life begin with the idea that we will establish a set of principles and/or concepts that we can use to make ethical decisions, that these principles and/or concepts are for each individual to discover/learn/animate/use, this idea of existence establishes a first principle that has nothing to do with what we know about the rules or laws of ethics. Rather, in this understanding of existence, the first principle is that we are all the same without being the same at all. Our sheer

existence as a human being cannot be reduced to anyone else's existence. *Who* I am is not who you are and you are not me. Were it the case that our existences were identical, then there would not actually be any individuals in the room; there would only be me. I would have subsumed you into my identity. But, then, the truth that the content of my "I" is my existence would have no meaning because just as I would have gathered you into my uniqueness, thereby obliterating your existence, so you, too, would have gathered me into your uniqueness, there obliterating my existence.

There are two ways in which we might deal with this reality. Understanding that my uniqueness is opaque to you (because I can never be reduced to you and uniqueness would be nothing if it were, in the end, reducible to sameness) and your uniqueness is opaque to me, it is possible to ignore this fact because it, on the first view, to not appear helpful to learning how to live with you. Therefore, I could turn to what I can know and I can derive rules about how to live in order to safely negotiate the social terrain in ways that preserve you as much as you preserve me. However, this move (of deriving rules and developing positive knowledge about you which becomes knowledge through categories and rules for applying categories that carry premade meaning such that I can understand you on the basis of agreed-upon categories that have meaning) ends up in obliterating the deepest aspect of my existence and of your existence, the fact of sheer existence. Levinas calls such moves "totalizing" because the "you" and the "I" become totally spoken for through the categories and rules.

A second choice which is grounded through this understanding of existence, begins not in using what I know and can know (and deriving rules about this knowledge and how to use it) but, rather, in seeing the Other, seeing you as the Other (as irreducibly different and alone) in such a way that I am "with" you and "open" to you. It is in this "withness" and "openness" that ethics begins. It begins with the humility of what I cannot know or even hope to know. My "I" will always exceed the categories by which I know even myself because the content of the "I" is the sheer existence itself, aside from any specifics about the existence. This sheer existence is not contentless, not abstract, but is quite concrete. Each of us can feel the way in which we exist and this becomes the starting point for our living:

we do exist. What form our subsequent manifestation of existence takes, pervading these manifestations is the fact that I exist and that you exist in a way that is radically other to me.

In so recognizing your existence and my existence in this thoroughly autonomous way, in recognizing how I cannot know this existence, in seeing what Levinas calls "face" by which he means that the existence of the Other appears in all its nudity and palpable living, before it manifested in specifics and even is there now, despite the specifics, I gain a responsibility for you. I will learn from you in the only way I can; through your sheer autonomy, I learn something I did not know before. I can only do such learning if, in fact, you really are different from me. If you are actually the same from me (in the ways enumerated above but can be taken up through the idea of "culture") then I cannot learn anything because I am only learning myself and what I already know. In the radical difference that is us, that is the place of learning. I stand at your feet; I take you in only be knowing I cannot take you in. I become open to you.

Ethics begins in this openness to your radical difference and my responsibility is born out of that experience. This is not a knowing as usually construed when we think about knowing something. This is an experience, what Levinas calls becoming sensible. You can see that this sort of knowing does not use cognitive apparatus (bits of knowledge organized logically in reference to a system of logical organization, whatever the logic is that is being used). It is a state of being that is ethical at base because it is responsible for the Other because you cannot help but be responsible for the Other, just as the Other cannot help but be responsible for you.

From the above, it becomes apparent that in order to develop an ethical life in classrooms, while we can (and will, quite rightly) establish ways of being together (whether these ways take the form of rules or of negotiations or of community building or of developing good, individual character), this cannot be the sum total of an ethical life. I will know what is right; I will choose whether or not to act on what I know; I will see the consequences of our actions and the meanings of those consequences. All of this is surface and shallow because it is not based in the existence of myself or the Other but is learned from the outside. I will *act* ethically (according to the canons

of our systems) but I will not, necessarily, *be* ethical. I will not *be* in a way that authenticates my actions and there is little or no guarantee that I have acted in ways that are good for the Other because the Other has merely become an-other in the sphere of my life. The irony is that while the ethics systems are learned from the outside, what they do not provide is a real experience of what Levinas terms "exteriority" that is the fact that the Other is wholly exterior to me and must be if there is to be another person in the room. From this flows the consequence that living ethically is living responsibly for the Other, living for the Other and not for myself for ethics is, finally, a situation of relationship and I cannot be in relationship with an Other is that other is merely an-other and not an Other. If the Other becomes simply an extension of me, then I am everywhere and no one else is anywhere.

