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The abstracts are arranged alphabetically by the authors' last names. The numbers in parentheses correspond to those assigned to the speakers on the online general speaker list.

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1. The Monstrous Other as a Challenge to the Integrity of the Self (#1)

Anna Alichniewicz (Medical University of Lodz, Poland)

Even though monstrosity occupies a recognised place in cultural narrative, featuring in numerous literary and artistic depictions, the monstrous Other remains largely *terra incognita* in philosophical discourse. In this paper, I present a phenomenological analysis of encountering the corporeality of human monstrosity. This analysis is based on Edmund Husserl's reflections in *Cartesian Meditations*, as well as on the phenomenology of Bernhard Waldenfels.

I argue that the experience of monstrosity in the Other gives rise to a particularly acute phenomenon of *horror alieni* as a result of a disruption in the process of typification. A bodily form that both resembles and differs from my own lived body disrupts assimilating apperception and intentional reference to an established objective sense. This disruption to the pairing process (*Paarung*) prevents the object of experience from being fully recognised – the monstrous physical form is and is not an *alter ego* at the same time, resulting in an ambivalent, propulsive-repulsive experience of a particularly intense phenomenon of uncanniness.

The extreme difference, or physical deformity, makes the monster radically Other, i.e. alien. When analysing encounters with the Other, Bernhard Waldenfels notes the ambivalence of this experience, in which the alien is experienced as a temptation and a threat, which can manifest as *horror alieni*. By presenting its deformity, the monster simultaneously presents the possibility of an order that is different to that inherent in our bodies. As the Other, it threatens our normality, yet simultaneously fascinates as an alternative version of the standard human body. It should be noted that, for Husserl, my lived body is always presented to me as Here, while another body is presented to me exclusively as There. Therefore, the Other is not perceived as simply my duplicate, but rather as possessing spatial manifestations that I would possess if I were There. In other words, I perceive the Other as I would perceive myself if I were There. In this context, Waldenfels' observations are interesting, as he notes that the closer

the alien is to us, the more the boundary between the Self and the Other is activated, and the greater our anxiety. What is particularly striking is the sense of familiarity in the Other, alongside the sense of difference. This experience simultaneously reveals the sphere of otherness within us, showing that the corporeal self is perceived as alien — 'never entirely present to itself' (Waldenfels, 2011: 43) — always somewhat distant and not fully graspable. This reveals that our integrity is not static, but stretched dialectically between ownness and alienness.

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2. When Truth Comes from the Other: Epistemic Foreignness and Ethical Response in Classical Islamic Philosophy (#69)

Mesfer Alhayyani, Kuwait University)

The religious other is rarely encountered as a neutral bearer of propositions. The other appears within an inherited horizon that already marks some voices as familiar and others as suspect. This paper asks whether religious Otherness merely reflects established doctrinal frameworks or can disclose their limits and transform the believer's relation to truth. It offers a phenomenologically informed reconstruction of al-Kindi, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Rushd. Drawing on Husserl's concepts of horizon and sedimentation and Waldenfels's account of responsive experience, it examines how the foreign claim becomes intelligible, how identity shapes its reception, and what response it demands. The aim is not to attribute phenomenology to medieval Islamic thinkers, but to place their descriptions of disagreement in dialogue with phenomenological questions about the homeworld, the alien, and the constitution of meaning.
Al-Ghazali provides the central case. In *al-Iqtisad fi al-Itiqad*, he imagines an Ashari and a Mu'tazili accepting a rational proposition until it is identified as the doctrine of the rival school. The proposition has not changed, yet its appearance has. Sectarian sedimentation turns the other into a sign of error before the claim is considered. Otherness therefore has an epistemic dimension. It may close inquiry by allowing the identity of the speaker to determine what can count as evidence. It also has a reflective function. The encounter exposes the believer's own inherited attachments, showing that what appeared as rational judgment may have been shaped by habituation and group loyalty.

Al-Kindi and Ibn Rushd disclose a different response. Al-Kindi's demand that truth be received even from distant peoples treats the foreign speaker as a possible contributor to knowledge. Ibn Rushd similarly argues that one should examine the works of those outside one's faith, accepting what is true and correcting what is false. Neither thinker dissolves difference or abandons judgment. Their common ground is not sameness of doctrine but shared answerability to truth.

The paper argues that this epistemic openness depends on an ethical orientation. Gratitude in al-Kindi, gentleness and compassion in al-Ghazali, and fairness and excuse in Ibn Rushd are not external courtesies added after inquiry. They help make inquiry possible by resisting contempt, rivalry, and premature exclusion. The other addresses the self in two ways. The other's claim may correct one's understanding, and, in a Levinasian sense, the other is someone to whom a responsible mode of engagement is owed.

This account avoids both assimilation and absolute separation. The other remains different but not unintelligible. One's own tradition remains authoritative but not immune to self-examination. Classical Islamic philosophy thus shows how encountering religious difference can be constitutive of belief by revealing its hidden horizons and reordering the manner in which truth is sought. It also suggests that the ethical response to Otherness is itself an epistemic condition of genuine dialogue.

3. In the Presence of Saints: On the Phenomenon of Relics (#3)

Tareq Ayoub (CSTS, Western University)

Although Edith Stein never authored a treatise explicitly devoted to relics, her Thomistic phenomenological framework provides a basis for a phenomenology of relics and sacred objects. This paper argues that Stein's account of embodiment, empathy, and religious symbolism offers a sense of coherence in understanding relics not as mere material remains, but as meaningful and efficacious loci of religious experience. Drawing on her early phenomenological work and later theological writings, the study situates relics within Stein's broader project of articulating the relationship between finite human experience and infinite Being. Central to this analysis is Stein's understanding of religious symbols as mediating structures that bridge the gap between the human and the divine. With Husserlian and Augustinian notions of life, Stein conceptualizes life-fullness as a mode nearing the fullness of God and the timelessness and immortality of the soul. Sacred objects function not primarily as representations but as experiential points of contact through which transcendence becomes accessible within the world through material foundations for empathic intentionality. Stein's phenomenology of empathy further deepens this account by illuminating how believers relate to saints through their relics, experiencing them not as inert objects but as extensions of a personal presence. In this sense, Stein's phenomenology would consider relics and sacred objects not only the sanctified embodiment of a presence, but also an experiential intersection between human finitude and divine transcendence, grounding theological claims in the lived experience of absolute faith.

4. Natural Light (Lumen Naturale) as Pre-Rational Awareness of My and the Others' Entangled Striving (#4)

Marian Baukrowitz (Freie Universität Berlin & Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg)

Integrating the Other's striving into one's own awareness and actions can take vastly different forms. The manager of a profit-oriented company who studies the desires of potential customers in order to devise the optimal product- and advertisement strategies treats their striving as a quantifiable external object. The relation to such a potential customer, for instance a child to whom toys are marketed, can also be different: The child enters the room and one's immediate experience of the room changes. An object such as a socket which was perceived as rather insignificant becomes interesting in the light of the child's striving and one can enter into open relatively unpredictable communication and play. It is as if the Other's striving is not an external object, an object you face, but a disclosing light the Other throws on the situation which shines through your very own disclosing light. Neither light erases the other; both take a center position. In the example you *can face* the socket but fused into the light with which you disclose the object is the Other's light. Such light – as basic disclosure – is deeper than external objects or even specific, defined thoughts. How can the Other's understanding pierce through me so deeply? An answer can be developed following Nishitani's designation of natural light as "the light of each and every thing" in *Religion and Nothingness*. Like his teacher Heidegger in *Being and Time* Nishitani does not identify *lumen naturale* with the light of reason but with a more fundamental awareness or disclosure of the spatiality of the world. Beyond that he opposes Heidegger however: While Heidegger stresses that Dasein is illuminated in itself, not through any other being, Nishitani thinks that the light of all things is inherently involved in my light. While Heidegger chooses individuating anxiety as the primary philosophical vantage point which discloses Dasein in its totality and its freedom to choose itself, Nishitani considers this vantage point distorted due to its egocentricity. Beyond the position of anxiety, in Nishitani's terminology the field of nihility, the field of the traumatized ego who realizes that its existence rests on nothing, which Heidegger does not move beyond, is the most fundamental field of emptiness in which we are free from egocentric illusions and free to experience our most fundamental, most natural awareness: We are beings beyond whatness in communication who are responsible to each other and let each other be. The natural light immediately discloses that we are sources of creative activity who are entangled in a web of life with other such sources. The natural light cannot be simply grasped as a type of knowing because the living, creative source beyond whatness resists the attempt to grasp it in a rational definition or proposition. It

involves a pre-rational awareness of entangled life. It is however the basis which rational claims – abstract theorems as well as empirical knowledge – depend on.

5. Wounding Words - Being a Self in the Face of Verbal Violence (#5)

Maja Berseneva (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

How does the self take form when it is addressed by an other whose words aim to silence it or undo it as a speaking subject? The abusive word places the subject in a position where it is addressed and threatened at once. This presentation examines how the self is constituted in and through encounters of verbal violence, with a phenomenological eye on how the other's abusive address enters into the formation of self-relation. The point of departure is the other who provides the distance through which the self can appear to itself and at the same time can wound in a way that reaches into this very process. In Levinas, the self emerges in responsibility, as response to the address of the other. However, the subject is being addressed by words that wound in ways that can foreclose response, insofar as such address aims at the subject's very undoing. I will argue (I) that not only in neutral or friendly encounters, but also in situations of verbal violence, the address compels the addressed to respond to the other. I then argue (II) that the self is not being undone, but emerges through exposure to the hostile other by means of its own response.

The responses of the body-subject have their theoretical source in Husserl's idea of bodily subjectivity, where the lived body carries an implicit sense of 'I can' and 'I do'. These notions express the intentionality of a body-subject, the way an embodied self acts and moves in her lifeworld. Under verbal attack, the 'I can' is provoked and brought into actuality, and subjectivity is formed in a back-and-forth movement between self and other. Within this movement, a phenomenology of affectivity becomes central, particularly in Waldenfels' account of pathos and response. The abusive address is felt as a disturbance in the body, as a sudden loss of ease. From this, a response appears as a moment in which the self comes into formation and may assume either a passive or an active stance.

The presentation develops two configurations of how the self is constituted under verbal attack. In one case, the subject responds: she gathers herself, gives form to her voice, and speaks back. Affectivity is transformed into a force that supports articulation, and the 'I can' and 'I do' become effective in resisting. In the other case, the subject becomes silent and withdraws. Harmful words are carried inward, leading to a loss of orientation, the lifeworld becomes uncertain and fragmented, and the 'I can' and 'I do' turn into 'I cannot, I can't do'. Drawing on current discussions on violence as suffered (Delhom, Staudigl), I aim to show that a silenced subject does not lose her subjectivity, but may transform silence into speaking back or into a bodily 'no' response to violence. By bringing phenomenology of embodiment together with a re-reading of Levinas through the lens of the violent encounter, I aim to show how the self is formed where the words of the hostile other wound.

6. Embodying Evil: Contextualizing Kantian Priestcraft in Husserl's Spirit Realm (#6)

Keli Birchfield (Saint Joseph's University)

This paper takes Kant's religious writings on the generation of priestcraft out of radical evil seriously, speculating on how we might truly identify its social origin and propagation, as well as the scope of our responsibility for it as individuals. Hardly deflationary, this paper analyzes these themes phenomenologically, utilizing Husserl's notion of the spirit realm to explore the cultural achievement of radical evil and priestcraft, taking for granted a world of persons wherein the Other is treated as a human being. By framing Kant's operations of pure reason within a greater conversation of Husserlian consciousness, its motivations, and the intersubjective constitution of meaning and value, this paper suspends the strict theological and psychological form of radical evil to determine its essence and clarify the possibility of secular priestcraft without dispensing with its original religious significance. In so doing, this paper clears a space for conversations concerning how radical evil and priestcraft emerge within the phenomenologically radical perceptual experience of Self and Other, in the hopes of developing a discernment for its fruits.

7. Expansiveness, Embodied Alterity and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Religious Experience (#7)

Hrvoje Čargonja (University of Zagreb, Croatia)

This paper proposes the notion of expansiveness as a mode of being foundational for religious experience. Expansiveness is being as becoming more in significance. It is being as enlargement. The concept arises from engagement with aesthetics understood as a universal human capacity for valued perception, and is here developed in dialogue with the cultural phenomenology in anthropology. The paper argues that expansiveness and embodied alterity together constitute the existential foundations of religious experience as it is lived in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, a devotional Hindu tradition known by the aestheticization of religious affectivity.

Thomas Csordas, an anthropologist known for his articulation of the concept of embodiment and of cultural phenomenology, argues in his 2004 essay "Asymptote of the Ineffable" that the existential, not ontological, ground of religion lies in embodied alterity. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's écart, the irreducible non-coincidence between percipient and perceptible, Csordas identifies a structural alterity at the heart of every act of perception, opening onto an inexhaustible horizon of difference, the never-objectifiable background to every foregrounding. Religion, on this account, is unique cultural emplacement that elaborates this embodied alterity in and for itself. This structural claim, however, opens onto a phenomenological question: how does *écart's* inexhaustibility appear in lived experience? It appears as the ever-lasting potential for *more* of the being. Therefore, expansiveness is grounded on embodied alterity.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is exemplary for the working out of this conceptual pair, primarily because of its emotional aesthetics. The tradition absorbed the classical Indian aesthetic theory, which is the systematic analysis of the cultivation, refinement, and amplification of emotion. From Rūpa Gosvāmī onwards, Gauḍīya theologians have treated devotional emotion, *bhakti rasa,* as the very medium of religious life, developing a precise vocabulary for what emotional amplification is, and how it is conditioned by bodily and ritual practice. Religious experience in this tradition is therefore approached as aesthetic-affective enlargement, which is supported by a general Hindu conceptualisation of the divine. The Upaniṣadic Absolute, *brahman*, stems from the Sanskrit root *bṛh*, "to grow, to expand." Kṛṣṇa, as that personified ultimate reality in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, is the ever-expanding one. All that exists is an expansion of his being.

Religious experience in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism arises where these three terms meet. Embodied alterity provides the structural inexhaustibility of the perceptual background. Expansiveness names the mode of being in which that inexhaustibility is taken up as becoming more. *Rasa* supplies the practical technology by which this taking-up is cultivated. The paper anchors this claim in ethnographic material from fieldwork with Hare Kṛṣṇa practitioners, focusing on bodily, sonic, and emotional practices through which the

inexhaustible background of perception is progressively elaborated as enlargement, and thus contributes to the phenomenology of religious experience.

8. Theopoetics at the Threshold of Phenomenology and Theology (#2)

Sema Cevirici Atilla [Bilecik Seyh Edebali University]

This paper examines the relationship John D. Caputo establishes among phenomenology, theology, and theopoetics. Caputo's central claim is that, when thought radically enough, the disciplinary boundaries between theology and phenomenology become unstable, and these two modes of thought draw closer to one another on a theopoetic ground. In this respect, theopoetics is neither merely a poetic mode of theological expression nor an application of phenomenology to the theological domain. Rather, it is a radical mode of thought that enables theology to question its own metaphysical and supernatural assumptions and to redirect itself toward the event taking place in the name of God. Taking as its point of departure Caputo's claim that "theology is possible only as theopoetics; theopoetics is possible only as phenomenology," this paper discusses the role phenomenology assumes in the passage from theology to theopoetics. In this context, phenomenological reduction, rather than passing a metaphysical judgment on the existence of God, opens the way to rethinking the name of God not as the name of a being but as the name of a call and an event. Theopoetics thereby opens a space of thought that departs both from the metaphysical guarantees of supernatural theology and from approaches that reduce religious phenomena to naturalistic explanations. The central argument of this paper is that, for Caputo, theopoetics does not constitute a third discipline situated between theology and phenomenology. Rather, theopoetics names the radicalization that both undergo when pushed to their respective limits. It is precisely at this threshold, where the boundaries between theology and phenomenology begin to give way, that theopoetics emerges. For this reason, Caputo's theopoetics will be read not as the abolition of theology but as its deconstructive reinvention and as an attempt to bring to light the event harbored in the name of God.

9. Beyond Likeness: Height Difference and the Phenomenology of the Other (#71)

Chau Fung Cheng (UCLouvain)

This paper examines the relation between occupying a higher or lower bodily position than another person and experiencing oneself as tall or short in their presence. Its task is to clarify how these experiences are connected and why they need not coincide. Merleau-Ponty's account of situational spatiality in Phenomenology of Perception provides a framework for analyzing how height difference is lived through posture, distance, and orientation toward another person. Sartre's account of the third ontological dimension of the body in Being and Nothingness concerns experiencing oneself as a body known by another. It helps examine how one's stature becomes part of bodily self-experience in the Other's presence.

Taking social science research on height as a starting point, I argue that experiencing oneself as tall or short involves both bodily orientation toward another and awareness of one's body as perceived by them. Bringing these dimensions into dialogue, the paper shows how the Other participates in shaping the lived significance of one's stature.

10. Hopeful Asymmetry: Shame, Diachrony, and Ethical Persistence in Levinas (#10)

Jaeseok Choi (Boston College)

Emmanuel Levinas's radicalization of asymmetrical responsibility creates a profound aporia for human subjectivity. Obligated to the Other beyond reciprocity and prior to freedom, the self risks collapsing into paralysis, exhaustion, or what Levinas calls "ethical non-sense"—an ontological crisis acutely manifested in shame. While contemporary responses often temper this burden through symmetrical reciprocity or external theological consolation, this paper argues that hope emerges immanently from within the asymmetrical demand itself.

Termed hopeful asymmetry, this lived condition arises from an asymmetrical plea to the Other: "Do not kill me, so that I may serve you". Rather than an egoistic retreat into self-preservation, this plea secures the diachronic temporal margin necessary to sustain an unfulfillable obligation. Through this temporal distension, synchronic, paralyzing shame is converted into diachronic, ethical shame—an affective hinge that prevents trauma from turning terminal. Consequently, substitution shifts from destructive desubjectification into genuine metanoia, reorienting finite existence as pure being-for-the-other. By demonstrating how grace and expiation inhere within ethical heteronomy, hopeful asymmetry provides a crucial turning point, bridging Levinas's phenomenology with theological discourse on creation, gratuitous redemption, and enduring human solidarity.

11. Heaven, as well as Hell, is Other People: Sartre and Levinas on the traumatic glory of the other's revelation (#11)

Matthew Coate (Kent State University)

Sartre, who in *No Exit* famously wrote that "hell is other people," nonetheless claimed in an interview near the end of his life that "we are constantly in the presence of the other" and that an individual's response to others, which defines that individual's choices and existence, is thus "of an ethical nature" that Sartre ultimately linked with a notion of messianism. These two positions are apparently at odds or even irreconcilable: for Sartre's earlier conception of the encounter with the other person, as something traumatic that ultimately ensures the ruin or even damnation of the human subject, is a position that, if anything, appears broadly Hobbesian, while Sartre's end-of-life conception of this encounter, as something bearing the most profound significance for our existence and serving as the basis of all sense, which offers the human subject the possibility of something akin to salvation to the extent that something like salvation is possible for us at all, is instead the sort of claim that Levinas would express. Because of this, we find that commentors on Sartre's work generally claim either that Sartre had been manipulated by his interviewer—having been deceptively steered into making the later claims while he nevertheless still held fast to his earlier position—or that he had completely changed his mind about the significance of the other person in the intervening years between the expression of these two positions. Yet there is nothing at all inconsistent about the two positions, in fact.

