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SENSIBILITY AND COHERENCE

by

JOHN HUNTING,

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in

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Introduction

In a recent article by David Carr, "Life and the Narrator's Art", the author contends that "narration, far from being a distortion of, denial of, or escape from reality, is in fact an extension and confirmation of it's primary features."[1] Appealing to Husserl's description of time-consciousness, Carr argues that the protentive-retentive structure of consciousness - which even the most passive experience involves - already anticipates the essential structure of the storyteller's art. That is, if on Husserl's view, experience is essentially configurational - our very capacity for "attention" and "following through" depending upon an on-going synthesis of events - Carr wants to argue that the beginning-middle-end structure of narrative is embodied in that configurational character of experience itself. He writes, "Life that is not some kind of story is unthinkable, or more precisely, unlivable."[2]

But even if it is true that a life which is not some kind of story is unlivable, Carr's presumption of the rightness of Husserl's description of time-consciousness is hasty. That is, if Husserl's and Heidegger's account of time-consciousness can be meaningfully interpreted in "narrative" terms, (and it seems to me these descriptions of consciousness are sound as far as they

go, i.e., insofar as they function as descriptions of the various ways in which we "make sense" of life), not all experience is necessarily open to this kind of description. If time-consciousness theories ultimately offer a phenomenological reading of coherence (or incoherence) at one level or another - e.g., Husserl's account of objectifying consciousness, Heidegger's analysis of projective Dasein, Carr's description of storied life or Merleau Ponty's reading of the body-subject and its motility - what is missing from these descriptions is a philosophical treatment of sensibility as an essential exposedness, open, not only to the potential sense of life, of the world, of space and of time, but also to pain and gratification. There is a depth and opacity to sensations, to the "materiality" of life, that is not organized across a matrix of storied, world or corporeal *possibilities* but is experienced purely as a wealth. Being is full, it is rich, and this wealth constitutes the goodness of life, i.e., its abundance. Generally this explains why reflection is so unnecessary to life. Sensibility does not seek the conditions of its possibility. We take pleasure in walking without bothering to ask what holds up the ground. And the there is, what Apollinaire called, "the joy for what exists", is not an understanding but an affirmation.[3] What is missing from phenomenological research, then, is an account of passivity and of the joy nourishment inspires. This turn to the non-configurational and non-synthetic character of the sensible, however, is not entirely my own. My thoughts on this subject are indebted to the work of Emmanuel Levinas and Alphonso Lingis among others.

But if these two descriptions of life seem sound, i.e., on the one hand, that the intelligibility of life is open, at various levels, to a phenomenological account of coherence, and that the drama of life must also be described in terms of its vulnerability and an *enjoyment* of life, the philosopher who travels this road is left with many questions. For example, how do these levels of life - i.e., the coherent and the sensible, the active and the passive - go together? If experience itself is not constituted by a kind of absolute subjectivity, what is at the origin of this power to lay hold of life, what is at the origin of this freedom? Is there a coherent understanding of ipseity that describes it in terms of passivity? Are there different levels or different modes of selfhood, and if so, is one more fundamental than the other? In short, what is the origin of experience?

On the other hand are these questions not themselves owing to a desire for coherence and unity? From its inception in Greece, Western philosophy has priviledged unity at the expense of the many, or it has tried to include diversity at a higher level of oneness. It is not surprising as a result , that Western philosophy has also priviledged thought and understanding over an experience of the sensible which is precisely not reducible to thought (or the absence of thought) and, hence, always breaks with any unity thought may achieve. Sensibility is precisely *other* than coherence in a radical sense, which is to say, sensibility is not the other *of* coherence but is beyond this *opposition* which thought constructs. Moving beyond a description

of the sensible per se, at a conceptual level I would argue this anti-Hegelian "position". But how can one argue *against* Hegel without affirming him? How can one read difference beyond the identity of difference i.e., beyond its meaning as difference? How can one understand *otherness* not as the other *of* something or someone? And *as understanding* is philosophy not *the* demand for coherence, and, that being so, is it possible to express philosophically the reality of difference and of the sensible? Is there something unhappy about philosophy itself? These questions point us beyond the scope of this work, but they are essential to it nonetheless.