For classrooms, this means cultivating this experience, this recognition of exteriority, of openness, of sensibility in ways that bring about the recognition. This is not circular logic. It is in the profound connection of difference which we must experience that we will become committed, in our being, to the Other and her/his preservation. Even using the "her/his" designation is misleading because that is already a category that sorts people into gender and/or sex and makes these categories have a meaning they don't have. They do not have meaning when it comes to the sheerness of existence for what does it matter what my sex is or social gender is or sexual orientation is. These are just categories that can only exist because I exist. I exist whether or not these categories exist. It is this which must be cultivated and out of which ethical life begins.

I use this talk to help my learners begin to encounter not just a different "idea" of ethics but a different "state of being" out of which one's ethics might emerge. I am a strong advocate of "telling" that can prepare people to move toward understanding something without manipulating them. I also advocate choosing to do this telling no matter the age, in order to establish some understanding of what we are about. This includes sharing Levinas with my learners. The kind of work I presented in Chap. 2, I also

share with my teacher education students, as well as the above. I encourage them to do the same with their students.

I have a basis for this. Many years ago I had a student in one of doctoral courses I was especially enamored of David Purpel's *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education* (1985). She taught a multi-age primary education level class (the ages assigned to first through third grade). She decided to read the book with them and discuss the book. She felt they could grasp with he was writing. She shared with me that she had done this and that, indeed, they had understood and together they forged a classroom life that addressed the kinds of dilemmas and contradictions elaborated in the book.

Having spent time discussing the particulars of Levinas with them, I have them read two books that deal with being present to another person: Mary Rose O'Reilly's *Radical Presence* (1988, already mentioned) and M.C. Richards (2011) *Centering*. These two books present ways of being centered in oneself as an educator while being able to connect with those around her/him. *Radical Presence* is O'Reilly's presentation of her Catholic/Buddhist/Quaker self and the ways in which she attempts to be present to her students. It is a book about education without being a "how-to" book. Richards, in *Centering*, analogizes the potter centering clay on the wheel to centering oneself in the universe and expounds upon what that means.

What does O'Reilly offer that contributes to a Levinasian way. She writes about education as usually a matter of packaging ideas for students to consume. In contrast to this, she offers the following:

> Most of us believe…that what happens in the classroom is caused by the teacher....The idea of filling students…rests on the conviction that we know what they need, that their hunger is like our own, or something like the hunger we felt in college....If we were to be quiet and listen to students, what would we hear?…It's good to remember, in general, that things may be the opposite…of what…[we] expect. (p. 2)

Here we encounter the notion of beginning with what we do not know and not making assumptions based on our categories of understanding. In aid of this she suggests, among other actions that we "… simply *[be] there*, with a very precise and focused attention, listening, watching. Not [be] somewhere else, answering some question that hasn't been asked." (p. 2) Further on she writes,

> Hospitality calls me to consider the singularity of each person, the diversity of needs… The discipline of presence requires me to be there, with my senses focused on the group at hand, listening rather than thinking about what I'm going to say – observing the students, the texts, and the sensory world of the classroom. Hospitality…implies reception of the challenging and unfamiliar. (p. 9)

This is in synchrony with the notion of a radical alterity, of an Other who is always other than myself, thus "singular." Further, as she notes, there is the "discipline of presence" requiring her to listen rather than think about herself. As she asserts, it is the "reception of the challenging and unfamiliar" that is necessary for presence. And just as the teacher must listen so, the learner needs "deep listening…good, welcoming silence, not the dark, crushing silence" that does not hear, instead ignores. (p. 26)

In aid of this notion of listening, I employ a practice called "Council." Council (Zimmerman and Coyle 1991) is derived from but not identical with the ways in which some Indigenous people conducted decision-making activities. The experience of Council, as I use it, is aesthetic in two ways. The actual practice, as described below, transcends the cognitive and the creation of what are termed "talking sticks" is a directly aesthetic activity. I will first describe the practice and then describe the making of the talking sticks.