In this paper, I will present a phenomenological analysis of the relation to another intended to demonstrate that this relationship comes to pass both as trauma and exultation, or even damnation and salvation, and that these two only ostensibly opposed characterizations are not actually opposed at all in the encounter but are essentially linked in the other's revelation in what Levinas refers to as *glory*. I will begin by examining the two Sartrean positions outlined above and will work through the analyses Sartre presents in support of them, supplementing this with similar Levinasian analyses in order to fully clarify their sense. This will lead to the conclusion that the ontic phenomena of both condemnation by the other—expressed by the claim that "hell is other people"—and solidarity with the other—which we could express as "heaven is other people" if we liked—are not only essentially linked but refer back to glory as a radical experience of damnation and salvation that dawns, at the basis of all subjectivity, in the relation to the other. I will end this paper by analyzing this notion of glory and demonstrating that it constitutes a passion, not outside of suffering and joy, but in which suffering and joy together reach a kind of apex, a passion beyond comprehension.

12. Before the Other: The Muṯannā and the Event of Otherness (#12)

Frank Darwiche (Université de Lorraine)

Contemporary phenomenology has largely asked how the Other comes to appear. Whether through intersubjectivity, the alter ego, the face, or the phenomenality of life, the question generally presupposes subjects that already exist before entering into relation. This paper argues that such a point of departure remains metaphysically conditioned. It proposes instead that otherness is not the product of a constituting subject but the event of relation from which both self and other emerge simultaneously.

To develop this thesis, the paper introduces the Arabic concept of the muṯannā (the dual), understood not as grammatical duality, numerical opposition, or metaphysical dualism, but as the irreducible ontological structure of relation itself. Unlike dualism, the muṯannā neither separates nor synthesizes two independent entities. Rather, it designates a primordial relationality in which distinction and unity arise together without either preceding the other. Relation is therefore not secondary to identity but the very condition of its possibility. The question of otherness must consequently be reformulated: before asking how the Other appears, one must ask how relation itself becomes possible.

This shift provides a new reading of the Qurʾānic concept of ʿahd (covenant). Classical Islamic theology has generally interpreted the ʿahd either as a primordial event, an anthropological disposition (fiṭra), or a juridical and normative structure. While each interpretation illuminates an important dimension of the covenant, all leave unexamined the ontological status of the relation that the covenant presupposes. I argue that the ʿahd is neither primarily an historical event nor a legal institution, but the theological enactment of primordial relationality. It is the event through which relation becomes lived, assumed, and continually renewed. The covenant therefore does not unite two already constituted beings; it manifests the relational event within which divine and human alterity become mutually intelligible while remaining irreducibly distinct.

The paper thus proposes a phenomenological reconfiguration of otherness grounded in the primacy of relation. The muṯannā offers an ontological grammar through which otherness can be understood independently of both substantial identity and dialectical opposition, while the ʿahd discloses the theological modality of that same relational structure. Rather than conceiving otherness as the encounter between autonomous terms, this approach understands it as the very event through which beings come to stand in relation.

By bringing Arabic philosophy into dialogue with contemporary phenomenology of religion, this paper seeks to reopen the question of otherness from a non-dualistic and relational perspective. It argues that relation is not the consequence of otherness but its ontological origin, thereby proposing a new phenomenological framework for thinking divine and human alterity beyond the inherited opposition between identity and difference.

13. From Apodictic Evidence to the Experience of Reality: A Reading of Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation (#13)

Marine de la Tour (University of Erfurt)

This paper proposes a reading of the inner crisis of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*, especially of the Fifth Meditation. It argues that this meditation marks the radicalization of Husserl's transcendental phenomenological project: transcendental phenomenology overcomes the solipsism of the ego without abandoning the transcendental reduction itself. Through the new epoché at work in the Fifth Meditation, the transcendental ego is led so radically to its own limit—or rather to its own ground—that it is freed from every remaining form of absolute self-position. Otherness enters into subjectivity itself, not as a constituting act of the subject, but through the disclosure of a deeper stratum of transcendental subjectivity, one that becomes accessible only in the loss of self-sovereignty involved in the recovery of the sphere of ownness. Only a subjectivity transformed in this way becomes capable of experiencing world, reality, alterity, and even itself.

Following the movement of the *Cartesian Meditations*, this paper argues that apodictic evidence alone cannot account for the experience of reality. Husserl's late transcendental phenomenology implicitly points instead toward a transformation of subjectivity as the condition for the manifestation of reality itself. Apodictic self-givenness does not yet amount to the disclosure of reality. On the contrary, the reduction of transcendental subjectivity to its sphere of ownness progressively reveals the insufficiency of a purely self-grounding model of evidence. It is remarkable that Husserl uncovers this decisive structure through the problem of the experience of the other, even though what is disclosed ultimately exceeds this problem by far.

The paper therefore challenges readings that treat the Fifth Meditation merely as a theory of intersubjective constitution. The encounter with alterity thus reveals an internal transformation of transcendental subjectivity itself.

14. The Institution as (Big) Other: a Phenomenological Incursion with a Psychoanalytic Twist (#14)

Andrei Dorobăț (University of Bucharest)

Drawing inspiration from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's distinction between public and private institutions (Koloskov, 2026, pp. 60-62), my goal is to place two radically different views of Otherness in dialogue: Merleau-Ponty's Other as a form of subjectivity which shares and co-creates meaning with the self, clashing against the Lacanian Big Other, a symbolic position which emanates social authority and demands obedience, yet is immaterial and unknowable to the Subject (McGowan, 2025, pp. 83-86). As other authors have argued, Merleau-Ponty's conception of historical institutions as Advents culminates in a breakthrough from both empiricist and rationalist views on institutions: rather than a timeless essence or an unfolding of an immanent teleology in history, institutions are a finite center of meaning (Flynn, 2019, p. 173). My argument follows a different path, but nonetheless is indebted to Merleau-Ponty's vision.

In order to better illustrate this position, a distinction needs to be made at a previous level of perception. If an institution occupies this position as a focal point from which meaning emanates, where is the place of laws (or more precisely, of the Law)? Following a Lacanian position, I argue that if we are to conceptualize institutions as occupying the place of the Big Other, we must also accept the separation between the Big Other and the Law. As McGowan argues, it is by no means necessary for the Big Other to demand respect for the Law (McGowan, 2025, pp. 87-89). What we are left with is a discursive and symbolic entity which not only demands, but is also demanded by the Law to facilitate its functioning (McGowan, 2025, p. 88).

In contrast with Merleau-Ponty's institutions which give and receive meaning, I propose a view of institutions as mediators of subjectivity: it is only through institutions as Big Others that relations between individuals are made possible. Without language, customs, social institutions, or even more discreet ones such as common sense, the capacity of individuals to bracket their own beliefs and understand the grievances or achievements of others becomes impossible. It is only through an Other that mutual understanding and recognition becomes possible (Schrans, 2018, pp. 7-8). Thus, a point of possible convergence arises: if institutions can be seen as occupying the position of the Big Other, Merleau-Ponty's public institutions and their normative character can be reconciled with a Lacanian position (Koloskov, 2026, p. 62).

A further point of tension arises when the Husserlian ego is contrasted with the Lacanian subject, but yet again, the argument demands for a Lacanian Subject in order to even make the Other's existence possible. What could be characterized as the narcissistic ego in Husserl (Filho, 2017, pp. 447-449) leaves no room for an actual Other to exist; it conceives itself as the Other, and the Other as itself (Lacan, 1954-1955/1978, p. 120).

Thus, I claim that it is through the Other that we gain access to institutions, and consequently, to the Law in the broadest sense. Without the Other, the relationship cannot exist; and without the Other, we cannot exist as social beings.

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15. Otherness and the Sukkah of Being (#24)

Solvej Hartmann (Charles University, Prague)

This essay will argue for conceptualizing reality not as the *house of Being*, but as the *sukkah of Being*, a temporary hut with a roof from twigs and leaves that grants not protection but the rupture that is a precious and vulnerable gathering. It enables an intimacy, neither secluded from wilderness nor from the firmament of meaning, with non-anonymous concrete and strange Otherness. The argument is, that the meaningful reality which Heidegger longed to dwell in, cannot be reached by turning to anonymous forces, shelter must rather be sought with those whom we are bound to by both the primordial intertwinement of living things, as well as the mutual address that comes with a symbolic understanding of said interconnectedness. Speaking beings, it will be explicated, can reach an awareness of reality that goes beyond a conscious feeling for the Other, for it allows for depiction of the sacred core of the natural, thereby opening up the supernatural space speaking beings navigate in. Primordial meaning provides to the sukkah the building material and its idea; but what we say and do within its enclosure we are accountable for. Reality as it is here depicted is based on an understanding of singular beings as fields – similar to Merleau-Pontian organisms, which will be discussed in the first part (I). Merleau-Ponty's milieu as a model of mutual affordance will then be compared with Heideggerian place-space (II). While Merleau-Ponty urges to remain within perception, seeing a danger in systematizing what is originally multifaceted, Heidegger does not shy away from drafting out a short-circuit of anonymous forces resulting in an event of truth disclosing itself to man who can henceforth dwell in disclosed reality. The Husserlian system of places will be discussed as a third attempt at understanding meaning (III), namely as the ideal optimum announcing itself in embodied experience, which can be systematically put into language. We will tie these drafts together in the following way (IV): Conscious beings, it is argued, gain a feeling for Others that consists in an embodied recognition and achieved familiarity with situations. When this approximative knowledge is, as Husserl envisioned, expressed in the form of pure phenomena in an ideal space, speaking beings emerge. These beings remain tied in with the wilderness that provides meaning, yet their new ability allows them to see their actions as cause for the establishment of the reliabilities of the social realm. Habits are from here on seen as the rituals they are, furthermore, speaking beings can turn to one another in an unprecedented manner, based on this mutual responsibility. Within this model, the supernatural accountability of beings which nonetheless remain one with nature, can be made sense of, as it takes seriously both natural affordances, and the supernatural intimacy that emerges when experience reaches the clarity and distinction of words.

16. Merleau-Ponty on the Reciprocity of Chiasm of Ourselves and Others (#25)

Hyun Höchsmann (East China Normal University and Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel)

> I borrow myself from others; I create others from my own thoughts – Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*
>
> We situate ourselves in ourselves *and* in the things, in ourselves *and* in the other, and at the point where, by a sort of *chiasm*, we become the others and we become the world – Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*

In tracing the evolution of Merleau-Ponty's thinking on otherness, the trajectory opened by Claude Lefort, the editor of Merleau-Ponty's *Œuvres* and later works, opens to a new horizon of anticipation towards the reciprocity of chiasm of ourselves and others.
Guided by Lefort's study of Merleau-Ponty's later works, reading *Prose of the World, Signs,* and *The Visible and the Invisible* as preparing the ground work for continuous explorations and not departures from the earlier writings broadens the scope of phenomenology to encompass ontological, moral, and epistemological explorations. Building upon theoretical as well as empirical researches in the biological and social sciences, Merleau-Ponty charted a new path in phenomenological research, distinct from the divergent branches of phenomenological traditions.

Merleau-Ponty's clarifications of the concept of chiasm (intertwining) in *The Visible and the Invisible* open up the directions for responding to the critiques of Merleau-Ponty's views on otherness by Sartre and Levinas. Merleau-Ponty's articulation of the parameters of responsibility towards the 'otherness of the other' and emphasis on the intertwining of self and other dispels Sartre's conviction regarding the impenetrability of the other in the master-slave dialectic and Levinas's general criticism that phenomenology endorses 'imperialism of the same' which regards the others in terms of their effect upon the subject and not in their inherent alterity.

Levinas's specific criticism that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is 'sustained by an unaccountable affection', towards the other seems to stem from a preconceived notion of accountable affection, distrust of either the excess of good will or lack of discernment in the subject, and the deficiency of evidence for the admirable qualities in the other. For Merleau-Ponty, subjects are not diminished but enhanced in their objective awareness of the other in a chiasmic relation. The chiasmic relation is not unilateral but *reciprocal*. The alterity of the other invites a continuum of possible transformations of the awareness and activities of the self and the other.

> The idea of chiasm, that is: every relation with being is simultaneously a taking and a being taken, the hold is held, it is inscribed and inscribed in the same being that it takes hold of
>
> — *The Visible and the Invisible*

Even if we could envisage the reciprocity of the chiasmic relation between the subject and the object as being pervasive in our encounters with the other, might not there be spheres of the subject's activities in solitude which are not chiasmic? Merleau-Ponty places the other at 'the foundation' of what would generally be regarded as the most subjective sphere of subject's activity, *thought.*

> Speaking and listening not only presuppose thought but—even more essential, for it is practically the foundation of thought—the capacity to allow oneself to be pulled down and rebuilt again by the other person before one, by others who

may come along, and in principle by anyone – Merleau-Ponty, *Prose of the World*

17. Husserl's Other Withstands Totality: Against Levinas's Critique of Empathy (#16)

Hedieh Eghtesadi (Department of Philosophy, McMaster University)

Husserl's genetic phenomenology of the Other, developed in his fifth Cartesian Meditation and the C-Manuscripts, withstands Levinas's charge of totality because the intentional structure of constitution, comprising passive and active synthesis, is the condition of possibility for encountering the Other's transcendence, not suppressing it. Levinas claims in *Totality and Infinity* that the Husserlian account reduces the Other to a correlate of the Same (the I) by making the Other a phenomenon that is visible and comprehensible in principle. Against this, I argue that constitution discloses but not reduces the essential and structural inaccessibility of the Other's sphere of ownness, making Other's identification with the Same impossible. Without the ability to constitute the Other as experiencing subject, distinguishing the Other from objects or entities that simulate subjectivity, such as artificial intelligence, ethical responsibility would be impossible, since one could not determine to whom or what I owe ethical response and to what degree. I distinguish the generic other (that which can only be constituted) from the non-generic Other (the other subject who also constitutes me) and argue that this distinction is essential to any phenomenologically grounded ethics. Drawing on Husserl's genetic analysis of pairing (*Paarung*) as the passive associative constituent of empathy (*Einfühlung*), I demonstrate that constitution neither provides adequate knowledge of the Other at the primordial level of the *alter ego* nor at the higher level of the Other as psychophysical unity. The non-generic Other's transcendence comprises two qualitatively distinct layers: the inaccessibility of the Other's inner life, which is appresented, but never originally given, and the mutual constitution through which the Other also constitutes me. The Other's being-for-me does not exhaust the Other's being; there is always the Other's constitutive life as a surplus that escapes my cognitive grasp and preserves the Other's alterity. Crucially, before any active constitution, the Other's lived body as "similar" affects me through pairing at the pre-predicative level of time-constitution, establishing that the Other's alterity has priority over my active constitution and is not a product of it. Although the intersubjective sphere is constituted in my monad as an intentional sense, my monad is also a member of the intersubjectively constituted objective world. Because every subject can occupy the position of Other for another constituting subject whose life remains inaccessible to it, no monad can appropriate the Other's givenness or make it its own, which reveals structural vulnerability and asymmetry rather than the mastery of the Same. Moreover, since the divine Other, to be phenomenologically encountered, must affect the ego through some mode of givenness, this framework may extend to religious experience. While bodily pairing does not apply to the divine, alternative structures of passive affection, such as affection through voice, world-horizon, or phantasy-appresentation, may preserve the Other's initiative and transcendence. However, this extension requires further phenomenological investigation.

18. Decolonizing the Name of God: A Levinassian Dialectic of Ethics and Politics

Christian F. Españo (Ateneo de Manila University)

How does Emmanuel Levinas describe "God," and how might this description offer an alternative to traditional ethical, political, and theological frameworks—especially in the context of decolonization? This article critically analyzes Levinas's philosophy to argue that his conception of God is not metaphysical but ethical, grounded in the infinite responsibility to the Other. In this framework, "God" is not an object of theological knowledge but the origin of ethical demand; "the Name of God" signifies a symbolic invocation capable of disrupting hegemonic and colonial structures. By drawing on Totality and Infinity (1961), Nine Talmudic Readings (1990), and God, Death, and Time (2000),1 I explore how Levinas challenges ontological imperialism, especially in its justification of control and totalization. Through dialogue with Enrique Dussel's liberationist critique of Eurocentrism, this article presents a political theology rooted in justice, hospitality, and relational responsibility. Ultimately, it argues that Levinas's ethical reconfiguration of God supports a decolonial theology wherein the Name of God becomes a summons to care for the vulnerable, not a mechanism of domination.

19. Jean-Luc Marion and Emmanuel Levinas on Anonymity and Naming (#19)

Yuval Gaon (Tel-Aviv University)

From its inception, phenomenology never denied its intersubjective component, yet it questioned the dependence of this connection on language. From Husserl onward, the bond to the other has often been related to corporeality rather than discourse. This leads to several questions concerning the role of language and its place in intersubjectivity within the phenomenological tradition. In this paper, I wish to rethink this connection by employing the concept of "anonymity," in a comparison between the views of Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Marion.

Primarily, anonymity is associated with the absence of a name or private designation, which is usually required to identify or point to another person as unique. In this context, two different senses of anonymity are sharpened: one related to a state that does not meet the threshold requirements of identifying language, and a second which views anonymity as a mode of evasion or even resistance to the policing side of language. The tension between these two senses allows for the following question to be asked: is the constitution of a singular personal identity contingent upon the suspension of anonymity and the entry into the linguistic order, or is it specifically the preservation of an anonymous and pre-linguistic dimension that grants the self its unique ipseity?

This tension receives an intriguing expression in Marion's critique of Levinas's concept of otherness. In Levinas, anonymity is the way he defines the "there is" (*il y a*). This primordial state is characterized by silence and the absence of speech, but also by absolute anonymity, meaning that particular beings cannot yet be isolated within it. According to Marion, Levinas's work is an attempt to provide security for the existence of the personal self as a response to this primary threat. However, Marion argues that Levinas's ethics fails because it remains universal and does not allow for the necessary transition from the general, abstract "Other" to this specific other. Thus, according to Marion, Levinas creates a status of anonymous otherness, devoid of name or face. Levinas, therefore, waives distinct personal existence by not allowing the "Other" to become someone with a name, leaving the intersubjective relation in an abstract and anonymous realm.

While Marion's critique is often viewed as primarily concerning ethics, I seek to examine it through the prism of anonymity as a central principle, establishing a dispute over language as its central issue. The connection between the anonymity of the *il y a* and the lack of speech allows for a re-evaluation of the place of anonymity in Levinas's philosophy: if, as Marion claims, Levinas's work is a response to the threat of primordial anonymous existence, to what extent is language the way to interrupt this primary anonymity? Is language the necessary means to establish the individual, or is the individual independent of it?