What would it mean, therefore, to set sensibility and coherence adrift? A true philosophy of existence, it seems to me, must approach the dissolution of the storied self and its coherence from this perspective. That is, it must include a description of corporeal existence as a sensibility which blots out the wake of the just passed and is oblivious to future horizons and, as such, does not maintain the unity or coherence of a synthetic consciousness. As Heidegger explained, one exists before one understands existence, but what is more, and Heidegger did not understand this, one can also exist without feeling, within ones very being, the *requirement to be*, the responsibility to choose ones being. If there exists a reading of ipseity at the level of sensibility it is unlike Heidegger's notion of Dasein anxious for itself, or Husserl's notion of inner time consciousness, or Carr's notion of self and its narrative coherence, or even Merleau Ponty's notion of the body-subject,

rather, as Lingis claims, it is a self which is essentially labile, like a series of instantaneous reincarnations. And if this is true, if life is composed of a unifying consciousness and a unifying self together with a labile sensibility, we must argue (perhaps paradoxically) that life does not form the integrity of a significant whole even if, of course, it is the job of the significant self to understand and to understand itself as if life did form a coherent whole. It is not the case, moreover, that life does not form the integrity of a significant whole because, from an "objective" point of view, the stories we tell with respect to ourselves, over a life-time or at any given moment, do not match up. Nor is it because at any given moment we may be consciously pulled in opposed directions by competing narratives. I am not claiming either that our lives are disunified because at times we seem, paradoxically, to have no self at all, rather the disunity of life is achieved, if you will, from within, by the positive results of a sensibility ignorant of coherence because engulfed in the qualities of corporeal existence and its needs. In other words I want to argue in this work that sensibility, understood as dependence and gratification, has nothing to do with coherence or incoherence equally.

Time and the self, therefore, are two themes around which the present work is constructed. One of the unique features of time-consciousness theories was to conceive of the self as an activity which is temporal. And time, like the concept of space in the philosophy of Merleau Ponty, is fundamentally realized in

Husserlian and Heideggerian terms as the ecstatic embrace of a synthetic consciousness. Hence, according to Carr, to the extent that time is human, time is storied, even if this is not always explicit to consciousness. (In this way Carr thinks Ricouer's difficulty to unite time and narrative can be avoided.[4]) The temporal structure of the self moreover, describes its essential freedom. Sartre made much of this idea that consciousness is a freedom and Heidegger too insisted that Dasein is that being which *has its being to be*. For Carr the self is also understood as an achievement because it is an on-going temporal affair even if, on his view, it is not ontologically responsible for the *story* it tells.

But if I am that being who has his being to be, it must be true first that I am, i.e., that I exist factually as a sensitivity, open, not just to non-being in the possibility of my death but to the potential brutality and well being of life. This sensitivity would contain the meaning of a self for whom existence would not mean "having a being to be", or, "having a story to live out", rather it would mean being as a dependance and a need, it would mean gratification and enjoyment or suffering and pain, an existence backed up into itself, self-sensing, a positional consciousness rather than a consciousness of position.[5] Such a self would not be temporal in any ordinary sense of the word but would be a kind of instantaneous birth, "Where being born now no longer means being given being, being invested, destined, but just erupting, being thrust out."[6]

A different description of time and a different conception of self is therefore required if we are to understand the difference between the sensible and the coherent. At the same time we are required to understand what it is about phenomenology per se that Levinas and Lingis reject. For this reason, and because Carr's narrative theory is so indebted to them, I provide in the first chapter a lengthy exposition of Husserl's and Heidegger's account of time-consciousness. May I repeat too that I find Carr's narrative theory to be sound as far as it goes. Diagraming the general scheme of one world where "I" belong we work across and through that net and nexus of possibilities which constitute it. The ability to understand how things work, to be able to initiate a future *for* me or for us, and to be able to lay hold of myself throughout a multiplicity of world dealings is necessary to life. In this way the stories I tell and *the* story which unifies my life on the whole makes manifest these possibilities. Life without a kind of storied hold on life is indeed unlivable. But the sense life achieves is not everything. Narrative theory doesn't tell us anything about the worth of life. Life is not lived for coherence and for knowledge alone, it is also enjoyed, it is awed by the richness of things, it revels *in* the qualities of the sensible. Time consciousness theories miss this essential agreement of life with life because, limited by the Husserlian *epoché*, they can only reveal the *presented* and *posed* as such, which are, of course, features of intentional consciousness.