Council is a way of a group speaking together about an issue in order to come to a conclusion about how to respond to that issue. It is not Deweyan deliberation in that there is no back and forth accompanied by alternative action scenarios eventuating in choosing one of those scenarios being chosen for experimental action. Rather, the group speaks together and as this happens what to do emerges. Council involves deep listening and presence, presence both to oneself and to another. There is the speaker and there are the rest of the group, not as a group but as a set of individuals, each attending to the speaker as if alone with that speaker. In this sense, it is Levinasian as it is a way into encountering the Other. Recall that for Levinas there would be no need to be reciprocated in this encounter (as there is with Noddings and the care ethic). I may encounter the *face* of the Other as a neighbor with whom I live in proximity and feel myself called out of myself into connection with that ineffability. Council may involve many people at once but it does not preclude the ethic of two people. It is just that, in this case, each person who is not speaking can be in that Levinasian connection with the speaker.

Council involves three rules and a talking stick. The purpose of the stick is to remind each member of the group that, when a particular person is speaking, the rest of the group is to listen in an attentive manner. The three rules are designed to bring about that deep listening. These three rules are:

1. *Be brief in addressing the question at hand.*
2. *Speak from the heart.*
3. *Listen from the heart.*

The first of these rules is obvious. Do not make speeches. Gather your thoughts and address the question as directly as possible. This allows time for everyone to speak. (It is expected that everyone will speak who is part of the Council.) All voices are valued in Council, even if what one person has to say seems to have already been said by someone else. Since it is this person's particular voice, s/he will articulate the idea in her/his own way that contributes to what is being said. That is, no one is identical and the speaking is not only about the content but also about the position of the person in relation to that content.

The second rule is crucial. The person should speak as honestly as possible and feel s/he is speaking from a place of personal truth. The heart as a guide provides the emotional ground of the speaking and makes it as important as the content of the speech.

The third rule, listen from the heart, is the central dimension of Council. What does it mean to "listen from the heart?" Often, when a person hears another speaking, s/he is not really listening to the other person. Rather s/he is already preparing her/his response. From a Levinasian perspective, this is a natural event in which I, the "listener" (except I am not listening) fit the discourse of the other into some preunderstood categories to which I am responding. In that sense I am making other same and I am not actually hearing what the other is saying, thus subsuming the other to my own ends. This cannot be helped. In order to stop this, each person must be aware of the move being made *and* remind her/himself that her/his responsibility in Council is to pay full attention to the person holding the talking stick. This responsibility does not come before shifting attention to the Other: it grows out of shifting attention to the Other. It is hearing the *face* of the Other, becoming to the Other as a *face* and knowing the Other or what the Other will say. That is, as a person "hears" her/his inner voice beginning to chatter while the other person is speaking, s/he

reminds her/himself to listen to the person speaking, to silence that inner voice that wishes to respond, wishes to categorize, wishes to subsume to her/his arguments rather than be present to the Being of the Other, to that radical alterity. We must remember that there will be sufficient time to formulate a response but it can only be in the environment of having heard in the first place.

The making of the talking sticks is a directly aesthetic experience that works toward bringing a group together in a way that makes of the sticks not only a tool for the act of Council but, themselves, objects of the meaning of the group as a group of people bound together in common practice. I devote one class (depending on the length of the class meeting but I often schedule the course in which the stick is made for a weekly three-hour block of time) to the making of the sticks and the initial use of the sticks. I write "sticks" because, given the size of the classes I teach (25–30 at the undergraduate level) I have the class make two sticks to accommodate what we do. Prior to the making of the sticks, I request that for the next class each person bring two objects that can be attached to two sticks (which are large mailing tubes). If I make the sticks in my social studies methods class (which is the class during which I teach ethics), then I ask for two objects that "mean" something to the students about social studies. If I make the sticks in my "Teaching, Learning, Creativity" course (which as a course in the aestheticizing of content), then I ask for two objects that "mean" something to the person as a person. Either way, in the following class meeting we begin by making the sticks.

How are the sticks made? Aside from bringing two mailing tubes, I also bring "art" materials (oil pastels, markers, crayons) and attaching materials (tape, thumbtacks, and glue). I tell them that we will be constructing the two talking sticks (they have already read the Utne article on Council). I give the following instructions for the actual making of the sticks.