20. Exposure to the Other: World-Disclosure and World-Shattering in the Phenomenology of the Homeworld (#20)

Rui Ge (University of Kentucky)

This paper investigates the ambivalent role of the Other in Husserlian phenomenology by examining how the encounter with otherness both constitutes a generative broadening of the world-horizon and threatens to shatter the taken-for-grantedness of the homeworld. Drawing on Husserl's analysis of affection, pairing, and empathy in the *Fifth Cartesian Meditation*, his account of the lifeworld in the *Crisis*, and Anthony Steinbock's generative phenomenology of homeworld and alienworld, I argue that these two seemingly opposed phenomena — world-disclosure and uprootedness — are two faces of the same underlying structure of alterity-encounter.

The *Fifth Cartesian Meditation* describes a constitutive movement by which the encounter with the Other discloses, rather than destroys, a wider horizon of meaningfulness. The alter ego is given through a pre-reflective, passive affection — an "allure" that draws the ego beyond its primordial sphere through pairing and empathy. The ego is not solipsistically enclosed but constitutively oriented toward what lies beyond it; in being drawn outward, it inherits an intersubjectively sedimented world that was always already implicit in the horizonal structure of experience. Through this affective opening to the Other, the world ceases to be my own primordial sphere alone and is disclosed as shared, historical, and infinitely broader than the self.

Yet this same openness to the Other carries with it a profound vulnerability. As Husserl shows in the *Crisis*, the homeworld is given to each individual as a pregiven horizon of intelligibility, sustained by a *Welt-Glaube* — a taken-for-granted world-belief that quietly grounds the natural attitude in its natural and cultural strata alike. The very Other who, in pairing, broadens this horizon can also become the agent of its rupture. Reading Hannah Arendt, Simone Weil, and especially Jean Améry through Husserl, I show that the experience of refugees, exiles, and survivors of extreme violence reveals that the shattering of world is itself enacted *through* the Other: it is, in Améry's account, at the very moment the other strikes the first blow that "trust in the world" collapses. The same alter ego who could open a shared world can instead foreclose it; through hostile othering, the lifeworld becomes inaccessible, and the subject is left uprooted from its constitutive horizon.

What unites these two movements is the liminal structure of the homeworld/alienworld relation. To inhabit a homeworld is, structurally, to be exposed to the Other — and this exposure is at once the condition for any expansion of world and the condition for its possible collapse. The phenomenology of Otherness, then, is best read not as a choice between alienation and integration but as the individual's continuous, risk-laden striving: a willingness to endanger itself in exposure to the shattering of its world in order to broaden that world and make the alien its own.

21. The Other's experience in a transcendental knowledge of the madness and future (#21)

Igor V. Gibelev (Idependent Researcher, Location))

Positing the horizon of the appearance of the Other in the eidetic of the norm determined based on retentional self-temporalization seems unquestionable. However, retentional consciousness is capable of prefiguring the future through pathologies of the past, which is why the norm can deviate from the telos of universal reason. Positing the horizon of the Other's appearance on foundations other than retentional ones, based on protential self-temporalization, may seem like a kind of mad fantasy.

Nevertheless, Husserl's thesis of universal teleology, which reigns in every act and thought of the "I" (consequently, the dominion of goals and the future in retentions), allows us to ask about the conditions of constituting the future in relation to the scenarios of the experience of the Other as a pathological or productive experience of "madness".

In one scenario, consciousness loses the ability to constitute the future in both immanent (Th. Fuchs et al.) and social time (D. Carr). The future appears as a mere stylization of the past, leading to pathological madness, wherein the transcendental constitution of the Other's appearances is monstrous.

Another scenario arises in the constitution of a new, free from the motives of past experience (cf.: "Behold all things are made new" (ap. Paul). The constitution of the new in pure events, philosophy and Christianity (A. Badiou), indicates the productive experience of "madness". These events unfold as an attempt to go beyond the hierarchical consciousness and retentional self-temporalization. The otherness of the Other for the first time in history showed itself as pure universality.

In both scenarios, the experience of the Other comes forth in the ontological distance formed by two modalities of the boundary: transitivity and limit. The primal empty intention as an act of opening the horizon (L. Landgrebe) expresses an aspect of transitivity. We can see the limiting aspect in the birth of a theoretical attitude and in the final construction of harmony, which is grounded in grasping the goal of transcendental life.

To understand the co-constitution of Self and the Other, one should consider ontological distance as the simultaneity of transition and limit. What conceptual image does simultaneity acquire in the perspective of protential self-temporalization?

The primal empty intention, according to L. Landgrebe, exists as "always-being-out-beyond-itself", which in the temporal aspect means "always-ahead-of-self-temporalization". Protential temporality ensures the self-identity of the Ego through universal meanings of final harmony. No matter how manifold the representations of the Self, it is identical to itself in the universal telos of reason.

In contrast to retentional, protential self-temporalization removes the contradiction between the endlessness and completion of history, since the self-temporizing Ego becomes equal to apodicticity. If the transcendental subject manages to settle into protential self-temporalization, the Other will reveal itself in the shining light of the historical absolute. Then history will truly end in world harmony, the life-world and objective science will achieve agreement, nature will be salvaged, and madness and normality will coincide.

22. The Other and the Role of the Observer according to Alfred Schuetz (#22)

Maria Golebiewska (Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology)

Alfred Schuetz (1899-1959) proposed, in the 1930s, his own concept of social communication, as well as the constitution of the *Alter Ego* (in parallel with Edmund Husserl's own theses). Schuetz adopted from Husserl phenomenological theses concerning cognitive issues: the subject as an active being constituting the object of cognition, and the concept of intentionality – the intentional object as the result of constitution. However, as a social scientist, Schuetz was primarily interested in the constitution of another subject, considered as a specific intentional object. The question of objective meaning as the result of constitution concerns here the meaning which the knowing subject assigns to another subject in the process of social communication.

Schuetz developed his concept of communication and the constitution of the Other, drawing on the final section of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* concerning the *Alter Ego*. Among other things, he adopted from Husserl the assumption regarding the typification to which the Other is submitted in the process of cognitive constitution. Schuetz additionally deliberated over the social and communicative context of the relationship with the Other (the cognition of the Other as a result of the act of communication with the Other). In writing about the status of the social researcher, he questioned the roles of individual, particular subjects, and he distinguished the recipient of the communicative act (of the message) from the observer of that act, to whom the message is not addressed but who participates in communication as a third party. According to Schuetz, the social researcher would be a specific observer of communicative relations. Moreover, the observer is a privileged subject because s/he is aware of its own social role, as well as the role of Others as recipients (and observers). Nevertheless, at the same time, the observers remain marginal subjects because they participate only partially in acts of communicative reception, since the messages are not directly addressed to them. By focusing on observing the situation itself, they are not sufficiently engaged in the communicative act. In other words, their receptivity – the perception of the Other subject and the act of constituting *an Alter Ego* – is limited by a detached observation of the behaviour of Others in their own role of a third party.

The observers, maintaining a distance from the Other as an object of cognition, attempt to overcome their passivity. By placing themselves in relation to the information – the cognitive content – without being entirely sure to whom it is addressed, they ask questions: to whom is this message intended? Is the information intended for me? Should I respond in my relationship with the Other? The observer – the third participant in the communicative relationship (including the social scientist) – appears as a disoriented subject constantly seeking guidance and direction. It seems that in the disengaged observation of the Other, the Others become the key to the self-knowledge of the *Ego*, because they are my *Alter Ego* in every particular social situation, which is always a communicative one. According to Schuetz, it is through them that I can better recognise my own subjectivity in the role of a self-aware observer, simultaneously passive and engaged.

23. The challenge that values pose for Stein's social phenomenology (#70)

João Gouveia (Institute for Philosophical Studies, Coimbra)

Although Edith Stein grounds her social philosophy on two clear principles, further developments about the historical process of destruction and the rise of communities leave unresolved doubts. Firstly, Stein refuses the existence of communities without social closeness – people must interact with one another in a proximate way to be considered members of a social whole. Secondly, there isn't a consciousness of the community above the consciousness of the individuals – the community experiences its surroundings through the individual's own experiences. Now, Stein also says that a community may cease its subjective existence and still perdure in the form of works until being resurrected by new individuals – here, the values of a lost community influence the individuals now living, not the other way around. The members of the new community will build on the old legacy they receive and establish the conditions for new values to be extracted from future works. This historical dynamic shows an interdependence between the subjective and the objective spheres – both affect each other to bring about new social structures. Here, the semi-mystical concept of the lifepower is Stein's key to explaining how a complex set of experiences may be preserved despite all the individuals who actually experienced them having already perished. Once brought about through the power of living individuals in close connection, those experiences were then crystallised in objective form and, centuries later, they communicated meaning to other sources of living power. Although this explanation respects Stein's main principles, it fails to clarify the type of existence that values have when they aren't being applied in daily life. In fact, Stein's insistence on the necessity of close social interactions between people leads us to assume that values are born from such interactions – therefore, one can only observe them by stepping outside of our individual reality. When the subjective basis of a community perishes, the continuous existence of its values could only be assured by another kind of existence, but a specific explanation for it had to be provided instead of insisting on concepts – such as the lifepower – that only repeat the general process of objectivation and subjectivation of values.

24. Multilayered Other (#23)

Zura Gvenetadze (DePaul University)

This paper examines the concept of the *Other* in across the different contexts for the aim of showing that theological other is not completely distinct layer of human experience, but rather can be found within it, and thus, through phenomenological reflection, we can arrive at least onto the minimal definition of the theological Other.

I argue my point by examining the structural similarities of the concept of other in different contexts. For example, when we ask what we mean by other, what comes first through the phenomenological analysis is the other as spatially and experientially distinct from the self, marked by bodily separation and the inaccessibility of their inner life. In everyday usage, however, the concrete notion of the other does not appear this way. When the word other is uttered, it often denotes not spatial distinction from one to another but cultural unfamiliarity, frequently accompanied by implicit perceptions of threat, and danger. Here, already we see that there are two different meanings that other can be denoted. The structural similarity of the other in all these different contexts (perceptual, constituting, cultural, ontological, etc.) will be phenomenologically construed. However, the most challenging one to fully explicate would be *theological Other*, since it is more peculiar and less phenomenologically lucid one than others. With explicating slowly, other layers of other, I arrive at the theological notion. That means that theological notion of other will necessarily entail other layers. I offer two examples. First, the love of God is not possible without the love of neighbor. This already implies that theological other entails an ethical principle towards the other as the concrete other, which includes not only spatially distinct other, but also the culturally unfamiliar one. Second example is the notion of *anonymity*. In many ways, we are given with the faculties we have, we are given with our bodies. It is not of our doing. It is not of our doing the way it functions, it understands, etc. With the help of Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty, one can show how self-temporalization and embodiment entails this ‘otherness’. This even puts into question what it is that we can actually control, what is our true subjectivity. This does not have in mind to completely put into question subjectivity, but it comes back to theological other. Through anonymity, one can show the mysteriousness of subjectivity, and mysteriousness of existence itself. All these points to the place of grace, and possibility of anxiety which are fundamentally existential and theological pointers.

25. Fracturing Selves and Multiplying Others (Plenary)

Naomi Janowitz (UC Davis)

A simple model of Self and Other has been abandoned in contemporary discussions of identity. Even a quick survey uncovers a range of intricate models that elaborate and complicate once-common Self/Other distinctions. One step in this process was carried out by Melanie Klein and her followers, who emphasized a Self replete with internalized objects that derive from relations with family members and especially with mothers. These "Other-relations" are introjected into the Self and play a central role in development, intertwined with motivations of hate and love. According to Lacan, during the mirror stage a baby recognizes itself as the Other seen in the mirror. This interaction of Self and Other-as-Self becomes part of the baby's psyche, the Other-Self internalized as a (Self)ego. More recently López-Corvo splits the self into a several Self-parts in conflict with each other. Once internalized, these Self-parts operate in conflict with each other. Clarifying this internal struggle is vital since "The patient is unable to understand that, in the end, the conflict is only taking place within himself, that it only involves him and nobody else" (López-Corvo 2006, 370).

This paper investigates the process which underlies all these models, that is, the issue of how something external becomes internal (whether the term used is internalization or introjection). What exactly is internalized and most importantly, what mediates that process? Internalization is a metaphor that disguises and thereby confuses the way in which Self and Other interact. Lacan posits the mediating device of a mirror but then shifts towards a more metaphorical understanding, useful for his followers given the evidence that babies do not necessarily recognize themselves at the age originally proposed. Internalization is asked to do an impossible amount of work in all these models of Self and Other and yet is presented as a simple mental process that is not shaped at all by the mediation processes. Progress cannot be made on the relationship between Self and Other until these issues are directly addressed.

López-Corvo, Rafael. 2006. "The Forgotten Self." The Psychoanalytic Review 93 (3): 363–77.

26. Silence as Ethical Restraint: When Not-Speaking Sustains Responsibility in Encounters with Otherness (#26)

Corine Jansen (Independent scholar, Breda)

In encounters with Otherness, speech can arrive too quickly. Words express, and they also stabilise, translate, and close. What is still forming is brought under familiar meanings, and what resists recognition is quietly made "at home." This paper begins from this contrast experience: the moment when one senses that speaking now would be a form of reduction. Silence, then, can be an ethical restraint, a deliberate interruption of premature speech that keeps the encounter open at the threshold of meaning. Holding that silence takes effort, attention, and a tolerance for not yet knowing.

Yet silence is not automatically ethical. The same restraint that protects can also fail. Silence can sustain a vulnerable presence without appropriating it, but it can also become withdrawal, leaving the Other alone with a claim that remains unmet. The guiding question is therefore: when does silence function as sustaining restraint, and when does it slip into avoidance or abandonment? The difference is sought in the direction of the silence: whether the one who falls silent stays turned towards the Other, remains answerable to the claim that has been made, and can still return to speech.

The analysis is developed primarily in a Levinasian register of interruption and responsibility. Responsibility begins with being addressed, before any initiative of mine and before any capacity to understand. The Other interrupts my freedom and places it under pressure. In this light, ethical silence is a mode of remaining answerable precisely where understanding cannot be completed, and where interpretation risks becoming possession. Methodologically, the paper offers a phenomenological ordering of the encounter that makes the ethical ambiguity of silence describable without moralising it. This ordering tracks how interpretive speed enters, how the unfamiliar is translated into the familiar, and how a response can remain both non-appropriating and genuinely answerable. Two guiding concerns remain central throughout: the often unnoticed entry of judgment, and the possibility of repair, return, and renewed engagement after speech or silence.

The argument is tested through a concrete limit case of vulnerability in which immediate interpretation would prematurely close the Other's experience. The aim is to resist reduction while leaving Otherness intact: to delay translation long enough for the Other to appear without being absorbed into my framework, and to respond without turning response into mastery. Silence is treated as an ethically consequential act whose meaning depends on whether it sustains responsibility within the encounter.

27. Personhood as Event Levinas' Theory of Individuation and Its Difficulties (#63)

Zijing Jiang (École Normale Supérieure de Lyon) (#63)

The problem of individuation in the history of philosophy has always revolved around the relationship between singularity and identity. Emmanuel Levinas breaks through traditional totalizing philosophy with his concept of “the Other.” However, Jean-Luc Marion criticizes Levinas’s account of the Other’s individuation for failing to achieve the most radical form of individuation—individuation at the personal level. Marion argues that Levinas reduces the Other to a universal imperative, effacing the singularity of the concrete Other and returning it to an anonymous totality. Although some scholars defend Levinas by invoking the idea of “nameless singularity,” a more fundamental difficulty persists: Levinas’s conception of diachronic time dissolves the identity of the Other, making it difficult for the Other to exist as a stable individual. The question thus arises: if the Other lacks ontologically persistent identity, is its individuation at the personal level still possible? Against the backdrop of this debate, this paper attempts to propose a new solution by clarifying the under-elaborated concept of “personhood” in Levinas’s thought, in order to resolve the difficulty concerning the Other’s identity. First, it provides a brief conceptual-historical examination of theories of persona and hypostasis, pointing out that in traditional philosophy, personhood is commonly understood as a mode of being grounded in substantiality and identity, yet this is not the only possible way to conceive of personhood. By distinguishing between substantialized personhood and evental personhood, this paper opens up a conceptual space for addressing the problem of personhood under conditions of non-identity. The paper then returns to Levinas’s texts, focusing on the functions of "the face" and "hypostasis" in the ethical relation. It argues that the Other does not appear as an object that can be known, categorized, or persistently grasped; instead, it manifests its irreplaceable singularity in the ethical event constituted by saying and responding. On this basis, the paper maintains that the personhood of the Other does not depend on ontologically stable identity, but constitutes an evental structure continuously actualized in ethical relations. It is in this sense that the Other is individuated in each ethical summons, and responsibility thus proves to be non-transferable. Through this interpretive approach, the paper seeks to show that the singularity and personhood of the Other in Levinas’s ethics are not weakened by the rejection of substantialized identity; Conversely, since an event is unique, unrepeatable, self-sufficient, and independent of causality, it thereby guarantees the absoluteness of the ethical imperative. In this way, the paper provides a non-substantialist, relational framework for understanding the problem of personal individuation in Levinas’s philosophy.

28. Encountering the Divine Other: A Phenomenological Approach to Divine Presence in Contemporary Hellenic Neopaganism (#73)

Małgorzata Kalinowska (University of Warsow)

This paper examines the experience of Otherness in contemporary Hellenic Neopaganism from a phenomenological perspective. Rather than asking whether the Greek gods objectively exist or how contemporary practitioners reconstruct ancient Greek religion, it focuses on how the divine is experienced as an Other within the lived experience of practitioners. The central question is: How does the divine Other appear in the religious experience of contemporary Hellenic Neopagans, and how is this Otherness experienced, interpreted, and sustained through devotional practice?

The analysis focuses on everyday forms of religious experience, including prayer, offerings, ritual, bodily gestures, moments of perceived divine presence, and the interpretation of signs or meaningful coincidences. These practices constitute a field in which the practitioner encounters something experienced as exceeding the boundaries of the ordinary self. The gods may be experienced not simply as representations or psychological archetypes, but as intentional and responsive presences whose alterity is encountered through particular situations, affects, bodily sensations, and forms of communication.

Particular attention will be given to the phenomenological tension between distance and intimacy. The divine Other is experienced as radically different from the human subject, yet this difference does not necessarily prevent intimacy. On the contrary, the experience of divine alterity may become the foundation of a meaningful relationship. The concept of kharis—the reciprocal relationship established through giving, receiving, and responding—provides a particularly useful framework for examining this dynamic. From a phenomenological perspective, reciprocity can be understood not merely as an exchange of offerings but as a mode through which the Other becomes experientially present while retaining a degree of irreducibility.

The paper further considers the role of embodiment and temporality in experiences of divine presence. Ritual practices do not simply communicate pre-existing religious beliefs; they shape the practitioner's bodily orientation toward the world and create conditions in which the divine may become perceptible as presence. Similarly, experiences retrospectively interpreted as encounters with a deity may alter the practitioner's understanding of past events and future possibilities, transforming the temporal structure of religious experience. By approaching contemporary Hellenic Neopaganism through lived experience, the paper argues that Otherness is not merely a conceptual boundary between human and divine. It is an experiential dimension of religious life through which practitioners encounter something perceived as exceeding, addressing, and transforming the self. Hellenic Neopagan devotional practice therefore provides a productive case for investigating how contemporary religious subjects experience an Other who is simultaneously transcendent and intimate, unfamiliar and relationally accessible, irreducible yet encountered within embodied everyday life.