> To construct the sticks you may use the art materials to decorate the stick in whatever way you like as well as attaching your objects to the sticks. We will not, however, be simply beginning. We will begin by "feeling the presence of the group." How do we do this? Many years ago, while studying dance in NYC with Phyllis Lamhut, we were doing an improvisation class. Phyllis has set the "theme" for the improvisation and we were doing improvisations in small groups. When it came time for my group to perform we went to the performance space, took a very brief moment and began. Phyllis stopped us. "No, no, no, I want this to be a group improvisation, not a set of solos. Don't

> just begin immediately. First feel the presence of the group, feel the group as a group and when you have all felt that, someone will begin, will make a motional offer and the group improvisation will begin. So begin by being quiet and feeling the group. And, then, when it is right, begin." We stood in a circle and simply waited, sending out our sense of each other, until someone felt moved to move. And we began. It was a powerful experience, one we will employ today. We are gathered around the table, not as a set of individuals but as a group bound together by common cause, the making of these sticks. We will do the making of the sticks in silence, so that we can feel the presence of the group. There may be an occasional need to say something but, mostly, no talking. We are gathered around the table. Cast your eyes downward, don't look around, just send out your peripheral vision and feel the group as a group. When someone feels so moved, begin to make the stick.

And so we begin. People may feel uneasy and there may be some laughter. I stop the group and ask them to remember that we are here for each other, that no one is watching us, that we can take that embarrassed laughter and turn it inward to feel outward toward each other. We regather our sense of the group. Once it is established someone begins, makes the first "offer" and we begin to make the sticks. Once the sticks are constructed, we sit in a circle. I take both sticks in my hands and say, "Aren't these beautiful. Just as objects of art, they are beautiful. They are also beautiful in that they are *our* sticks, our objects the declare us to be a group. Now we will pass the sticks around the circle. Each person will speak of the two objects s/he attached and what they mean to that person, why those two objects. I will not begin. The sticks will go to someone who will begin. Who would like to begin?" Usually there is some silence and then someone asks for the sticks and speaks.

This first passing of the sticks begins to build a community out of a group of people, most of whom did not know each other prior to taking the course, or, at the very least, did not know each other as a group. It is also coming to encounter each person in her/his status as separate from each of us, as a person who is not known. Since I use Council early in my teaching, these ideas are not yet available to the learners. However, the potential is there to, later, bring back Council but now in light of these ideas of "not knowing" and *face* and Metaphysical Desire for connection and responsibility. Even without this underpinning, this initial experience with Council is always a powerful, emotional experience that grows out of an aesthetic experience (making of the talking sticks). The making of the sticks offers, itself, an opportunity for a quasi-Levinasian moment of

connection that is wordless and also, deeply bodily and emotional. It is "quasi-Levinasian" in that it is not a duality moment. But it has kinship to Levinas in that it builds from a place prior to cognition.

I recall the first time I did Council. It was with a cohort teaching preparation program and was done in the second semester of that program. The cohort had not been particularly cohesive and the first semester faculty had had some struggles with them. One faculty member, who had taught them in the first semester and had them again, asked at our faculty meeting subsequent to this Council class, what had I done. All these students were talking about it and they seemed transformed as a group. I told the faculty about the Council work. Ever since that initial experience, I have used Council and the making the sticks as the opening to my undergraduate teaching which has almost always been in cohort settings. In general, when I have used Council in my classrooms, my students respond that they have never felt so heard. For the first time each person feels present and equal to all the other speakers. Council tends to bring out more voices and there is much more respect for what is being offered. As the talk about the situation occurs (and not all the talk must be strategic as to what will be done with the issue), each person's personal relationship to the issue becomes part of the conversation. The talk is not only about what to do but, through the sharing of stories about the issue, each person becomes more aware for her/his own experience with it and each person comes to know others as separate and valuable individuals. In this sense, Council presents one sort of initial avenue into connection with others which is at the heart of Levinasian ethics.

So far, it is clear; I am using a cognitive approach. But also note, with Council, something more is going on than the mere content of the conversation. A connection is being made in an emotional, bodily manner. As for the two mentioned books, they are not used merely with the intention of gleaning content but are experiences of reading. I encourage my students to study themselves as they read these books, to place themselves within the life being lived in those books and to imagine, for instance, what O'Reilly means by "listening like a cow" and what that might mean for each of them. For some this particular book is difficult, as it seems filled with religion, some of which may be anathema to some students whose religion is different. I encourage them to look past the religion for the ways in which O'Reilly reveals how she becomes present. One does not have to "believe" as a Catholic or a Quaker or a Buddhist to gain from reading this book. Richards's is a secular book and, so, easier for them to

consider. Together, these two books introduce some ways of "being present" which is central to a Levinasian ethics. In what follows I present work I do with my students to begin to show them the humility and presentness I suggest are necessary for an ethical being.

Ethics Begins in the Humility

I have been emphasizing that, with Levinas, ethics begins in admitting that we do not know. One avenue into experiencing that is to engage in stories of not being known. That is, everyone has the experience of feeling others do not really know him or her, that each of us is "more than I can tell." If each of us is "more than I can tell," then this fact comes alive in the moments when a person feels that s/he is not really being "seen" but has already been fit into a category and "made sense of." I use my own writing on this (2012), having them read this and we discuss the writing. The essence of this writing is as follows. I explore how a label restricts a person from being understood as more than that label. No surprise there. But I also write about what it means to accept the label and live the label (in my case the label of "dancer") such that my entire existence hinges on living out the implications of that label. As I wrote there:

> The spell of the name. It told me who I was. People who met me for the first time responded to me for my name, "Dancer." They believed they knew me in knowing that name. Or they believed they could know me by inquiring into my Dancer's Life. In many ways they were right for I had always accepted, happily, the name which set me apart, made me special, provided cachet not easily obtained: this god, this dancer, this special being. I always answered questions about what I did with "Oh. I'm a dancer." (I *am* a dancer.) "Oh, really? Oh my! How wonderful. A dancer? That's great!"
>
> *What do you do?* I am.
>
> That was the formula: *being* equated with *action*.
> Existence, pure and simple (if that is even possible) was not possible without a name.

I also wrote:

> Morris Berman, in *Coming to Our Senses*, writes that we tend to fill our social world with sound, noise, words, all in order to cover the void which

> we feel in our bodies. He writes, "It is as if silence could disclose some sort of terribly frightening Void. And what is being avoided are questions of whom we are and what we are actually doing with each other."…He further writes…"culture substitutes for our body, is the 'secondary satisfaction'" which "substitutes for a primary satisfaction of wholeness that somehow got lost."… Any sort of -ism or set of dogmas is an attempt "to create meaning for human beings who, if they had not suffered some sort of primary loss early on, would not need it."

I write that, for me, I voluntarily adopted that label (although I also write of the ways in which the world set a situation in which it could be said I was guided in that direction). The point here is that, with Levinas, categories and labels are very powerful markers for our identities that shield us from the uncertainty of the world around us. Later on I write of how the adoption of the label interceded between myself and my experiences of the world so that, in many ways I stood outside of what was occurring, "seeing" it only through that label.

It is this which I share with my learners prior to them engaging in their own stories of disaffection and feeling the ways in which labels constricted them so that the "more than I can tell" becomes invisible, even to themselves. I have them share their stories with only one other person and I never ask for a report of what was shared. What I do request is a sharing of the experience of telling the stories of not being seen, of "being more than I can tell." The importance of this work is not in the contents of the stories but in the ways in which we each become oriented in the world through the labels and the experiences of noticing that orienting. It is a step into awareness of that which, generally, goes unnoticed.

Levinas and "Face"

For me *Face* is one of the most profound dimensions of Levinas. In Chap. 2, I presented a description of the *neighbor* and the *face* and the importance of passivity. To reiterate a theme in this book, ethics is grounded in what we do not know, grounded not in rules but in presence to what is there, not what we wished were there. However, this "thereness" is not a concrete set of characteristics but rather the emptiness of my not knowing. I can imagine that sentences such as this may feel counter-intuitive and interiorly contradictory. In order to connect with them, we need experiences directed toward them. In what follows I provide some descriptions

of possible experiences. These experiences, in keeping with this book, are aesthetic in character and activity. They draw upon bodily/emotional presence.

Niccolaides, Franck and the Art of Drawing and Ethics

Niccolaides (1990), in his book *The Natural Way to Draw*, begins with the insight that most people do not draw what they see but rather what is in their minds about what they are seeing. A person draws an apple s/he conceives to be "apple-like" rather than the apple in front of her or him. The first task, therefore, is to slow down the processes of encounter and get people out of their heads and into the world around them. Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt Therapy, enjoined each of us to "lose your mind and come to your senses." This exercise designed by Niccolaides is precisely grounded in that idea.

Niccolaides's instructions for this activity as quite simple. Set up an object which you wish to draw. It could be an apple or your hand or a plant but something that is not moving. Then set up your paper on a support and place your pencil on the paper for a starting point. DO NOT DRAW YET. See the pencil not on the paper but on the object itself. That is, do not ever look at the paper but only at the object and draw as if the tip of the pencil is touching the object, not the paper. Begin by not drawing (not drawing upon what you know about the apple or your hand or the plant). Wait. And wait some more until you are sure the tip of the pencil is touching the object you wish to draw. Once you feel you have established that level of connection, begin to draw the tip of the pencil "down" the object, literally. Feel the pencil on the object. Move very slowly. If at any moment you feel you have lost touch with the object, stop. DO NOT LIFT YOUR PENCIL. Wait. And wait some more until you feel that connection between the tip of your pencil and the object. Continue. If you notice something on another part of the object you wish to draw do not lift the pencil tip off the paper. Rather, simply draw the pencil tip across the object, getting to what you want to draw and then continue drawing as you did before. When you feel you have drawn all the object you wish to draw, remove the pencil from the paper.