29. Otherness and the Realisation of the Between (#65)

Gesa Kastendieck (Independent researcher, Berlin)

The paper develops a phenomenological, ontological, and philosophy of religion approach to the question of whether Otherness opens a distinct access to reality. Reality manifests itself through a multiplicity of polarities – such as day and night, past and future – in which, upon phenomenological examination, no sharp boundaries can be identified but rather a counter-relational structure. Phenomena such as twilight or the present moment make this counter-relationality accessible. When this insight is pursued philosophically, the question arises whether philosophical concepts adequately reflect such structures. Within European philosophy, polarities such as mind and body, being and non-being, or reason and sensibility have frequently been conceptualised as opposed entities, thereby directing philosophical attention toward what is determinate and conceptually accessible. Conversely, hiddenness, receptivity, and that which resists conceptual determination have largely been marginalised. In contrast, Laozi, Heidegger, and Böhme each developed ways of thinking in which reality unfolds through counter-relational structures. Within the reception of Chinese thought, the concept of double ontology provides a horizon of dialogue. Building upon previous research, this paper refers to the conceptual figure developed under the term twoness (Zweiheit), understood not as duality but as a two-unity. In this context, Otherness appears as the marginalised pole within counter-relational structures – corresponding to hiddenness, receptivity, indeterminacy, and without-being. This raises the question of what kind of reality becomes accessible when turning toward the marginalised pole and, given the counter-relational nature of the poles, how the between should be understood. The between resists determination as an independent third element and, like the marginalised pole, points toward aspects of reality that resist complete conceptual grasp.

One phenomenological approach for investigating the between can be found in Jean-Luc Marion's understanding of the icon. It discloses a mode of appearing in which the visible and the invisible belong together without collapsing into either identity or separation. For the icon to appear iconically, a receptive mode of seeing is required. Such seeing, in turn, presupposes the actualisation of the marginalised pole within, of the Other within – only then can the iconic gaze appear. From this perspective, the iconic gaze discloses one possible understanding of the between – as transparency opening toward the invisible. Applied to the polarity of immanence and transcendence, the between opens a philosophy of religion perspective. If the invisible may be interpreted as corresponding to the transcendent, the same mode of appearing may be recognised in the relation between the Other within (immanence) and the transcendent. From this perspective, the Other within may be understood as opening toward transcendent Otherness.

Taken together, these considerations suggest: 1. Otherness may be interpreted as the marginalised pole. 2. The actualisation of the marginalised pole may be understood as constitutive of the iconic gaze. 3. The iconic gaze opens up one possible understanding of the between – as transparency opening toward transcendence. 4. The between may be investigated as an ontological structure underlying iconic appearing. 5. The Other within may be understood as opening toward transcendent Otherness. Further investigation is required to examine whether different philosophical motifs disclose further phenomena of the between. These considerations point toward the broader thesis that reality comes into its fullest realisation through the between.

30. The Socially Constituted Other: A Limit Concept for Husserlian Phenomenology (#27)

Kenneth Knies (Sacred Heart University)

I argue that Husserl's primordial reduction reveals that there can be no other whose constitutive significance is exhausted by reference to a normal community to which she does not belong. I call such an other "socially constituted."

First, I will indicate why there seem to be such others. Certain non-human animals, infants, and persons suffering from severe mental disorders are normally apperceived such that their experience does not disclose the objective world in which that experience is determinable as the kind of experience that it is. For example, the infant, unlike the blind person, cannot grasp the anomalous character of her access to the world. That falls to the normal community of experiencers. Descartes' brief reflection on the "insane" in his first *Meditation* already implies that the socially constituted other is what she is only on the ground of the existing world and is therefore not a world-constituting subject. In several manuscripts, Husserl seems to follow this lead, arguing that animals, the "insane," etc. are not co-bearers of the being-sense of the world, but rather belong to it.

Second, I will show that an accomplished primordial reduction entails that inter-monadic empathy must be possible with every other of any type socially constituted as anomalous. The reduction reveals that the original evidence of being a self in the world involves holding-sway in a *Leib* that is singular and without type [*artlos*]. Further, this *Leib* is given as the circumstance under which the entire world horizon is disclosed. In empathy, this original evidence is appresented in the other. I follow Husserl in thinking that zhaothe constitutionally first community is the normal human community and that other types of animate organisms appear on this ground. However, by virtue of its *Leib*, every animate organism can awaken the original singularity of the own-*Leib* and effect a pairing experience that is not framed by a mundane typology.

Finally, I consider how this pairing is enabled by the fact that the other's *Leib* is the first intersubjective object. All empathy depends on the conviction that the perceptible *Leibkörper* over there is the very *Leib* in which the other holds sway. I argue that this lends presumptive certainty to judgments like: "being 'here' in that spider-body over there feels eight-legged." But the other does not originally hold sway in a *Leib* that is of a type. The evidence won in original pairing with an other of anomalous type rather has the form: "An ego is holding-sway over there who grasps the world eight-legged-ly." This uncanny encounter has the power to reveal the contingent character of the anthropological basis of human experience in its orientation toward the true world. In revealing this contingency, the ego of anomalous type reveals that it is what it is without and beyond its reference to the normal community to which it does not belong.

31. Every Other is (in) the Same: Derridean Divine Alterity and Its Critique of Levinas (#28)

Ella Lazar (University of Vienna)

Jacques Derrida's 1964 essay, "Violence and Metaphysics", engages in a deconstructive reading of Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy of alterity. This reading attacks Levinas' conception of the Other as radically and incommensurably other, insisting that, on both an epistemic and ontological level, the Other's alterity necessitates, as Husserl showed, a similarity to myself—alter-*ego*. The first primary critique in this text is that the Other, in order to be truly other, must be sufficiently similar to the self or the Same; the second is that a pure nonviolence is impossible, that the relation to the Other is always already founded on an "original, transcendental violence, previous to every ethical choice" (*Writing and Difference*, 125). The relationship between Derrida and Levinas exemplified in this essay, as well as the influence of the Levinasian thought of alterity on Derrida, has been well discussed in scholarship, from Simon Critchley through the religious and theological interpretations of Derrida by the likes of John D. Caputo. However, these scholars stop at the two explicit critiques made in "Violence and Metaphysics", without addressing the underlying notion of alterity Derrida develops in other texts. That is, in the constitution of the Derridean "subject" in and through language and temporality—in short, *différance*—the originary place of alterity is within the "self", and it is this internal alterity which precedes and makes possible both the Same and the Other, more "ancient" than this very distinction. Furthermore, these commentators do not notice the extended dialogue Derrida holds with Levinas in the theological register: for, in later "religious" texts, Derrida not only engages Levinas on the ethical level of discourse, but rather, continues to think through God's alterity in a critical proximity to Levinas. This paper will outline the critical relation between Derrida's thought of alterity and that of Levinas: firstly, on the explicit level begun in "Violence and Metaphysics", through a phenomenology of the alterity of the Other. Following Derrida's close reading of the fifth of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*, we will examine the (im)possibility of a radically other human Other appearing to the self in the manner described by Levinas. Second, we will detail the fundamental critique Derrida conducts towards Levinas' notion of alterity as necessarily never appearing within the self. On the basis of a similar close reading of Husserl, that of *Speech and Phenomena*, we will show that in order for the self to appear to the self, for there to be self-presence and, in short, a self, there must always already be an alterity within—the *différantial* alterity of temporality and of language. Finally, we will apply these analyses to the phenomenology of God's alterity through a close reading of a passage from Derrida's *The Gift of Death*, wherein Derrida characterizes God as an internal invisible witness, the possibility of my having a secret.

32. "Older Than Presence": Entgegenwärtigung, "Meontic" Unreality, and the Two Fates of Alterity (#30)

Christopher J. Lilly (St. John's College, Santa Fe)

Eugen Fink's analysis of depresentation (*Entgegenwärtigung*) in *Vergegenwärtigung und Bild* (1929) constitutes an infrequently acknowledged but philosophically operative resource—in the precise sense of Fink's *fungierender Begriff*—undergirding both Emmanuel Lévinas' ethical radicalization of alterity and Jacques Derrida's quasi-transcendental *différance*. This paper reads these as two reactions to a shared Finkian inheritance, arguing that they 'diverge' in the wake of a longstanding interrogation as to whether an alterity-oriented uptake of "depresencing" forecloses freedom in favor of "an-archic responsibility," or else perpetually holds open such obligation to the alterior.

While Husserl himself imported the Finkian "*Ent-gegenwärtigung*" into the *Krisis*' analysis of empathic *Appräsentation* (§54b), he ultimately failed to draw the radical conclusion that stems from Fink's "not intentional"-yet-"horizonal" extension of temporal depresencing into phantasy: that essential alterity is only "co-disclosed" through non-evidentiary depresentational analysis—'fenestrally' implied, but never originarily given in representation. Against the orthodox account of re- and de-presentation as secondary modifications of originary presence, Fink identifies in phantasy a "fourth" mode of depresencing that is irreducible to those associated with the retention–primal impression–protention triad: the "open," non-worldly, omnitemporal horizon of "pure" ideality. This "fenestral*"* character "between two worlds," Lévinas notes, emerges from the material world's paradoxical opening unto an unreal world-time, marking a constitutive non-coincidence of reality and "unreality" at the heart of experience. This non-negative "non-being" becomes the productive medium of "pure possibility" (§24).

Following Lévinas' decidedly positive 1934 review of *VB*, *Existence & Existents* (1947) extends this fenestral opening into an "exotic" and increasingly ethical dimension. Come *Otherwise than Being* (1974)*,* the other who "interrupts" the *lebendige Gegenwart* of the "denucleated" subject from an "anarchic" past that was never present—a 'temporality' never fulfillable as a moment of lived-time—does so through the "me-ontological" aperture Lévinas calls responsibility. Thus, where Fink sees unreality opening onto "*Speilraum,*" Lévinas reads an-archic non-presence as the source of an ethical demand. The breakthrough of temporal *rien,* the "diachronically" irreducible time of responsibility, obliges 'prior to' our freely constitutive acts.

Derrida's own engagement with this structure becomes evident after his positive 1966 review of *VB*, which reads *Entgegenwärtigung* as inhabiting not "the sphere of origin" but the "transcendental imagination." The following year, "*dé-présentation*" appears both in *Grammatology* and *Voice & Phenomenon,* whereupon the *Vergegenwärtigung* in which *Gegenwärtigung* "is de-presented so as to be re-presented as such," reminiscent of the Husserlian formulation, is declared "older" than presence itself, and "nonpresentation or depresentation" "as 'originary' as presentation," which hews closer to Fink's. Later, this constitutive withdrawal comes to mark why "hospitality" exceeds any straightforward appeal to "fraternity"; one is not left cooly indifferent, but the depresentation that permits both "play" and any encounter with alterity cannot simply be resolved into Lévinas' anarchic responsibility. Rather, horizonal depresencing as ipseity-constitutive hos(ti)pitality opens onto an ineliminable relation to "the opening of what is called to come (*à venir*)," that "*pas*" we do "not yet" know and that no present can anticipate, even as human, animal, or divine.

33. Exhaustion and the Cost of Testimony: Otherness in ME/CFS and Long Covid (31)

Marie Lippert (École Normale Supérieure, Paris)

Chronic illnesses such as ME/CFS and Long Covid challenge conventional accounts of exhaustion, expression and testimony. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze's distinction between tiredness and exhaustion in his work on Samuel Beckett, alongside phenomenological accounts of fatigue and temporality in Emmanuel Levinas and Cristian Ciocan, this paper argues that exhaustion is not simply reduced capacity but a disruption of lived possibility and temporality. In ME/CFS and Long Covid, post-exertional malaise can make even minimal activity, including speaking or narrating one's experience, physiologically costly. Testimony may therefore become interrupted, delayed, or impossible precisely when it is most needed.

The paper examines what happens to intersubjectivity when the capacity to testify is unstable and when the demand for articulation risks worsening the condition being described. I argue that exhaustion does not eliminate ethical relation but makes its expressive dimension precarious. The problem is not primarily a failure of meaning, but the bodily cost of producing and sustaining expression.

The paper concludes by considering the methodological implications for clinical research, particularly approaches such as narrative medicine that treat articulation as both available and beneficial. ME/CFS and Long Covid challenge this assumption and call for models of testimony that accommodate interruption, delay, silence, and retrospective expression. Rather than treating these forms as failures of communication, the paper argues that they may be necessary to understanding testimony under conditions of exhaustion.

34. Levinas against the state: a decolonial reading of Levinas' Talmudic texts (#32)

Yonathan Busquila Listik (Leiden University)

The article aims to engage with three texts from different periods of Levinas's scholarship to attempt to construct a common theme: a Levinasian account of resistance to power. The central conceptual axis in this account will be the contrast between autonomy and heteronomy in Levinasian theory. I will argue that Levinas' readings reveal an ethics of openness to the otherness that resits appropriation both as a mechanism of dominating others and of being dominated by other. The three texts are: "Beyond the State in the State" in *New Talmudic readings*; "Judaism and Revolution" in *Nine Talmudic readings; Messianic texts* in *Difficult freedom.* The three texts share a common methodology in the sense that they are Levinas's interpretation of Talmudic passages. The Talmud is a compilation of debates in Jewish jurisprudence as well as a collection of interpretations on the significance of Jewish narratives.

The first text tells the story of the encounter between Alexander of Macedonia and the sages of the Negev after his conquest of the region. In the dialogue, the Jewish sages challenge Alexander's power. The text then narrates Alexander's encounter with African women who present a similar behaviour towards the new foreign power. The second text concerns a debate over labour rights as well as a story concerning policing under the roman empire. There the sages debate whether it is appropriate to cooperate with the empire or not. This is a common theme in the Talmud. The link between these two themes does not escape Levinas and he asked in the text whether Judaism is compatible with the state in its Greco-Roman conceptualization. The last text concern debates over the meaning of messianism and the application of justice. It covers a series of rabbinical disputes over themes such as the meaning of the messianic times, the figure of the messiah and the universalism of salvation.

Levinas's approach to the Talmud and the possibility it open will be complemented by Dolgopolski's (2009) approach to the text where he affirms that the text's core purpose is the destabilization of certainty. Segré's (2014; 2022) direct engagement with Levinas' reading of the Talmud will also be central to the articulation constructed here. More specifically, Segré's reading Levinas' "Judaism and Revolution" argues that Judaism is in fact incompatible with politics as it is conceived in the Greco-Roman tradition and therefore it demands a revolutionary attitude of resistance towards it. The investigation will also engage with recent attempts to frame Levinas within a radical tradition: Malabou (2022) and Abensour (2002) highlights Levinas' anarchism, Doublet (2021) his Marxist roots, and Dussel (1975) and Rabinovich (2016; 2024) explores his relevancy for Decolonial thinking.

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35. Bernhard Waldenfels' Phenomenology of Violence: From Limits of Legitimation to Metamorphosis (#34)

Michał Maczuga (Jagiellonian University, Vienna Doctoral School of Philosophy)

For Bernhard Waldenfels, the key characteristic of violence is "*violation* (*Verletzung*) specifically of claims to which we have to respond" (Waldenfels, 1990, p. 115). It can therefore be argued that otherness constitutes the central point of his reflections on violence, which he presents primarily in three essays written over the course of decades of his philosophical development: (1) "Grenzen der Legitimierung und die Frage nach der Gewalt" (Waldenfels, 1990); (2) "Verletzende Gewalt" (Waldenfels, 2006; originally published in: Waldenfels, 2000); and (3) "Metamorphosen der Gewalt" (Waldenfels, 2012). By examining these sources, I aim to systematize Bernhard Waldenfels' analyses and demonstrate that he offers a rich phenomenological account of violence. These essays, separated by many years of intense work, emerge as punctual applications of the developing method of responsive phenomenology to a specific matter. Thus, one can rightfully inquire about continuities, developments, and revisions across these three main endeavors into the problem of violence. My leading hypothesis is that, for Waldenfels, the central insight at the heart of his approach—its "constant"—is the analysis of violence in terms of *violation of otherness*. This perspective was formulated as early as 1990, but it was systematically developed in his later texts, in which he presents multi-faceted descriptions of the various ways in which violence manifests itself as a violation of an embodied, responsive subject. However, a specific shift in direction, which can be viewed in terms of radicalization, can be observed in his latest essay. I would like to argue that the initial analysis of violence in relation to its *legitimation*, formulated in 1990, is replaced in his latest attempt by a deeper insight into the dark process of violence's *metamorphosis*, which brings his approach in proximity to the traditional question of *evil*. This allows us to situate his investigation against the backdrop of the long history of philosophical responses to that recurring problem: "unde malum?".

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36. Loneliness and the Other: The Primacy of Ethical Relation in Levinas's Totality and Infinity (#67)

Priyansha Malik (IISER, Mohali)

This paper examines the concept of loneliness by situating it in alignment with responsibility towards the other. Taking into consideration phenomenological theory developed by Emanuel Levinas specifically pertaining to ethical responsibility towards the other. I position contemporary loneliness not just as a psychological or pathological concern but as breakdown of this fundamental ethical relation which Levinas describes as something which comes even before ontology.

Levinas begins his project in philosophy particularly in dialogue with Husserl's phenomenology and very gradually and systematically critiques entire genealogy of philosophy culminating it in his positioning of Ethics as first philosophy.
Husserel's major work is in the domain of intentionality that consciousness is never emplty it is always conscious of something. Levinas diverges away from it by positioning that when we become conscious of something we bring it down into the category of the same reducing or eroding away the alterity of the other where he gives his position even before consciousness being conscious of something or ontologically knowing the subsequent other, it is already in ethical responsibility towards the other, Levinas substantiates this position by high-lightening the fact that my existence under the sun is also at the disposition of the other. Levinas uses face as something that puts "the self" that is "I" into responsibility. By "face" he doesn't mean "face" in sense of perception but something that resist thematization and resists appropriation. He refers to language as a medium in order know the other without reducing their alterity. He talks of this relation as asymmetrical in nature but the "face of the other" summons the "self" or "I". In contemporary day to day interactions there is no lack of people due to digitization we are always connected, we interact with each other in form of liking or connecting but there is no ethical connection or ethical interaction between the self and the other and based on articulation by levinas I position that because of breakdown of this fundamental ethical relationship loneliness arises in contemporary scenarios.

37. From “I” and “You” to “We”: Henry and the “community of the living” (#35)

Anthony Masquelier (University of Lorraine)

The question of the Other in Michel Henry’s philosophy is one that is only addressed at a later stage, following the publication of two articles in the 1990s in “Phénoménologie matérielle”. Why was this question not addressed earlier? This is due to the originality of his philosophical system, in which the *τέλος* of intentionality is rejected in order to avoid a transcendent approach. Truth, which is Life, is akin to absolute immanence, that is to say, an immanence opposed by no exteriority, no Otherness. In that case, what of the Other? Is the Other external to us? Is the Other different from us? Faced with the risk of solipsism, Henry develops a theory of intersubjectivity based on the notion of “community”, who is a religious experience – since this community is the “community of the living” and since Life is equivalent to God, this constitutes a religions experience –.

Our question boils down to determining what becomes of the Other within this community of living beings. Conversely, defining the Other in Life also amounts to defining oneself as a living being. To this end, we shall undertake an analysis of the situation of the *ego* in its testimonial dimension. This will lead us, through a dialogue between Michel Henry, Francis Jacques and Jacques Derrida, to conceive of the *ego* as rendering an “account of Life”. However, the necessity of bearing witness, whether to others or even to oneself, leads us to an aporia: as Life is immanent, it cannot be intentionally aimed at. Indeed, any form of testimony seems impossible. Nevertheless, our ability to express ourselves rests fundamentally on the question of a dialogical exchange with the Other. It therefore seems that we are inclined to bear witness by becoming witnesses. In this respect, the experience of Life that unfolds from an “I” or from the Other can be conceived as an impossibility of bearing witness to it. In other words, the Other compels us to be witnesses whilst simultaneously realising a “non-testimony of Life”. Furthermore, the central role of the Other will emerge: although it appears to be external to the “I”, it remains an integral part of it. It emerges in relation to the self as an opposite, which precludes solipsism and necessitates testimony of some kind – whether it’s his on me, mine on him, his on him, or even mine on me –. This seems to elevate us to a higher level, where the “I” and the “You” give way to an “I” that is essentially passive and receives itself from Life. This “I”, because it is situated within a community – that of the living – therefore transforms into “We”, without, however, merging into an indistinct amalgamation of the living. This “We” will henceforth enter into dialogue with Levinas’s concept of the Other.

38. Exploring Otherness in the Burnout Society: An Initial Exploration of the Concept of Friendship within Otherness with Emmanuel Levinas and Byung Chul Han (#36)

Patrick Andre Mencias – (Far Eastern University, Manila, Philippines)

This paper presents an initial exploration on the concept of Otherness between Emmanuel Levinas, and the contemporary philosopher, Byung Chul-Han. Coming from Han's academic encounters with Martin Heidegger, he was eventually led towards Levinas' concept of Eros in describing a relationship between the subject and the Other through "letting one be". Inspired by Levinas, Han further develops the concept of Otherness by recognizing the value of a human person against the backdrop of the burnout society that turns pits one person against another in the fast-pacing world of the "achievement society".

Coming from a Levinasian standpoint, I will discuss the paper as an evaluation of Han's analysis on Levinas' concepts in his overall project. In doing so, I will first locate the place of Byung Chul Han in the intellectual landscape within the Levinasian scholarship by briefly revisiting what has been said and written by other scholars, and examine how he supplements Levinas' ideas. Second, I will showcase how Han's uses the concept of "Eros" and emphasize the importance of this concept in the Burnout Society in which he stresses how listening and friendship allows us to form connections with the Other. Third, I aim to provide my assessment on which avenues within Levinas' philosophy that Byung-chul Han can explore to further criticize the Burnout Society from an ethical lens. Coming from Han, and Levinas, I will also argue how the Burnout Society prevents one from experiencing religious experience, the tired subject becomes too fatigued to be part of a religious community or being unable to commit to his religious obligations(Han), and his inability to see the Other as a manifestation of God(Levinas).

39.Self-Constitution and Alterity (#41)

Pritika Nehra (IISER Mohali, India)

The question of how the self comes into being has remained central to phenomenological and ethical philosophy. Against traditions that conceive subjectivity as autonomous, self-grounded, and prior to its relations with others, this paper argues that the constitution of the self is inseparable from the encounter with otherness. Drawing primarily on Emmanuel Levinas and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, I examine how alterity functions not merely as an external relation to subjectivity but as a constitutive condition of selfhood itself. While Levinas emphasizes the radical transcendence of the other and the ethical responsibility that arises from this encounter, Merleau-Ponty approaches alterity through embodiment and intersubjective experience. Bringing these thinkers into dialogue allows for a richer understanding of how the self emerges through exposure to what exceeds it.

For Levinas, the other can never be reduced to the categories of the self or fully comprehended within intentional consciousness. The other remains irreducibly transcendent and resists every attempt at totalization. This radical alterity places the self in a condition of ethical responsibility prior to cognition, freedom, or autonomous self-determination. Subjectivity, in this sense, is not founded upon self-presence but upon a primordial exposure and openness to the other. Levinas therefore reorients the question of subjectivity away from ontology toward ethics, arguing that responsibility for the other precedes the formation of the self as an autonomous subject.

Merleau-Ponty, however, offers a different account of alterity by situating it within embodied and perceptual existence. Through his notion of intercorporeality, the self is understood as always already intertwined with others in a shared world. Alterity is not encountered as an absolute exteriority inaccessible to experience; rather, it emerges within the relational and embodied structures through which subjectivity is constituted. The experience of one's own body already reveals a relation to difference and exteriority, making the encounter with others possible in the first place. Drawing further on Bernhard Waldenfels and Dan Zahavi, this paper argues that selfhood develops through a dynamic process of interruption, response, and relational openness to what exceeds the self. Zahavi argues that: we do not first constitute ourselves completely and then encounter others, rather, selfhood develops within intersubjective relations.

By bringing Levinas and Merleau-Ponty into conversation, I argue that the ethical transcendence emphasized by Levinas and the embodied relationality articulated by Merleau-Ponty are not mutually exclusive but mutually illuminating. Merleau-Ponty provides the phenomenological conditions that make responsiveness to alterity possible, while Levinas preserves the irreducibility of the other against all forms of assimilation into the self. This tension becomes particularly significant in contemporary conditions marked by loneliness, digital fragmentation, and technologically mediated forms of sociality (what Hannah Arendt calls 'Organized Loneliness'). In such contexts, the other is increasingly reduced to projections of self-understanding, consumption, or algorithmic familiarity. Contemporary loneliness therefore reveals not only social isolation but a deeper crisis in the relational and embodied constitution of subjectivity itself. The paper ultimately argues that recovering an openness to alterity is essential for rethinking subjectivity beyond the isolated and self-enclosed individual.

40. Desire, Estrangement and Identity: Eschatology and Fallenness (Plenary)

Felix Ó Murchadha (University of Galway)

The temporality of the eschaton is of a futural transformation of the present in the moment. The eschaton is present, but virtual. In living through that transforming moment, entities both are and are not in the world: in the world, but of world as 'to come', which affectively refigures the present being of worldly entities. This divine presence splits consciousness of those who live within it. Thereby, being in the eschaton is a way of being-in, through which the self becomes a stranger to itself.

A similar structure is apparent in the phenomenon of fallenness. The experience of fallenness is constituted by a trace of a forgotten state, the state of grace. It is forgotten in the sense that it fails to be instantiated in the world. Yet, the trace of it, when experienced in moments of both wretchedness and joy, opens the present towards a past beyond retrieval and yet as originating the possibilities of the present. This is an experience of an ambiguous source: a source from which every action further distances itself.

Drawing on Heidegger, Agamben, Benjamin, Augustine and Schelling, this paper will explore the manner in which both eschaton and lapsus are experientially manifest in a splitting of the self as a desiring entity: the self's striving to actualise the object of desire continually estranges it from its source and its end. Instrumental action serves to accentuate such estrangement because it leaves desire itself unaddressed. Only contemplative action, i.e., the act of attending to the phenomenon as such, can address this situation. Such contemplation is seeking to uncover identity within the splitting made manifest in eschatological and lapsarian experience. The identity emerging there, it will be argued, is an active rather than a substantial one. Activity is understood here as the striving of desire. Attended to as such, it becomes clear that desire is estranging not through itself, but to the extent to which it is grounded in the self's experience of lack. Out of that experience emerges the binary opposition of worldly and other-worldly, as cosmic manifestations of the split self. However, desire and yearning disclose the world not in terms of its lack, but in its superabundance, as both show the world as in excess of any finite world(s). As temporal movements they disclose the world in the light of its source and end, understanding these as horizonal indications of infinite possibility. The paper will conclude by indicating how the contradiction of divine presence and absence can be mediated through devoted immersion in yearning experienced as a dynamic relation, of which all actual entities are finite instances.

41. The Displacement of Otherness: Horizons of Visibility and Ethical Demand (#39)

Damla Özçimen (Istanbul Bilgi University)

This paper approaches otherness not as a fixed ontological category, but as a fragile position of visibility continuously reconstituted within historical, perceptual, and ethical horizons. It centers on the question of how the Other becomes visible, and within which horizons it appears as threatening, foreign, vulnerable, or as an ethical demand. In this context, otherness is understood not as a stable essence, but as a relational position constituted through perceptual horizons shaped by collective memory, sacred narratives, and discourses of security.

In Husserlian terms, that the Other is never directly given, but emerges through appresentation, memory, and analogical transfer, demonstrates that otherness is not fixed but continually reconstitutable. The experience of the Other does not occur within a neutral perceptual field, but within sedimented layers of meaning. Such sedimented meanings can be reactivated and reinterpreted through reflection. Displacement of otherness therefore indicates not only changes in political discourse, but also shifts in structures of visibility and historical perceptual horizons. Contemporary political conflicts may thus be read as fields in which the constitution, stabilization, and displacement of otherness become visible.

The Palestinian question as a contemporary resonance renders visible the displacement of otherness itself. Historical narratives sedimented around chosenness, the promised land, security, and historical trauma have frequently rendered the Palestinian body visible within categories such as security, foreignness, vulnerability, or a population to be regulated. These forms of visibility are stabilized not only discursively, but also within perceptual horizons supported by hegemonic projects of security and stability. The issue is not merely political representation, but the historical and perceptual conditions under which certain bodies become recognizable, speakable, or invisible.

Student encampments, academic boycott initiatives, dockworkers' refusals to transport military cargo, global solidarity protests, and networks of testimony supporting Palestine point toward the destabilization of these established structures of visibility. The 2024 encampment movements and transnational forms of solidarity have reopened the Palestinian question not merely as a regional political conflict, but as a shared ethical horizon in which different experiences of injustice render one another visible. Experiences previously appearing disconnected begin to reinterpret one another within a shared field of visibility.

Accordingly, the Palestinian subject begins to emerge not merely as a represented figure, but as a point of encounter that transforms the field of visibility through its historical experience, vulnerability, and ethical demand. The paper draws on Merleau-Ponty's notions of the visible/invisible and reversibility to demonstrate the fragility of hegemonic positions. The seeing subject, once rendered visible, becomes the object of the meaning it had itself constituted. No position of power can therefore remain in the position of seeing, defining, and classifying. In Levinasian terms, the suppressed Other returns as *face*, producing a call to responsibility that exceeds representation, categorization, and political stabilization.

Otherness does not disappear, but is displaced. The Other is not a fixed identity, but a position redistributed within visibility, memory, and ethical responsibility.

42. When the Dead Refuse Distance: Otherness, Digital Testimony, and Metaphysical Verification in Contemporary Nigeria (#37)

Alapa Odugbo (Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA)

This paper argues that phenomenologies of otherness have largely located alterity in the living stranger, the divine, or the foreigner, leaving the socially active dead insufficiently examined. It contends that Nigerian digital media organize encounters with the dead through testimony, repetition, questioning, and communal verification. These accounts do not simply preserve supernatural belief; they create vernacular spaces in which presence is recognized beyond bodily visibility and metaphysical claims are publicly negotiated. Reading digital testimony as central reframes how otherness operates, revealing the dead as ethical and ontological interruptions rather than objects of superstition. The question, then, is not only whether the dead return, but how their presence becomes socially credible. Such a reading expands phenomenology beyond embodied encounter and the empiricist limits of reality.

43. The Transcendence of Religious Experience and its Naturalistic and Cognitive Scientific Understandings (#38)

Takashi Okinaga (Teikyo University of Science, Tokyo, Japan)

Phenomenology has succeeded in guaranteeing the transcendental legitimacy of the vivid reality of experience. However, recent naturalistic approaches to phenomenology are explaining transcendental experiences in terms of physical and physiological conditions, such as those of the brain and nervous system. In a sense, these two perspectives are fundamentally different. One area where the distinction between direct experience and its naturalistic understanding is currently most evident is in the cognitive scientific interpretation of religious experience. Religious experience, as exemplified by Rudolf Otto's "Kreaturgefühl" is characterized by the experience of overwhelming reality of the Creator as the Absolute Other, that of ultimate value, which results in a permanent shift in our belief.

However, from a cognitive scientific perspective, these experiences are explained as physical and chemical states, such as a sense of reality derived from stimulation of the temporo-parietal junction, etc. Here, the Absolute Other does not exist. This raises the question of how we should interpret this distinction and where the transcendence of religious experience is assured within such a naturalistic framework.While such overwhelming experiences can be artificially induced through drugs or electrical stimulation in an instant, it is still unclear whether meaningful experiences can be repeatedly induced each of which reaches the "depths of truth" and continue to influence a person's fundamental belief and behavior long afterward. As William James pointed out, such experiences typically occur only once or a few times in one's lifetime. Therefore, the idea emerges that religious experiences require a sense of "depth" as well as the integration of that sense into a complex web of meaning. Then, the rarity of this combination may be able to explain the rarity of real religious experiences.Furthermore, as a position that opposes to the view that experience is a material event, the panpsychical positions, ―advocated historically by early American pragmatists and more recently by David Chalmers and others—propose that brain does not produce consciousness, but rather serves as a communicator or mediator of universal consciousness or information states. Thus, those positions regard our consciousness as something which cannot be reduced to the brain. On the other hand, modern physicalism would likely adhere to the idea of the brain's causal production of consciousness and the reproducibility of religious experiences by physical or chemical means.

Now, several positions still attempt to assure the religious transcendental dimension. First, neurotheology, developed by Audrew Newberg. He posits the hypothesis that brain functions merely filter the "holistic experience of reality" as the transcendental dimension. Second, in response to evolutional theory's assertion that religion is nothing other than our collective illusion, William Alston offers the counterargument that religious experiences are more simply explained as direct perceptions of a transcendental reality. Third, a radical view about transcendence is proposed by Don Cupitt, that regardless of the relationship between the brain and consciousness, the very fact of our experiences of sublime value assures transcendence, because it proves the world itself is transcendent.In this presentation, we will examine the validity of those perspectives.

44. Screen Flesh and the Sediments of the Self in Maya Deren's Cinema (#40)

Priya Parikh (Independent researcher, New York)

When narrative is suspended the viewer is forced to derive meaning elsewhere, and the intentionality turns from projected causality to the perceptual field itself. In these explicitly diegetic moments, perception, encountered via the screen, becomes perceptible to itself. Through a reading of Maya Deren's experimental filmmaking alongside Merleau-Ponty's account of perception and Beauvoir's notion of ambiguity, I explore what happens when the self encounters itself through mediation. This paper labors to carry out a case that Deren's work exists as an acting phenomenology in order to reveal the operations of perception in an increasingly explicit technic. Across At Land, A Study in Choreography for Camera, and Ritual in Transfigured Time, Deren progressively intensifies cinema's ability to reorganize the viewer's ordinary experience of body, space, time, and relation. Her use of medium-specific techniques creates perceptual worlds whose coherence belongs to and within cinema alone. These worlds engage the spectator through familiar structures of perception and repeatedly destabilize them until the spectator becomes aware of their own participation in making the world coherent. I argue that such activity conjures a self-witnessing that functions as a form of alterity where perception is the condition under which the self begins to become available to itself. Deren's theoretical rejection of psychoanalysis constitutes a competing theory of film-watching at the time much theory often simply overrides it, using her images as symptoms and reproducing exactly the representational logic her filmmaking practice was constructed to resist. For this reason, the primary sources are not merely her films, but Deren's theories from An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film, Cinema as an Art Form, and her letters and lecture notes held at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University. Through Merleau-Ponty's account of embodied perception and intersubjectivity, Sobchack's phenomenology of film experience, and Simone de Beauvoir's ambiguity, Deren's cinema can be understood as a layered encounter among perceiving and perceived positions. These are Deren as director and filmed body, the camera and film as responsibility and utilized mode of vision, and the spectator whose own perceptual activity is momentarily brought out of its backgroundedness.

Merleau-Ponty provides a framework for which Deren's filmmaking practices are justified, while Simone de Beauvoir is the exacting, necessarily inconclusive solution to wielding the responsibility of a new medium or new form. Deren's cinematics are exploited on behalf of this active practice of ambiguity, where the recursive loops of perception, screen flesh, and the sediments of the self are brought, quite literally, to light. In this way, Deren's oeuvre illuminates that narrative need not be the natural or highest form of cinematic meaning and displaces it with noema, instead.

45. Otherness in the spiritual Experience of Bhakti (#43)

Poonam (Independent researcher, Dehli, India))

This paper explores the phenomenology of alterity within the context of Hindu *Bhakti* (devotional) traditions, focusing on how the "Otherness" of the Divine is experienced, sustained, and collapsed through intense emotional devotion. While classical Western phenomenology often frames absolute alterity (*Das Ganz Andere*) as a site of overwhelming awe, cognitive disruption, or ethical asymmetry, the *Bhakti* paradigm introduces a distinctive dialectic of distance and intimacy. Drawing upon the phenomenological frameworks of Emmanuel Levinas, Rudolf Otto, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, this study analyzes how the *Bhakti* practitioner (*bhakta*) confronts a Divine Other that is simultaneously transcendentally remote and radically immanent.

Through an examination of key devotional modes (*bhavas*), such as *dasya* (servitude), *sakhya* (friendship), and *madhurya* (conjugal love), we trace how the structural boundaries of the ego are destabilized. The paper argues that *Bhakti* does not merely seek an intellectual recognition of the divine other, but an affective, embodied absorption where the self is emptied to accommodate the presence of the beloved divine. Crucially, this encounter maintains a "porous alterity" which means, a deliberate poetic tension where the absolute distinction between the lover and the divine is preserved just enough to allow the experience of longing (*viraha*) and union (*samyoga*) to coexist. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that the *Bhakti* experience offers a unique contribution to contemporary philosophy of religion by showing how radical otherness can be navigated not through existential dread or cognitive mastery, but through the ecstatic, embodied vulnerability of love.