What will you find? You will find, as I have, that you have, for the first time, really seen what was there and what is on the paper is unique, specific, and "real." It looks like that apple in front of you, your hand, or the plant. It does not look like any apple or hand or plant but *this* apple, *this*

hand, *this* plant. This is a slow process but the connection to something outside of yourself is quite amazing. This connection is a form of the kind of connection described by Levinas as you have not fit the apple, hand, or plant into what you already know (your categories, labels, and so forth), you have not made other same. Rather other has stayed other, even your hand. While I do not pretend that you are having an ethical experience, there is a sense of your responsibility outside yourself toward the apple, hand, or plant. You are not drawing for you but for the apple, hand, or plant. You are present for her or him. Levinas's notion of *il y a*, that emptiness of presence, that void that you cannot fill is not filled with dread as one might surmise but, rather, with this glow of connection. To be clear, again, this is not an ethical encounter as there is no asking by the apple, hand, or plant or you to make the world for the Other, no sense of responsibility that may feel overwhelming. It is an analogue but, as such, it presents the opportunity to *begin* to live in an ethical relation with another. We must, after all, start somewhere.

Frederick Franck (1979) has a similar approach to drawing. He eschews any focus on skill or technique. He prefers, and so instructs, that in order to draw you must truly "see" that which you wish to draw. In *The Awakened Eye*, his description of taking a workshop with him, he begins his students by asking them to go out onto the grounds of the workshop and find something. Do not draw it, just find it. Having found it, sit with it. Come to be with it. Eventually a person might draw but s/he would draw not what she sees but what it is for itself, outside of what s/he might think it is. Whether it is a clover, a flower, a stone, or the bole of a tree, be with it, not with yourself seeing it. In this state you will draw what you see it to be for itself, not what you want it to be or imagine it to be.

These activities, as already stated, are analogues for ethical presence in the way discussed by Levinas. But they can carry over into the ethical.

Motional Experiences

There is a motional experience I also employ in providing some access to the notion of presence without prejudice, presence without knowing. I do this in the form of taking a walk. So often, as we walk, we are thinking about this or that, we are conversing, if we are with another person or, in the present day, we are on our cell phones. In all these cases, we are not present to the walking or that through which we are walking. We are staying "inside" our heads. As such, the world around us is missed

entirely. Even if we begin to pay attention to the world around us we will, frequently, substitute what we know about the world prior to this encounter for the actual world through which we are walking. Postmodernism has the notion of the *simulacrum* in which the "reality" of the world around us is displaced by the mediated lives we live that place a screen between us and the "reality" of the world. As an example, I recall driving on Interstate 8 from Phoenix to San Diego. Along that interstate, just west of Yuma, AZ, across the AZ–California border are vast white sand dunes undulating as far as the eye can see, on both sides of the interstate. It is an abrupt shift in the landscape. The first time I saw these dunes I "spontaneously" and suddenly had the image of the first Star Wars movie and its sand dunes. I realized, immediately, that I was not seeing the sand dunes but the Star Wars sand dunes. I was seeing a simulacrum of the sand dunes rather than dunes themselves.

In aid of seeing around the edges of our simulacra I ask us to walk out into the world around us and attempt to notice our noticing (that is what happened for me in seeing these sand dunes, I noticed my noticing the Star Wars substitution) and also to try and "see" what is right before us in its own right. This might be standing before a tree and making oneself available to the tree. Or seeing someone who you do not know and notice what you think you know simply by her/his appearance and then try to see the person there, not the person you might think you know. This does not involve staring but only looking without looking, without knowing. This is neither self-hypnosis nor mind-games except that it is a sort of game in that you begin to play in the world around you rather than substitute a cardboard world for the real world.

I take this further. It is possible to see the *face* of another, naked, pure, *il y a*. It is possible to notice the intervention of your mind and then set that aside and try to see before there was seeing. You may find, as I do, a softening of the heart, an availability to the Other because s/he is not you nor a projection of you. S/he is separate, fully and innocent. This is not only about the features of the person's face but also about the being. I think it not arbitrary that Levinas chose *face* for the moment of connection. The face is one of our most powerful communicators and through the eyes we see, the ears we hear, the nose we smell, the mouth we taste. The face is the locus of our encounters with the world. To see past what we know, this is what it means to begin to be in ethical relation.

Empathy, Sympathy and the Other

I do not take it that these experiences of seeing can only be manufactured (and therefore, can become suspect as a form of self-delusion). I assert that we have all had moments of presence in our lives toward another, either the stranger among us or a loved one or simply another person who we know. For some reason, all knowing falls away. These moments are the access points for an ethical relationship. The drawing work and the walking work are simply ways of enlivening that which is already occurring.

There is, of course, more to an ethical relationship than simply seeing. Levinas provides a key notion here. When we have an encounter of the Other as other, "see" the *face* of the Other, responsibility is born. I can recount one such experience. I and my family were driving from Flagstaff to Phoenix, AZ on a Sunday August afternoon. As was usual for Arizona, there were cars all along the way, on the shoulder, overheated, hoods up. A common sight. Mostly I would make judgments about people (why could they not pay attention to the cars and notice the overheating before it became a problem?) and those judgments were not particularly positive. Until this moment: a family outside their vehicle, hood up, including a young mother holding her baby. At the instance on seeing this woman with her baby, standing in the blazing sun of the August afternoon in Arizona, I felt a compassion, a responsibility, a dropping away of judgment and only concern (the fragility and nakedness of which Levinas writes, although I did not know his work at the time). I thought to stop the car, we discussed it. We noticed that there were men on cellphones clearly calling for aid. We had no room in our car and it seemed they had it "under control." We did not stop (I have always asked myself if my own ethical response was wanting because of that failure to stop). But in that moment, I experienced this young woman and her baby in a way I had never experienced another person. She was not "her" but a being, fragile, weak, and needing. Not weak in a judgmental way but only exposed as are we all for our own fragility.

I hazard we have all had experiences like this. It is in these moments that ethics is born if we can only recognize them as such. There are some features of this experience that it is important to describe. I have already pointed to Levinas's rejection of empathy and sympathy as forms of ethical thinking/being. To recall that description, both empathy and sympathy require you to fit a person into your already existing schema of

goodness, to translate them into what you already know. In this sense, the person is still just another object in your world. These emotions give you power over the other person. Empathy is problematic because it begins in the notion that you know something about the other person. Since ethics begins in not knowing, empathy will not lead to ethics. Sympathy, similarly, suggests you know something about what the other person is experiencing and you are sympathetic to the dilemma. An analogue for the sympathetic response is the striking of tuning fork near a guitar and hearing the string on the guitar vibrate at that same frequency. There is a sympathetic reaction to the tuning fork. The guitar string is not the tuning fork and the tuning fork is not the guitar string and, yet, they are in sympathetic vibration with each other. Other has been made same. This is the totalization side of Levinas's phenomenology, the interiorization, rather than the exteriorization of the Other. It is against this that I am writing.

Because these states (empathy and sympathy) are so close to what I am describing it is understandable that they would be taken as good markers of ethics. As I have described them, they are not. I did not have either an empathic or a sympathetic response to the young woman and her baby. It was something much more elemental and "before." It is difficult to describe this in words (that was Levinas's difficulty that brought him to write *Otherwise than Being*, to attempt to correct what he took to be the missteps of *Totality and Infinity*, tripped up by language, as am I). It is, however, real and we can be available to it. I have been suggesting that it is through aesthetic practices that we can become increasingly attuned to an Other. These practices are coupled with an understanding of Levinas. I am not engaging in an either/or but suggesting that we must have some knowledge (in our word-saturated/image-saturated world) that begins to interrupt the surface of the world around us and interrupt our personal building of ourselves, in order to even possibly notice these ethical encounters that are the basis for the connection Levinas argues we all seek.

Coda: Difficulties, Demurrals and the Promise of Levinas

This brings me to a discussion of the pitfalls of what I am presenting. One must be very careful here. I am not claiming that we can, easily, have a fully naïve encounter with the world around us, much less with another

human being. Even if it is not simulacra that intervene, it is our knowledge that might do so. A geologist seeing those dunes will have a specific experience in which s/he is also not seeing the dunes in front of her/him. S/he is seeing the real-life instantiation of some geological processes of which s/he has knowledge. Here, too, the dunes disappear, replaced by this prior knowledge.