46. Alienation and the Other: A Levinassian critique of the subject (#42)

Björn Puhr (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, University of Vienna)

"Paradoxically, it is qua *alienus* – foreigner and another – that man is not alienated", Levinas writes in *Otherwise Than Being*. He thus challenges the Hegelian meaning of alienation as a necessary dialectical exteriorization as well as the Marxian concept of a subject unable to identify with the product of its work. In this talk, I will draw the consequences from this argument for a theory of alienation, pointing out how, in a theory marked by reflections on Judaism, the focus shifts from a metaphysics of the self to an ethics of responsibility that echoes the idea of *election*. Alienation thus comes to mean not a loss of the self in the Other, but the obstruction of this essential dimension of alterity. First, the theory of alienation will be situated in its Hegelian and Marxian heritage. While Marx draws from Hegel regarding the importance of work as exteriorization, this part of objectivity does not, for him, lead to alienation. Rather, the subject is from the outset objective. For him, it is the loss of this objectivity, of the product of its work, that comes to lead to an alienated consciousness. Thus, alienation is not a necessary stage of the dialectical constitution of the subject, but a historical contingency tied to the reality of capitalism. The second part of the argument looks at Levinas' theory of the subject to show why, for the philosopher, the primary exposition to the Other is not an experience of alienation, despite its apparent resemblance to Hegelian exteriorization. Indeed, in *Otherwise Than Being*, the subject is constituted through a *substitution* that precedes it and in no way represents a stage in a dialectical process. Levinas here responds to a criticism addressed to him by Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion, who suggested that, in *Totality and Infinity*, the philosopher remained negatively dependent on the metaphysical tradition he tried to escape. It is by fundamentally questioning a philosophy built on the self and founding the subject on the responsibility for the Other that he finally breaks with subject-centered metaphysics. Finally, the concept of alienation is identified in texts like *Humanism of the Other* not as an encounter with the Other, but as the obstruction of this primary ethical dimension. He points out the threat of this reduction to the logic of the Same in three different registers: the bureaucratic terror of Stalinism, betraying the emancipatory projects of Marxism, the human sciences, treating the subject as an interchangeable entity, and the Heideggerian philosophy of being, looking for a reconciliation with an authentic *being* and thus effacing the essential ethical difference between the self and the Other. Levinas' thought thus offers a concept of alienation that goes beyond its Marxian meaning to question a subjectivity based on the self. It does so not by pointing out its loss of an object, but the foreclosure of alterity resulting in the collapse of sociality as the fundamental condition of subjectivity.

47. The Postphenomenological Self, the Cultural Other and the Artificial Third (#45)

Sharoni Risha Ray Sanyal (Presidency University, Kolkata)

The Covid-19 pandemic has cemented people's presence online. Thus, an individual's embodiment occurs at two levels: physical and virtual. As a result, an individual's experience of the world in the present time is thoroughly mediated by technology vis-à-vis artificial intelligence and the modern day self is a postphenomenological self (Don Ihde, 1990). A persistent critique levelled against Ihde's postphenomenological self is that it is insensitive to the socio-cultural context of the subject (Scharff 2020).

The paper would argue that contrary to Ihde's belief that technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence, is an Other and not merely the Quasi-Other to the postphenomenological human self. Otherness begins in oneself for if one were a pure ego pole, one would not have had the need to utter "I" in order to differentiate oneself from others, thus, identity can only emerge in difference. Moreover, had the Other been a complete alien beyond the grasp of one's self, one would not strive for the recognition of the Other. As a result, it appears that the Otherness of the Other is something familiar, something one is at home with, namely, it is the aspect or fact about oneself which is beyond one's grasp, which cannot be changed, yet this fact shapes the context one finds oneself in. Artificial intelligence, in the present world, not only mediates the experience of individuals but in many cases acts as a companion and an adversary. Thus, the lack of lived experience on the part of artificial intelligence is surmounted by the postphenomenological self going online and undergoing metamorphosis to become a virtual subject. Technological mediation of experience is never limited to a single or few subjects but always occur in the same manner in a large group like a culture. Thus, the technological *We* is more pronounced than the *I* in the present day. Furthermore, the paper would explore whether through AI the eurocentric Western culture is appropriating a new orientalism. The Orient was conceived, since antiquity, by the West as the cultural Other. The Orient completely emanated from the fecund imagination of the West. The Orient had no real border, or in other words, the boundaries of the Orient could not be verified, since it derived ist territory from a geography, which Edward Said (2003) calls the "imaginative geography". The boundaries of Orient was quasi-real, the reality of such a geography subsisted only in the cultural self of the West and was conceived by the Western cultural self to draw the "our land-barbarian land' boundary or to draw the distinction between "ours" and "theirs." Lastly, following Bernard Waldenfel's exploration of the Third the paper would try to establish that AI becomes the Third in the present cultural exchange between the West and non-West.

48. Encountering the Other Before Interpretation: Mystical Elements and Ontological Presence in Suhrawardi's Narratives (#44)

Saman Rezaei (University of Alberta)

This project examines the ontological status of mystical elements in Suhrawardi's mystical narratives and proposes an alternative to the dominant symbolic and allegorical approaches that have shaped their interpretation. Rather than treating these elements as signs that refer to meanings external to themselves, I argue that they should be understood as beings of light that disclose themselves through encounter. Their significance lies not primarily in what they represent but in how they come to presence within the lived experience of the seeker. The project develops an ontological and phenomenological account of mystical encounter by focusing on the moment that precedes interpretation. At this level, the mystical element has not yet been transformed into a concept, symbol, or object of hermeneutic decoding. It appears instead as a presence encountered within a relational field that alters both perceiver and perceived. The question, therefore, is not "What does the symbol mean?" but "How does it come to presence, and what mode of being is disclosed in that encounter?" By returning to Suhrawardi's ontology of light, I argue that mystical elements possess an existential autonomy that has largely disappeared in modern interpretive approaches. Meaning in these narratives does not emerge as a stable content waiting to be uncovered. Rather, it unfolds through a dynamic process of concealment and disclosure in which presence always exceeds conceptual determination. The act of reading often obscures this ontological ground by reducing encounter to interpretation. Yet what gives rise to meaning in the first place persists as a form of alterity that resists assimilation into conceptual structures. The other is not primarily another subject, nor merely an external object of knowledge. It emerges as that dimension of presence that withdraws at the moment it is conceptualized, while nevertheless grounding the possibility of meaning. The recovery of this forgotten ground requires a shift from a hermeneutics of decoding to a phenomenology of encounter. Through a close engagement with Suhrawardi's mystical narratives, this project argues that mystical elements should be approached as ontic presences whose mode of appearing precedes and grounds interpretation. In doing so, it proposes a framework that brings Islamic philosophy into dialogue with contemporary phenomenological concerns regarding presence, alterity, and the conditions under which meaning becomes possible.

49. Otherness as the Other, Otherness as the Self: Empathy and Shame in the Constitution of Otherness (#46)

Simone Santamato (Vita-Salute San Raffaele University)

The aim of my presentation is to examine how Otherness is phenomenologically constituted through shame and the act of empathy [*Einfühlung*], developing an eidetics of Otherness in which the *mineness* of experience is constituted by a *sense of alienness* [*Fremdheit*] that decentres identity toward alterity and alterity toward identity.

First, I underscore that empathy constitutes the kind *Otherness as the Other*. Empathy is "a basic type of acts in which the lived experiences of the other are grasped" [*Grundart von Akten in denen fremdes Erleben erfasst wird*] (Stein 1964: 6, revised), through different "accomplishment degrees [*Vollzugstufen*] that correspond to different fulfilment stages of the act of empathy" (De Vecchi 2019: 229). These accomplishment degrees refer to the degree of adequacy involved in acquiring the lived experience of another person, ranging from a basic acknowledgement to the apprehension of Otherness as a uniquely personal subjective pole of experience. Moreover, I focus on an eidetic variation of empathy, the case of reflexive sympathy (1964 :18), in which I realize that the empathized person is empathizing me. So, "*my* original experience returns to me" through a double level of empathy.

Second, I highlight that shame constitutes the kind *Otherness as the Self*, namely, the apprehension of our self as an *object* within the conscious experience of another person. While with acts of empathy I grasp the lived experiences of another, in shame I grasp the Other I am within the lived experience of another. This apprehension is not analogous to reflexive empathy. Indeed, shame displays a grade of pre-reflexive self-constitution in which I apprehend that "I am conscious of myself as escaping myself" toward a decentred mode of my being that pertains not to my experience returning to me, but to another's experience of me that I live as "an immediate shudder" (Sartre 2007: 260, 222).

Finally, I develop an eidetics of Otherness. I emphasize that Otherness is not reducible to the Other, since I can become the Other for myself in shame, nor is it reducible to the Other I encounter through empathy. Rather, Otherness names the in-between of experience itself situated among immanence and transcendence, decentralizing identity toward alterity and alterity toward identity. The eidetic of Otherness claims that the *sense of alienness* is essential to experience since it organizes the *mineness* of subjective experience from my inner world to the external world, and from the external world to my inner world, finally revealing that *mineness* receives its meaning from the negotiation with the Otherness I am for myself, and the Otherness the Other is to me.

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50. Voice and Alterity in Ideas 2 (#47)

Timothy J Schatz (Villanova University)

One of Husserl's overarching goals in *Ideas 2* is to account for how a shared world was constituted through the experience of others (*Fremderfahrung*). The details of this constitution never fully came together for Husserl. The voice, including the child's voice, is one avenue offered by Husserl, although only in outline. This paper presents a reconstruction of how the constitution of the other could be built upon by voice within the conceptual resources of *Ideas 2*. I argue that the voice is like a traumatic rupture that lingers across time. Key to my analysis is the alterity within the self. Only because the voice is split between the felt and heard voice, space is made so that one's past voice is heard in the voices of others. I focus on the intentional entwining between the not-I and the I within the I in terms of primary and secondary sensibility, which Husserl explores in the 1917 text titled "Supplement 12" in *Ideas 2*. The relation is analogous to the way the I anticipates itself in Husserl's *Bernau Manuscripts* (1917-1918). This topological structure of the I and not-I forms the medium through which the voice forms a bridge between self and the other.

51. Being-with-each-other in dia-logue(s). Ethical reflections about our in(-)dividuality from within our fundamental human engagement (#51)

Vanessa Schmitz (Charles University Prague/ Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen)

Phenomenology, itself rather a vivid *movement,* unfolding from within the tension between so-called 'main figures' and 'peripheral perspectives', than an already fixed school, where you are obliged to follow *one* path, is, in particular, about the phenomena of the world. In culmination with the focused reflections about the importance of human corporality (*Leiblichkeit),* the phenomenon of Otherness does not emerge *sur plus*, but merely completes the Trias building the source(s) of phenomenological reflections about human ex(-)istence.

Whereas Husserl argued that even in science, the other *fundamentally* influences how far I experience and perceive others, the world and myself, he not only developed the importance of intersubjectivity, emerging from Being-with-others (in respect, on a transcendental dimension), but thus, also set the lines to unfold the otherness of each individual for him-/ herself. Simultaneously, he has introduced an ethical dimension by introducing the phenomenological *attitude* in opposition to what he calls the natural *attitude.* These paths are explored by phenomenologists who partially follow Husserl's paths while also critically going beyond them.

Considering that it is constitutive for our concrete reality in how far we *encounter* each other, which is also constitutive for our perception, this presentation develops the dia(-)logical dimension, including and going beyond verbal interaction. Referring to Heinrich Rombach's approach on the process of correspondence (*Entsprechungsgeschehen*) as the source of concrete constellations and also to Hans Rainer Sepp's introduction of In-Sein 1 (In-Being 1) as the fundamental asocial constitution of one Self and Insein 2 (Inbeing 2) as the fundamental social constitution of a com(-)munity, which are fundamentally intertwined with each other, but raise the emphasis of structural *and* foremost in-dividual responsibility for *our* reality, my approach aims to offer a fruitful-recreational dialogical response to also today's developing exploitation of human and non-human entities. Deconstructing Martin Heidegger's introduction of speaking-with-each-other, in dialogue with Maurice Merleau-Pontys description of the chiasm as the never-fixed in-between building the source for our reality, Levinas emphasis of the a-hermeneutical dimension of the dialogue, also responding to the responsibility for the Other, Jan Patočka's emphasis of our *proximity* as the initial phenomenon for encountering-each-other and being-with-each-other and Eugen Finks perspective about coexistence and education, taking seriously the initial impact of *experiences* in childhood for our concrete life including the constitution of communities, I risk the question of our coexistence and cohabitation in reference to our *fundamental human engagement*[1]. At all, what is at stake, is the potential political impact in and of phenomenological reflections for everyday life and every shade of ex(-)istence. Since reflecting our ex(-)istence in the face of our groundphenomena is not the end, but, on the contrary, demands us to respond to this by our behaviour to ourselves, including myself as well as human and non-human others – whereas we always respond to something as human

[1] With the fundamental human engagement I refer to the fact, that the Other is already constitutional to the Self, since the newborn cannot survive without the care of Others, whereas even the prenatal phase can be understood as an first intertwining of two in-dividuals fundamentally influencing each other (cf. Ara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*) ; thus every engagement emerges as a response to our fundamental human engagement, which emerges in-between human and non-human constellations.

beings *acting* in fundamentally moving, and, as such, constitutional-constituting structures, to which we fundamentally behave…

52. In Love with the Mad Other: A Phenomenological Analysis of Love under the Conditions of Mental Illness (#52)

Polina Sinitsa (KU Leuven)

"One does not love a madwoman, except insofar as one loved her before her madness," Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes in *Phenomenology of Perception*. The scholar argues that in love we attempt "to possess a body animated by a consciousness," rather than a mere body, which a mad person becomes. According to Merleau-Ponty, a mentally ill woman cannot be emotionally or sexually desired by the Other, insofar as a disorder alters her human condition. She becomes indifferent to the world and life as such. Her field of possibilities collapses, the modes for communication are escaping her, while the distance with others deepens. Ultimately, her existence is no longer actualized. She is alone, hiding and losing herself in her body, Merleau-Ponty concludes. Despite the impact of the mental disorder on the dialectic of her existence, so that she is neither a subject for herself nor an object for others, the thinker argues that the promise of intentionality and true presence in the world persists for the madwoman, allowing for genuine recovery.

I wish to call into question such an ableist framework and the denial of intersubjectivity for the mad person. I refer to the clinical accounts that document the experiences between people with mental illness and their loved ones, highlighting the depth and complexity of their affectivity. Furthermore, I consider the therapeutic potential of love and sexual desire as conceptualized by Merleau-Ponty: the 'atmosphere' of sexuality and its movement enriches the 'intentional arc' of a mad person and opens up her 'body schema,' introducing the richness of indeterminacy back into the patient's life. Thus, I argue that not only does love exist among mentally ill people, it also offers a promise of transformation for both the madwoman and her loved ones, a path of hope despite the debilitation and destruction caused by mental suffering.

53. The Ideal of Forgiveness as Reconciliation with Transcendence in Relation to the Other (#53)

Andrzej Słowikowski (University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland)

Reconciliation with transcendence (communion) appears to constitute a fundamental religious experience – one toward which those seeking God strive and in which they find moments of existential fulfillment. In the traditions of continental philosophy of religion developing from Søren Kierkegaard onward, however, this reconciliation is not understood as a purely mystical union attained through contemplative withdrawal from the world of immanence. Rather, reconciliation with transcendence takes place in relation to the Other (the neighbor or the stranger), who reveals himself in another human being. Since the primordial rupture with transcendence (the fall) signifies humanity's metaphysical guilt and introduces violence into the human world, shaping relations with others on multiple levels, reconciliation with transcendence can occur only in the form of forgiveness. The fundamental religious experience of reconciliation therefore cannot be constituted without acknowledging and assuming guilt toward the Other whose presence in the relation with another human being has been ignored. Forgiveness thus possesses a structure of mediation: transcendence is encountered through the figure of the Other, revealed in interpersonal relations, where each recognizes in another person the Other – and in this way, reconciliation with transcendence becomes possible for all those involved in the relation. Contemporary continental philosophy of religion offers a number of attempts to describe forgiveness understood in this way. In the pre-phenomenological account developed by Søren Kierkegaard, the central role is played by the category of the neighbor and by the enactment of the work of love, through which spiritual equality between the one who forgives and the one forgiven is restored. In the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, forgiveness signifies taking responsibility for the Other in the interpersonal relation and breaking with the logic of totalization. Jean-Luc Marion emphasizes the excess of the gift, which surpasses ordinary human calculation and points toward a higher order of love that makes forgiveness possible between human beings. Richard Kearney, in turn, appeals to the transcendentally grounded phenomenon of hospitality toward the stranger, through which the relation ruptured in the primordial act of violence may be restored. In each of these accounts a different guiding phenomenon comes to the foreground: Kierkegaard – the work of love; Levinas – responsibility; Marion – the gift; Kearney – hospitality. Yet all of them share several fundamental assumptions: 1) the relation with the Other (the neighbor or the stranger) encountered in another person constitutes the relation with transcendence; 2) reconciliation requires acknowledging the superiority of the transcendent order and relinquishing the claim to possess ultimate truth; 3) it also requires ethical action capable of reversing the metaphysical consequences of assumed guilt. A phenomenological analysis of the shared elements of these conceptions makes it possible to reconstruct the general structure of forgiveness as reconciliation with transcendence and, consequently, to determine the ideal of forgiveness as a manifestation of a higher transcendent ideal.

54.L’enfer, c’est les autres? Reflections on the Other in the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Buber (#49)

Konstantin Steuer (Independent researcher, Cologne)

The article discusses the relationship between the Self and the Other in the philosophies of Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Buber. It raises the question of how the two philosophers view this relationship and how their conceptions of intersubjectivity are similar. This article aims to contribute to the discussion of the differences between the Other and an object, as well as how we can relate to the Other in principle. Furthermore, this article would like to open a new perspective on the conceptions of intersubjectivity in the philosophy of Sartre and Buber. In particular, the similarities between the two concepts will be highlighted. I will begin with an examination of Sartre‘s phenomenological analysis of the look of the Other in *Beeing and Nothingness*. Then, I will compare the I-It relationship outlined by Martin Buber in his major philosophical work, *I and Thou*, with Sartre’s position. In the following I will consider the authentic relationship between the Self and the Other, as explained by Sartre in his posthumously published book, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, and compare it to Buber’s I-Thou relationship. In this context I will focus particularly on the ethical aspects. As a result, I will first point out that Sartre indicates two important meanings of the Other. On the one hand, the Other is the necessary condition for recognizing oneself as an object in self-reflection, i.e. without the judgement of the Other, one would remain on the pre-reflective level of consciousness. On the other hand, the Other, who objectifies and categorizes the Self, is perceived by the Self as an existential threat to his freedom. In response, the Self tries to make the Other into an object vice versa. In other words, the Self tries to destroy the Other’s transcendence. In the same way Buber describes the I-It relationship as a relation characterized by the fact that we classify the Other in fixed categories. Secondly, I will demonstrate that, in contrast to this objectification, Sartre and Buber present alternative ways of relating to the Other: the authentic relationship and the I-Thou relationship. While Sartre describes the authentic relationship as mutual recognition as freedoms, Buber points out that in the I-Thou relationship, we recognize the Other as an individual, not as an object. Thirdly, I will show that, for Sartre, the model of an authentic relationship is an accepted appeal. By accepting the Other’s appeal, we recognize the Other in his freedom with his personal needs and try to support him, i.e. the Self and the Other become one entity, both committed to realizing the Other‘s goal. To use Buber's words, we are taking on ethical responsibility by recognizing the appeal.