Again, another difficulty. If it is the case that we do not, generally, experience the world around us unmediated but always through the language we use to language the world into existence, then there could never be an unmediated connection with the world. Our language, as an assemblage of categories and labels would immediately filter the world around us, presenting some of the phenomenon (in this case the sand dunes) while withholding other dimensions of it, what Nietzsche termed the "prison-house of language." There seems little hope of the kind of void, innocence, nonknowledge, and consequent humility which grounds Levinas's ethics. I must argue, in postmodern fashion, that this is a false either/or. It only holds if we cannot admit only to a rational mind, indeed to the mind, as the only avenue for knowing. If, however, we accede to the possibility of other avenues of knowing which are not grounded in language and can notice those "knowings" that are not knowing in the conventional sense but are the shadow of knowing, the moment just before the congealing of language and simulacra, then we have the opportunity to live in presence in a way not usually conceptualized in at least Western thought. The events described above are grounded in this other way. As such, it is important to come in touch with our ability to be passive and quiet, not authoritative. It means recasting how we "see" another person (or tree or flower or animal or rock). It means helping ourselves to be truly present to the being that is there. It means that if I notice that I notice than I am no longer noticing.

There are many ways I treat this educationally. I use movement, drawing, cultivating individually this passivity. It means noticing when I am seeing through my ego, through my own categories. It means, "listening like a cow." Movement in which we move together through a space slowly and see each other and notice when we are seeing the person or people we know and when we can notice that we can strip away that ego and see the other simply as the Other who is not someone we know but someone. It involves standing before a tree and really trying to see it. It means being with another in distress and not trying to fix the distress or come up with ways the person might fix the distress but only being with the distress and

eventually, if asked, doing what the person needs without judgment. Ours not to judge. Ours to be and order the world for the other as the Other, not as I would want it.

In this work, there is no end to it, no rules, or duties to invoke unless we take it as a duty to be available, to not judge or categorize, to be present, to live in a state of proximity of a neighbor with each person with whom we come in contact. If these are duties, then so be it. However, I take it that as with all ethical situations, we take each one as it comes, we learn more about these ideas as they manifest in lived experiences that never tell us what we will do "the next time" unless it is to notice that we did not "not act," we did not "not categorize," we did not…I find that every time I return to these roots of presence, my relationship to an other becomes an Other and in that a space opens up for that Other, that s/he may be her/himself, whatever is that self. I do not mean this in a way of elevating myself as an ethical person for that would be entirely counter to a Levinasian approach. I take it that each encounter brings me to humility, to being humbled by the beauty of another, not the great art sort of beauty but a rounding roundness, softening of the lines into a beautiful visage, face that is no longer seen by me as a hardness of edge, as a mask I think I know. I do not accomplish this revelation. The Other does so as s/he feels "seen" not "known." I am there to serve that Other and in that connection a fulfillment of the heart emerges for me in me, a fulfillment that helps me not be alone.

If ethics is the story of relationship, then, at last, I am in such a story. I am but one character of two in that story and I cannot have a story if I do not open the space for that Other to be there in her/his independence from me. Only then is there a story of relationship to be lived. It is not easy. It is not without pain. Indeed, Levinas speaks of pain frequently and points to the frailty of the Other who is in pain as well as joy, who only wants to be no matter her/his state. And I, as I give up my totalizing which is so comfortable, may feel pain and even fear.

Pain and fear are part of the ethical life. Ethics is neither pretty nor ugly, never balanced in a symmetrical way. It is that imbalance, that heteronomy that gives ethics its dynamics, its energy. If one is experiencing great harmony in ethics it is possible that this is not truly an ethical situation for harmony can speak of stasis and stasis speaks of death. Ethics is not about death but about life in all its messiness. In the end, what Levinas offers is not easy but it is obtainable if we are willing to live with uncertainty. Most ethics attempts to create of the world a certain peace (through invo-

cation of rules, principles, duties, imperatives) upon which we can rely. Levinasian ethics reveals the underpinning of that world, the one in which instability is more a description than balance and certainty. And, in the end, all of this brings out that ethics is about the humility of not being certain, not being in charge. Once we give up that fiction, we can begin to live ethically and experience the unendingly, always ultimately never truly fulfilled Metaphysical Desire of connection with which we began this exploration of life.

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D.S. Blumenfeld-Jones, *Ethics, Aesthetics, and Education*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55607-3

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D.S. Blumenfeld-Jones, *Ethics, Aesthetics, and Education*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55607-3