55. A Mystical Revelation as the Other in the Hermeneutical Relationship between a Subject (the witness) and an Object (the vision)

Sally Stocksdale (Towson University)

In this chapter I analyze a mystical experience as narrated to me by someone I refer to as the "witness." The objective is to methodically, heuristically describe, explain, and understand its meaning. This involves a simultaneous semiotic, (hermeneutic) phenomenological, and Christian analysis of the symbols, signs, images, and sequences of the vision's content, as well as its *context*, the *semiosphere* – indeed *sacosphere* – in which the intersubjective experience took place. By the latter I mean the place, the border between, and/or the middle or mediating ground, where the finite and infinite, the material/ontological and the spiritual/metaphysical, the phenomenal and the noumenal, the visible and the invisible, the temporal and the eternal, the world and heaven, culture and nature meet. A vision is at once a symbolic and dialectic or hermeneutic experience in that, on the one hand, from a heavenly point of view, it is a downward descent by God or God's energies and/or God's communication, a touching into the material realm; and on the other hand, from an earthly perspective, it is an upward ascent by the subject, a touching into the heavenly realm. The lifeworld of the subject is in essence the hermeneutics of an intersubjective, experiential encounter between themselves, the subject (in this case, the embodied witness) and an object (the other) (in this case, the mystical vision). (It goes without saying that the hermeneutic method accounts for the subject, in turn, being the object of the former object, the subject, and vice versa. In this case, can we not imagine that God, in its givenness of energies to the object, the witness, also has a lived experience here in this sacrosphereal context?) I argue that a mystical vision is a God-given communication, the language of which is symbolic, and is delivered, visited, revealed, in the form of God's energies. I suggest that, due to a variety of historical phenomena, many people are distracted or alienated from the holistic, unified, reality of existence – the composite unity of the seen and the unseen, the material and the metaphysical or spiritual, the mind and the body, and the natural and cultural. This is why, when an individual is confronted with a mystical experience they are, on the one hand, incredulous and yet, on the other hand, forever changed. This story is a both a testament to the witness and God itself, and a reminder of what the wise have counselled regarding the nature of our life, the truth, and our relationship with God.

56. Rationality and otherness in religious experiences – Some remarks on the Husserlian approach (#48)

Juraj Sücker (University of Bonn, Germany)

Since centuries there has been an opposition between rationality and religion. In the Enlightenment discourse, only those forms of religion were accepted that could – according to this philosophy – be explained rationally. The so-called "natural religion" was established as an embodiment of principles inherent to reason itself, and thus universally valid, regardless of any particular religious claims. Yet exactly in this kind of religion, every trace of divine otherness is lost. From this perspective, God must comply with the principles of human reason.

On the other hand, the critique of irrationality and particularity in "revealed" religions during times of religious conflicts in the de facto multi-confessional European societies had its legitimate aims. This raises the question: How can rationality and otherness be reconciled, and how can we avoid the dead ends of irrational arbitrary religions on the one and of "rational" reductivism devoid of otherness on the other side?

In this situation the specific Husserlian concept of reason and rationality can be helpful. According to Husserl, reason is the subjective part of the correlation between givenness, being and truth. This means that a reasonable position (Setzung – intentional act with a thesis) must be in accordance with the givenness of objects. This opens the possibility of a "rational" phenomenology of religious experience without a priori excluding the unique givenness of radical otherness or even absolute alterity. Nevertheless, in his reflections on God and theology, Husserl did not pursue this line of thought, focusing instead on teleology and the ideal possibility of universal harmony within intersubjective experience.

In my talk, I want to take both concepts (rationality and teleology) as a starting point for a critical debate of Husserl's "theological" position. In my view, Husserl also loses sight of otherness, as is especially evident in his thinking about God. God appears less as an otherness breaking through human systems than as a guarantee of the ideal possibility of fulfillment and of the unity of the one world across distinct intersubjective experiences. Yet in his notion of reason, Husserl shows a way how this otherness can be taken seriously in its appearance while simultaneously escaping irrationality. Reason does not set the conditions of possibility or exclude illegitimate appearances; rather, it consists in remaining faithful to givenness and in responding appropriately to what shows itself from itself.

Obviously, a similar path was tracked by Jean-Luc Marion in his works. However, I want to highlight some central elements in Husserl's phenomenology that can help us understand religious experience and its otherness – elements that Husserl himself did not exploit. These resources may be more persuasive to non-religious phenomenological thinkers than Marion's more explicit theological approach. Nevertheless, this approach is not without its challenges and limitations which I will also address.

57. When Expression Fails: Indication and the Emergence of Otherness (#54)

Shohei Suzuki (Tohoku University)

The aim of this presentation is to clarify the nature and locus of Otherness by examining two modes of givenness in the experience of the Other: expression (Ausdruck) and indication (Anzeige). Recent phenomenological approaches emphasize that the Other is directly perceived as an expressive unity of body and mind (cf. Zahavi 2011; Taipale 2015). Accordingly, Husserl's account of the constitution of the Other in the Fifth Cartesian Meditation is often interpreted as describing such direct perceptual givenness. However, a closer reading shows that, although Husserl recognizes an "abyss" separating self and Other, he does not clearly describe how this abyss manifests itself in experience. This "abyss," understood here as the inaccessibility of the Other, constitutes what is meant by Otherness. The presentation seeks to describe its manifestation in terms of indication.

This presentation argues that the experience of the Other has a dual structure, consisting of an aspect of an "expressive unity" and an aspect of "indicative manifestation." While previous research has primarily focused on the experience of the Other as an expressive unity, I contend that, in order to account for Otherness, it is rather necessary to consider the Other as an indicative manifestation. This becomes evident when one traces the argument of the Fifth Cartesian Meditation. There, Husserl ultimately maintains that the Other can be discussed only insofar as it appears within my experience. According to my interpretation, this is because Husserl is concerned precisely with the Other as it appears as an "expressive unity," and does not explicitly thematize the discrepancy between the experiences of self and Other—this, however, does not mean that Husserl was unaware of such discrepancies. In other words, as previous studies have shown, the Other is understood in the Fifth Meditation as an "expressive unity," and precisely for that reason Husserl was able to delimit the Other to what can be described within my own experience.

On this basis, the presentation introduces the concept of indicative manifestation. Its central claim is that Otherness does not arise from the difference between "here" and "there," but from a discordance in the behavior of the Other within my experience. Such discordance occurs when the Other's behavior fails to coincide with my anticipations and habitual patterns of understanding. In these moments, the Other is no longer grasped merely as an expressive unity, but appears as indicating something beyond what is given, pointing to a dimension that cannot be fully integrated into my experiential framework. This dimension renders the inaccessibility of the Other experientially salient.

The originality of this presentation lies in understanding Otherness not as a transcendental structure given in advance, but as something that becomes manifest in experience. This perspective shows that the Other possesses its own motivational nexus, thereby opening a path toward the constitution of the personal ego and the surrounding world (Umwelt), and toward a reinterpretation of the shared world in phenomenology.

58. Hierophantic Woman: An Eliadean Reading of Beauvoir's Account of Woman as the Other (#55)

Kayleigh Timmer (Stellenbosch University)

Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex,* argues that "Man seeks the Other in woman as Nature and his peer" (2011, 167). Woman, as the embodiment of Nature and the Other against whom man asserts himself, represents that through which man conquers nature. All of man's anxieties regarding his contingency and that he might not, in fact, exist as pure Idea are projected onto woman. She is seen as subject to the cycles of the cosmic forces, bound to repetition and immanence. Filipa Melo Lopes (2026) has recently argued that woman's perceived ambiguous, dual being as both human and Nature renders her uncanny, both human and inhuman, and so as likely to be associated with the divine as to be dehumanised and subjected to misogynistic violence. I contribute to analyses of Beauvoir's conception of woman-as-Nature by synthesising it with Mircea Eliade's (1987) phenomenology of religion. I argue that man, as the transcendent, autonomous subject embarking on one project after another, represents what Eliade calls "modern man", who lives in the desacralized world of the profane, ordered by profane linear time. Woman, on the other hand, insofar as she is taken to embody Nature, relegated to immanence and subject to the cycles of the cosmos, remains in the world of Eliade's "traditional" man, a sacralised world subject to cyclical time. I further argue that woman represent what Eliade terms a hierophany, a manifestation of something sacred which does not belong in the profane world which yet manifests itself through a feature of that profane world. Women, as both man's peer and Nature, are a manifestation of Nature, and the pre-modern, sacralised world, in the world of profane civilization. Yet they are still part of that profane world. I argue that woman's status as a site of hierophany of a conquered and yet still feared Nature causes man's ambiguity towards her. As Beauvoir and Melo Lopes illustrate, man feels both a fear of and desire for woman. This ambiguity between fear and desire is due, as put forward in Eliade's work, to modern, profane man's never being able to truly turn away from sacrality and his need to return to the paradise of repetition. Woman represents both what has been conquered and what must be controlled, and that to which man desires to return. Synthesising Beauvoir's account of woman-as-Nature with Eliade's phenomenology of religion thus allows for an enhanced analysis of the relation between man as One, and woman as his posited Other. Woman is recognised as representing a site of hierophany, Nature piercing through the world of the profane in an unwelcome reminder of all that Nature involves – contingency, mortality, and carnality. The complexity and ambiguity of the relationship between man as One and woman as Other, and the perception of woman as "uncanny" and needing to be controlled, thus takes on new dimensions.

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59. Attention as the Undoing of Otherness: Simone Weil on the Encounter with the Afflicted (#68)

Malwina A. Tkacz (Trnava University, Slovakia, and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw)

Simone Weil's account of attention offers a demanding answer to a question central to phenomenological accounts of otherness, particularly those associated with Levinas – what does it mean to encounter another person as other? For Weil, attention is not heightened noticing but a withdrawal of the self that clears space for the other to appear undistorted by the perceiver's own needs, categories, and habitual gravity. The paper argues that Weil inverts the usual direction of the problem of otherness. Where phenomenological approaches often ask how the self can encounter an other who remains irreducibly separate, Weil asks what must be undone in the self before the other can become genuinely apprehensible as other.

The argument proceeds in three stages. First, attention is situated within Weil's metaphysics of gravity and grace. The natural movement of the soul fills every void with its own projections, while the afflicted person, precisely because affliction strips away the qualities that ordinarily command notice, becomes the test case on which attention either succeeds or fails. Weil's famous question, "What are you going through?", is read not as an inquiry seeking information but as an act that dismantles the perceiver's readiness to substitute a category or type of sufferer for the singular person before her. Otherness, on this reading, is not simply a metaphysical distance to be bridged; it is also obscured by the self's tendency to project and classify, a tendency that attention can suspend.

Second, the paper places this account in dialogue with Levinas's account of the other's irreducible exteriority. Weil shares Levinas's resistance to totalisation but diverges from him in a decisive respect. Levinas locates the ethical demand in that exteriority, which resists the self's attempts to comprehend or totalise it. Weil instead emphasises the self's capacity for dispossession, or decreation, without which the other's exteriority may remain obscured by the perceiver's own projections. The paper asks whether this difference is one of emphasis or of substance, and suggests that Weil's account supplies something Levinas leaves comparatively undertheorised: an account of what a subject must do to become capable of genuinely attending to another.

Third, the paper turns to Weil's polemic against the concept of the person in La personne et le sacré, where she argues that the vocabulary of rights and personhood is too coarse to register what is sacred in the afflicted, and presents attention to the afflicted as prior to claims framed in the language of rights. The paper therefore reconstructs the encounter with otherness as depending not only on the other's exteriority but also on a transformation of the perceiver. The afflicted person is not made other by attention; rather, attention makes possible an encounter in which her singularity can be apprehended without reduction to a type.

The paper concludes by asking what Weil's account contributes to phenomenological discussions of otherness under conditions of exclusion and social invisibility, where the failure to attend, rather than difference itself, may be what renders another person socially and ethically unseen.

60. The Temporal Asymmetry of Alterity (#56)

Attila Ákos Tóth (ELTE University, St. Athanasius Greek-Catholic Theological Inst.)

Otherness, within the phenomenological tradition, is understood as a condition of subjectivity that nevertheless resists being constituted by it. In the present paper I will revisit this tension by placing Emmanuel Levinas and Bernhard Waldenfels into dialogue, focusing primarily on the temporal structure of Otherness, rather than its metaphysical status. I argue that what appears in Levinas as absolute transcendence could be reinterpreted, through the phenomenology of Waldenfels, as a specific temporal asymmetry, an irreducible belatedness of response. My claim is not to call into question the transcendence of the Levinasian Other, but to find an interpretation of its phenomenological accessibility, which I approach through Waldenfels's account of responsive experience. In the later major Levinasian work *Otherwise than Being*, the dimension of time becomes more crucial than in his earlier work. The ethical relation to the Other is rooted here in an-archic and pre-originary generation that precedes the self, who finds itself already accused and responsible for the Other. This priority is basically ethical and limits my freedom and possibilities within the ontological world, because through the Other the self's spontaneity is interrupted and exposed to an obligation outside any reciprocity or shared horizons of meaning. Therefore, alterity appears as absolute transcendence—beyond all comprehension and totalization. Waldenfels, however, reformulates the encounter that takes place between me and the Other, who, within his framework becomes the alien. With this blurring of boundaries, the focus shifts from metaphysical absolute inaccessibility and asymmetry, to an irreducible strangeness. The alien does not arrive from a metaphysical beyond – unlike the Levinasian other – but emerges constantly at the limits of my own order. This renewed encounter is characterized primarily by a temporal dislocation, which this paper is focused on, and spatial exposure. The self is always addressed before it can recognize or thematize what addresses it. The response to the demand to respond always remains belated, because the alien is the structural excess that disturbs familiar horizons of meaning. In this paper I propose to shift the focus from transcendence to temporality asking how the asymmetry of the relation is generated. In this way, I suggest, the Levinasian absolute Other can be understood as the phenomenological effect of the irreducible temporal gap, where the self cannot reach the address that calls it into question. The an-archic priority is the structural non-coincidence between call and response. This does not dissolve the ethical radicality of Levinas's thought, but situates it within the dynamics of experience, which means that the ethical normativity does not depend on an unreachable beyond but on the unstable temporal interval. The Other could be encountered at the structural limits of experience.

61. Totality and Infinity (1961) to Otherwise than Being (1974): Separation and the Transformation of Ethical Subjectivity in Levinas (#57)

Cita van den Heuvel (Radboud University, Nijmegen)

This paper engages with the phenomenology of Otherness through a close reading of Emmanuel Levinas' two major works, *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and *Otherwise than Being* (1974). The paper examines the evolving role of "separation" between the Self and the Other in Levinas' thought, focusing particularly on the shift from the radical exteriority of the Other in *Totality and Infinity* to the notion of subjectivity as "the Other-in-the-Same" in *Otherwise than Being*. Where Levinas' earlier work emphasizes an irreducible distance between Self and Other as the condition for ethical responsibility, his later work radicalizes this position by rethinking subjectivity itself as ***substitution***—being-for-the-Other prior to any act of consciousness. This raises a crucial philosophical problem: if subjectivity is already structured as responsibility for the Other, what maintains the distinction between one subject and another? In other words, what becomes of "separation" in a framework where alterity is internalized?

By comparing these two key texts, the paper investigates whether Levinas' later philosophy represents a development or transformation of his earlier position, and explores the implications of this shift for understanding ethical subjectivity, alterity, and the limits of phenomenological description. In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions within phenomenology concerning intersubjectivity, absolute alterity, and the possibility of preserving Otherness without reducing it to sameness.

To outline this theoretical exploration, the first part examines Levinas' project in *Totality and Infinity*, focusing on his critique of Western philosophy as a philosophy of totality, his account of interiority and the emergence of the self, and the radical exteriority of the Other. Here, separation is presented as the necessary condition for an ethical relation between Self and Other. The second part turns to *Otherwise than Being*, addressing Levinas' methodological shift, his engagement with Derrida, and the distinction between the Said and the Saying. Special attention is given to the difficulty of expressing alterity in language, and the tension between translation and betrayal. The third part focuses on the concept of *substitution*, where subjectivity is redefined as being-for-the-Other. By comparing both works, the talk ultimately evaluates whether Levinas' later philosophy represents a development or a rupture, and reflects on the implications for understanding ethical subjectivity and Otherness.

62. New Angels: The Otherness of the Angelic Gaze in Benjamin, Stein, and Heidegger (#15)

Freja Værnskjold Dzougov (Aarhus University)

Recent scholarship has noted a surprising return of angels in 20th century philosophy, the Angelus Novus in Walther Benjamin's *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (1940) having received most attention. My paper will contribute to this conversation by relating Angelus Novus to two lesser-known angelic figures that likewise took shape in the shadow of World War II: Archangel Michael from Edith Stein's *Sint Michael* (1942) and Rilke's 'Elegiac Angel' from Martin Heidegger's *Wozu Dichter?* (1946). I will investigate how these texts approach the horrors of history phenomenologically through the non-human otherness of the angelic gaze.

I will frame this investigation through the opening remarks of László Krasznahorkai's 2025 Nobel Prize lecture:

> "I originally wished to share my thoughts with you on the subject
> of hope, but as my stores of hope have *definitively* come to an end,
> I will now speak about angels."

Krasznahorkai goes on to present an order of angels called the 'new ones' who, in contrast to the 'angels of old', are not announcing any hope for the world to come. Rather, they are a band of strangely misplaced and unsettling creatures that exist within the cracks of *this* world, challenging and delaying its fatalistic march into the future. This challenging delay, Krasznahorkai seems to suggest, is what survives when all hope is gone. But what message is to be found within it? The answer remains opaque, like a riddle posed by the web of stories of these 'new ones' in Krasznahorkai's lecture.

My paper will elucidate this riddle by interpreting the angels employed by Stein, Benjamin and Heidegger as belonging to the order of 'new ones'. It is hard not to hear in Krasznahorkai's choice of words an echo of Benjamin's Angelus Novus which is likewise exiled from any hopeful news. It remains fixed with its back to the future, caught up as it is in the paradisiacal storm of progress, staring into the heap of destruction that is continually growing before it and which it longs to redeem. Here, as in Stein's and Heidegger's texts, the opposing human powers of creation and destruction appear fatally linked in the ambiguous face of a Luciferian *Übermensch* who devours the world, rinses it of all otherness and lets it rise anew as a disembodied projection of his desires. The angels offer shelter from those forces, not by opposing them, but by unravelling their consequences and setting free the voices of the dead as an uncanny and yet joyful challenge to the ravings of the *Übermensch*.

This causes his world to slowly spiral out of control as the past returns to him as a sprawling and untamable reality. I aim to demonstrate that whereas Heidegger's text remains rather stunned by the otherness of this angelic gaze, Benjamin and Stein both find a paradoxical peace within it: they hint at a messianic happiness which does not belong to the future, but to the strange present of angelic delay.

63. Traumatic Self-Differentiation: Husserl, Nietzsche, and the Limits of Self-Overcoming (#72)

Manjing Wang (Zhejiang University)

Traumatic self-differentiation challenges the inference from revised self-understanding to transformed agency: the meaning a subject assigns to their past can change while the expectations formed through that past continue to govern what feels possible. The subject recognizes their history as their own, yet encounters its habitual effects as obstacles to commitments they now endorse. This paper argues that such self-otherness involves an asymmetry between explicit revision and practical reorientation within a continuing experiential life. Husserl's analyses of synthesis, habituality, and passive genesis establish the distinctions needed to examine this asymmetry. Synthetic unity accommodates conflict, while acquired orientations continue to shape experience beneath changing judgments. Developed within phenomenological psychology, these distinctions locate the difficulty in a form of continuity that sustains estrangement: habitual anticipation assimilates new encounters to an established pattern of threat even when the subject acknowledges reasons to respond differently. In the configuration examined here, experiential integration can therefore coexist with an impaired capacity to revise how the past informs present possibilities. This persistence complicates self-overcoming. In Nietzsche's "On Redemption," the will's opposition to what it cannot undo makes its subsequent activity dependent on that past. Read alongside Husserl, this account exposes a risk in projects of self-transformation organized around invulnerability. Defining oneself against an earlier vulnerability may preserve anticipated threat as the measure of what matters. The comparison concerns dependence on an opposed past, without equating traumatic responses with Nietzschean revenge. "The Convalescent" places articulated affirmation under similar pressure: the contrast between the animals' exposition of recurrence and

Zarathustra's continuing convalescence makes the relation between understanding a position and acquiring the capacity to live it problematic. Husserl's account of habitual acquisition gives this problem psychological specificity by distinguishing an adopted interpretation from a changed orientation toward experience. On this basis, this paper proposes practical revisability as a criterion for transformation in this form of traumatic self-differentiation. Differences between present situations must become capable of modifying inherited anticipation sufficiently for previously foreclosed responses to become available. This criterion addresses the relation between narrative reconstruction and altered temporal possibility: a revised account of one's history may articulate new commitments, but establishing a change in agency requires examining how those commitments affect what the subject can anticipate and undertake. Self-otherness participates in traumatic limit-experience when the subject's acquired orientations restrict this passage from commitment to action. Since repudiation and professed affirmation can each leave that restriction intact, an account of traumatic self-transformation must demonstrate changes in the past's habitual influence rather than infer them from the meaning assigned to it.

64. Otherness for Hegel & Lacan: Constructing the Self through Desire (#58)

Ioana Welt (University of Bucharest)

In this work, I will present a contemporary account of the Self by linking Hegel's concept of otherness and Lacan's psychoanalytic concept of 'Big Other' and analysing their conceptions of desire as a point of convergence. I will show how this combination, integrated into the phenomenological framework, could bring a novel understanding of the Self that surpasses limitations of previous ones.

Lacan is building on the Kantian and Hegelian transcendental conceptions of otherness by moving the focus from epistemology – subjectivity through knowledge – to unconscious desire (McGowan, 2025, p. 69). As for Hegel, for Lacan the Other is an empty concept created by the Self, but it is nevertheless a source of desire that contributes as a medium to the constitution of the Self (McGowan, 2025, p.84). The Big Other consists of the abstract images each subject (Self) has of its demands, which then become, through interpretation, the subject's desires (McGowan, 2025, pp. 83-4). Lacan's framework is compatible to phenomenological concerns over the Self and its constitution through alterity, which, for him, is present on two levels: the other (other people, on the same level with the subject), and the Big Other (on a level above individual subjects, not representing a person, but rather, a symbolic position) (McGowan, 2025, p. 83-4). I will take specific interest in the latter due to its structuring property for the Self.

Desire reveals the relationship between the Self and the Other for Hegel through the dependence of sense-certainty on the Other. Desire is self-seeking, the Other only being an auxiliary that sets this process off (Kain, 1998, p. 110). For desire to be fulfilled, the Other must be *cancelled* and be absorbed by the Self ("OUTLINES OF HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY," 1869, §27). The impossibility of desire being fulfilled only further reveals the substantiality of otherness (Kain, 1998, p. 110). For Lacan, desire is central to the lived experience of the subject: not only is it a part of the subject's life-world, but it has a fundamentally constitutive role in it (Kemp, 2006, p. 3; McGowan, 2025, pp. 66-7). Just like for Hegel, for Lacan desire is essentially unsatisfiable, and, due to the existence of the unconscious, it is also fundamentally unknowable to the Self (Kemp, 2006, pp. 2-3; McGowan, 2025, p. 66). Consequently, this elusive desire is not to be fulfilled, rather the Self is (only apparently) satisfied with the state of desiring by itself (McGowan, 2025, p. 66).

Merleau-Ponty's innovative idea of Self as instituted (as opposed to constituted) through interacting with the Other, reveals the Self's condition as becoming, whereas in previous conceptions it was taken as already existent. Institution takes place in the encounter of the Self with the Other, 'between' them, and allows the Self to inhabit a common medium with the Other (Alloa, 2020, pp. 77-78).

The purpose of my research is to explore whether contemporary phenomenology would be enriched by placing the critics of the discipline (such as Lacan) and its precursors (such as Hegel) in dialogue with innovators such as Merleau-Ponty, as this might reveal limitations immanent to the phenomenological method.

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65. Why Can't We Be Friends? Aristotle and Husserl on the Conditions of Friendship with Others (#59)

Kyril Wolfe (Independent researcher, Florida)

Can we be friends with others? While it seems a simple question with an obvious answer, the conditions and possibility of friendship with others as Other are a matter of controversy especially today. On the one hand, following traditional accounts of friendship (e.g. Aristotle 2011; Plato 2025), there is a recognized need for likeness, commonality, and sharing to found friendships. Yet, this very foundation renders friendships with the Other—especially as "another self"—self-referential or even self-centered (cf. Pangle 2003), thus risking the objectification of the Other. Yet, to emphasize the otherness or alienness of the Other (cf. Husserl 1960) leaves them in varying degrees inaccessible. Consequently, the highest forms of classical friendship are problematized to the degree that the other's inner life becomes inaccessible to me, let alone the factuality of their existence. How can we reconcile these concerns and more adequately constitute friends in their otherness? This paper proposes a generative and genetic framework for phenomenologically approaching friendship. In dialogue with ancient sources (esp. *Sophist*; see Plato 2025), it proposes not only a logical distinction, but also a generative asymmetry between the concepts of likeness, sameness, and identicality in experiences of and with Others (cf. Husserl 1960). The experience of what is identical cannot generate the same or the like as such, nor can it fully present the form of the identical as identical. However, one can move from likeness to sameness, and from sameness to identicality. As such, there is a priority of likeness and sameness—and perhaps difference—over the identical. The paper then applies such a framework to examining a distinct and foundational experience in friendship reliant on the Otherness described: that of empathy (cf. Husserl 1973, Stein 1989). The paper asserts that such empathic experiences, while indeed relying on eidetic variations of one's own self, nevertheless distinguish—in line with the phrase "if I were you"—between the phantastical and at-times counterfactual givenness of the eidetic variations of one's self and the factual or real givenness of the Other and their life. Thus, the experience of empathy not only preserves but reinforces the distinction and generative order between likeness, sameness, and identity. The paper then proposes a synthesis of classical and phenomenological accounts of friendship and community (cf. Husserl 1989; Mansini 1998; Sokolowski 2002; Dreher 2009; Zahavi 2026) in which Others are present not merely in their difference, but in the real, living variations of personhood that offer the possibility of harmony through likeness and sameness without identity. The paper will then conclude with reflections on the Divine Other, and question the extent to which the different can generate the like and the same in the case of radical transcendence.

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66. Making Otherness into Non-Otherness. Dialectics and Phenomenology of Otherness (Plenary)

Cezary Woźniak (Jagiellonian University, Cracow)

Otherness is a relational, dynamic phenomenon. Appearing of otherness involves the drawing a boundary between otherness and that which may stands outside it or in opposition to it, that which is distinguished from it as something no other, generally here referred to as non-otherness, as something own, proper or familiar. How to think otherness and non-otherness? Or is it perhaps possible to conceive of otherness itself without drawing that line? This state of affairs already sets in motion the dialectic of otherness.

Heraclitus had already proposed a dialectic in which all phenomena have their source in the tension arising between opposites, between opposing forces that give rise to or bring about what we usually refer to as reality. However, these opposites are no opposites *sensu stricto*, because they are merely elements or poles of a relationship or interconnection and as such they are fluid and transitory. It seems that he same would apply to otherness and non-otherness, these categories cannot be defined separately. This fundamental distinction is already inscribed in the structure of our experience in its relational, mereological or phenomenal dimensions. It seems also that there is no alternative to this dialectic, for as long as reality occurs, the interplay of this fundamental opposition persists. This must be understood in the strongest sense: the gulf between the otherness and non-otherness can indeed be conceived as the source of reality and also as the source of our existence in the sense of the initial, fundamental stretching of our existence between these two poles.

This dialectic would suggest that an active approach to the relationship between otherness and non-otherness is possible, one that would involve expanding the realm of non-otherness in our experience. We have understood, at least since Hegel, that otherness could be assimilated in the course of history and even abolish at the end of history when the absolute spirit returns to itself. Phenomenology understood as the existential study of the field in which phenomena appear, would serve as an special and even individual tool for investigating and transforming otherness into non-otherness, which would be a transformation of the experience itself. Was it not precisely this possibility of phenomenology that Heidegger proposed in *Being and Time* when he considered two *modi* of *Dasein*'s existence, the authentic and the inauthentic? It is precisely this move away from stark dualism, coupled with a shift towards a phenomenology of immanence, that seems to open up the possibility of transforming and exploring the experience, including the way in which otherness is experienced.

This paper will explore precisely this possibility.

67.The Disqualified Face (#60)

Paul Yoon (University of Pretoria)

Reading Emmanuel Levinas in light of the ongoing crisis in Gaza offers an opportunity to re-examine his 1982 interview remarks when asked "…for the Israeli, isn't the 'other' above all the Palestinian?" (Levinas 1982) In this paper, I suspend my judgment of his response to the question and instead delve into how his framework made his judgment structurally possible and perhaps inevitable. I use Paul Ricoeur's concepts of idem and ipse as a diagnostic tool to make sense of Levinas's decision to not see the Face of this particular other. What is presupposed when this face demands infinite responsibility? Whose face is foreclosed and thus denied legitimately in his ethics? What is the philosophical justification for this foreclosure? Within Levinas's ethics of the Other, Ricoeurian idem and ipse are a scalpel or a diagnostic instrument to expose where his ethics breaks from within. This philosophical diagnosis takes place not outside Levinas but within and through him.

Levinas's ethics of the Face commands infinite responsibility prior to ontology and epistemology, overturning the first order of Western philosophy. Yet his 1982 remarks reveal that this apparently unconditional demand carries a hidden condition: the Other must not kill. The Palestinian, already fixed in advance as potential aggressor within the political climate of Sabra and Shatila, is not simply unrecognized but actively disqualified from the category of Other before any encounter begins. Alterity, Levinas implies, is conditional, and it is precisely this conditionality that his framework cannot account for from within.

Ricoeur's distinction between idem—identity as fixed substance, character, unchanging essence—and ipse—selfhood as fragile, ongoing fidelity to oneself across time—helps locate where this collapse occurs. What appears in Levinas's remarks is not a face but a category. The Palestinian arrives not as a concrete Other summoning infinite responsibility but as a political function, already classified by idem before ipse can open itself to the encounter. This idem-foreclosure is not only visible in how Levinas perceives the Palestinian. It structures his own self-understanding. His idem-identity, overdetermined by the narrative of the Holocaust, the Hebrew Bible, and his political commitments, forecloses the very ipseity his ethics requires. The promise of infinite responsibility cannot be made to a pre-determined Other.

This paper argues further that Levinas's ipse and the Palestinian Other's ipse are structurally entangled. To foreclose the Other's ipse is simultaneously to foreclose one's own capacity for self-constancy. Genuine ethical encounter requires what I call narrative negotiation: both self and Other arriving with unfinished, mutually transformative stories, each capable of reconfiguring the other's self-understanding. Drawing on Barbara Cassin's notion of untranslatability, this narrative negotiation takes the form of a labor of translation—never completed—in which the Other's narrative demands engagement precisely because it resists full absorption. What Levinas's remarks ultimately reveal is the refusal of this labor: the Palestinian's claim is not allowed to disrupt the narrative Levinas carries, because that narrative has already determined what disruption is tolerable and what is not.

68.Trika in Dialogue with Phenomenological Accounts of Alterity

Nancy Yadav, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

This paper investigates the philosophical problem of alterity by placing the Trika tradition of non-dual Śaivism in dialogue with major phenomenological accounts of the Other. It asks whether the intelligibility of alterity necessarily presupposes ontological separation, or if otherness can also be articulated within a non-dual ontology. While much of twentieth-century phenomenology conceives the Other through a logic of exteriority, Trika offers an alternative framework in which difference is grounded in the self-articulation of consciousness rather than in ontological distance.

Within phenomenology, alterity is frequently understood as that which exceeds intentional constitution and resists assimilation to the structures of subjectivity. In the work of Emmanuel Levinas, the Other appears as ethically absolute and irreducibly exterior, grounding ethical responsibility precisely through transcendence and non-reducibility to the self. Likewise, Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of givenness and saturated phenomena preserves alterity as an excess that manifests itself beyond the constitutive capacities of the subject. Despite their significant differences, these accounts retain the assumption that otherness is inseparable from some form of exteriority.

Against this conceptual background, the paper argues that Trika radically reconfigures the ontology of alterity by rejecting the primacy of exteriority. According to Trika metaphysics, reality is the dynamic unity of consciousness (Śiva) and its self-expressive power (Śakti), within which subject, object, and world emerge as differentiated manifestations of a single, non-dual consciousness. Alterity is therefore neither denied nor dissolved into identity; rather, it is reconceived as an internal differentiation within consciousness itself. The Other is not an ontologically separate being but a distinct mode of consciousness's own self-manifestation. To characterize this account, the paper develops the notion of immanent alterity. In this model, difference is real without entailing ontological separation. Differentiation belongs to the intrinsic dynamism of consciousness rather than to a division between independent substances. The encounter with the Other is therefore understood through the Trika concept of *pratyabhijñā* (recognition), whereby apparent otherness is disclosed as consciousness recognizing itself in differentiated forms without collapsing those differences into mere identity. The paper concludes that Trika offers a distinctive philosophical model of alterity that challenges the widespread identification of otherness with ontological exteriority. By demonstrating how real difference can be sustained within a non-dual ontology, it contributes both to the interpretation of Trika philosophy and to contemporary philosophical debates concerning alterity, subjectivity, and the metaphysics of relationality.

69. From Autre to Autrui: Levinas on Absolute Alterity, Enjoyment, and the Face (# 61)

Jiajie Zhang (KU Leuven)

This paper examines the differentiated meanings of *autre*, *Autre*, *autrui*, and *Autrui* in Emmanuel Levinas's *Totality and Infinity*, arguing that these terms mark distinct phenomenological registers of otherness rather than merely typographical variations. While *autre* designates alterity insofar as it remains correlated with the Same—whether as the dialectical opposite within totality or as the elemental object of enjoyment—*Autre* names the formal structure of absolute exteriority, defined by infinite distance and non-adequation between idea and ideatum. Yet this formal determination of alterity remains insufficient unless it is concretized in the relation with *autrui* and *Autrui*.

The paper first reconstructs Levinas's critique of totality through a comparison with Hegelian recognition. In Hegel, the other is indispensable to the movement of consciousness and self-consciousness, but its alterity is ultimately mediated within reciprocity, labor, and reason. From Levinas's standpoint, such an other remains an *autre*: it is preserved only as a moment in the self-realization of the Same. Levinas's phenomenology of enjoyment transforms this structure by showing that representation is derivative of life, dwelling, and separation. The elemental *autre* is not first opposed to the self as an object of cognition, but lived from, enjoyed, and possessed.

The second part turns to *Autre* as the Infinite. Here otherness is no longer constituted through opposition or negation, but through a distance that thought cannot reduce to adequation. However, the paper argues that *Autre* is not fully meaningful as a merely formal indication of transcendence. Its concrete realization occurs only in the relation with *autrui*/*Autrui*, that is, in language, interpellation, and the face. Drawing cautiously on Heideggerian distinctions between actuality and objective presence, the paper shows that Levinas's face-to-face relation cannot be understood either as theoretical objectification or as practical involvement within a shared world. Rather, the face exceeds ontological givenness and inaugurates an ethical relation in which the self is questioned and summoned to responsibility.

Finally, the paper distinguishes *autrui* from *Autrui*: *autrui* refers to the concrete human other encountered in existential life, while *Autrui* names the metaphysical realization of absolute alterity through the face. This distinction clarifies why, for Levinas, absolute otherness is not an abstract beyond but appears concretely as the vulnerable and commanding face of the human other.

70. No Direct Other, Yet No World Without Others: A Phenomenological Reconstruction of Alterity in Kant (#62)

Xiaochen Zhao (Independent scholar, New York)

How is another subject encountered within a philosophy that, at the level of cognition, admits only objects of possible experience, and, at the level of practical reason, secures subjectivity solely as a rational postulate? This paper argues that the divide between the empirical object and the moral postulate leaves the phenomenological encounter with the other as a subject unarticulated.

As a preparatory step, I argue that the third Critique's concept of *Mitteilbarkeit* (communicability) provides a retrospective key to uncovering the intersubjective depth of Schematism. While explicitly situated in the *sensus communis*, I argue that *Mitteilbarkeit* reveals a latent sociality of the imagination: it is the mechanism that ensures the world is not merely a "totality of significance" (Heidegger) bound to practical equipmentality, but must first be grounded in a pre-conceptual affective attunement, namely, a shared aesthetic horizon where the form of givenness in time is felt as universally shareable. In this reconstructive reading, the Schema is the site where the "objectivity" of experience is anchored in a communal validity; without this implicit shareability, the very phenomenal texture and scenery of our sensible world would collapse into private, unbridgeable phantasms.

However, a critical limit persists within this grounding: the other's Spontaneity remains fundamentally non-schematizable. A parallel difficulty appears in Heidegger: just as Dasein cannot undergo the death of the other, the Kantian subject cannot undergo the other's spontaneity from within. Yet, while Heidegger leaves the transition from the individualizing limit of death to the shared world of *Mitsein* largely as an ontological postulate, I argue that Kant locates this transition in reflective judgment's symbolic operation through the imagination, structurally parallel to schematism. This marks a strategic intervention within the phenomenology of alterity:

Alongside Husserl: Husserl's appresentation proceeds through associative *Paarung* grounded in bodily similarity, which is pre-reflective. In contrast, I propose *Symbolic Darstellung* as a complementary mechanism operating through a transposition of reflection. This allows the form of reflection governing the other's freedom to be sensibly borne, the freedom itself remaining an irreducible opacity, thereby securing alterity through the shared recognition of a limit that remains non-appropriable yet phenomenologically present.

Alongside Levinas: Levinas situates alterity as an an-archic interruption irreducible to the order of manifestation. Yet this very interruption still reaches us sensibly. Articulating its ontological structure leaves Levinas's ethical priority intact; it specifies the architecture of appearing within which the call can register at all. Symbolism performs this articulating work: it anchors the other's non-schematizable spontaneity within a regulative sensible landscape, drawing the limit within manifestation itself and holding alterity at its inner edge. This explains why, though our deaths remain singular, the 'light of the world' is shared: we are attuned through an imaginative movement preceding both concepts and commands, rendering the other's withdrawal the very condition of our common manifestation.

Underlying all of this, *Mitteilbarkeit* secures the shareability of sensible givenness itself, and every further operation of the imagination, symbolic presentation included, remains nested within the material-affective common field of *dunkle Vorstellungen* as its enabling ground.