In chapter two therefore I try to describe the sensible in such a way that would distinguish it from the narrative and time-consciousness points of view. From play to dwelling I have drawn on different themes in order to explain what I take to be one interpretation of sensibility discovered in the philosophy of Levinas. But, to be consistent, the sensible must also admit of a temporal (or quasi-temporal) analysis and it is once again to Levinas and his description of the instant that I turn in this regard. Paradoxically one must return to a notion of the present reminiscent of empirical studies, the very abstractness of which phenomenology was intended to discredit. But by contrast to the empiricists who attempt to begin with a *tabula rasa* and account for experience as a causally additive process Levinas does not conceive of time as a series of abstract points, but as the contraction of one singular point, the *instant*, an irrevocable present in which sentience finds its meaning as a corporeality engulfed in the sensuous. And if according to time-consciousness theories the self is an activity bound to synthetic consciousness, similarly, according to Levinas, the self must be initially described as a passivity bound to the instantaneous birth of the instant. Hence, in part four of chapter two I discuss the meaning of an ipseity which, contracted in the instantaneous time format of the instant, must be conceived as a lability.

It is of interest to us that Levinas' account of labour and of representation is compatible with consciousness orientated theories of the "world" and of the "self", but *how* consciousness

and the storied "I" emerge *in the sensible* (as a relation with alterity) is not at all clear. Levinas' book *Totality and Infinity* was structured as a phenomenology of different strata of life from the purity of sensibility through various stages of seperation and ipseity in sensibility to contact with the other and the intersubjective possibility of representational consciousness.[7] But it is beyond the scope of this work to elicit an understanding of Levinas' ethics and, in particular, to see, as Levinas does, responsibility and ethics at the heart of the sensible itself. What I want to achieve, simply, is an account of sensibility and an account of ipseity, which, differing from time-consciousness theories, is non-configured. And, therefore, unlike Levinas or time-consciousness theories, I do not want to priviledge sensibility over coherence, or coherence over sensibility, attempting, as they do, to see one in light of the other.

In any case, what emerges is an account of sensibility and of coherence that insists on their radical *seperation*. This seperation, moreover, is nowhere more obvious than in an analysis of death and ageing, which, from the point of view of consciousness, signals the very responsibility of projectedness, but from the perspective of the sensible, is an indication of its exposedness and of the depth of the elemental in which it *baths*. Therefore we will conclude our discussion in light of this problem. What is the meaning of death and of ageing for sensibility and for the coherence of configured consciousness? Professor Carr has researched the extent to which human life is

storied. But is age and ageing always a matter of finding oneself in life's course? Does life's course not also indicate a progress over wich I have no control and no distance? There is a timeless dimension to this dependence of a body capable of suffering and of fortification. In short, it is not only in our projections that death emerges, it is also in our very vulnerability that the extinction of life is a reality. In ones sensibility one is *subjected* to ones substance and in fatigue and suffering one is acquainted with this "materiality" which is all feeling and need. It is as if in ones sensibility one was always on the threshold of dying or that one is dying. Hence from this point of view too we try to show that not all experience is configured but that life is also *undergone*.

Chapter 1

TIME CONSCIOUSNESS

Part I - Husserl and Inner Time

Husserl's phenomenology, as is well known, is a philosophy of consciousness whose task is to lay bare *how* in general the world is *given*. This attention to the giveness of the world and to the giveness of experience, opened, Husserl believed, "an infinite realm of being of a new kind," what he calls *transcendental subjectivity*, or, as he also writes, "the reality of concrete transcendental subjectivity."[1] Quite simply, if the world and its appearing are given to consciousness, *something* must be given, something must appear to consciousness, and it will follow as a result, that consciousness must be a consciousness of something which in turn is not itself, or is transcendent to itself. This fact, that consciousness is consciousness of something transcendent to itself defines, at least in a preliminary way, what Husserl means by the "intentionality of consciousness" and, that consciousness is this essential directedness beyond itself, allows him to employ the term "transcendental experience" to refer not only to the transcending nature of consciousness, but also to the world as transcendent. As Professor Carr writes, "Phenomenology is concerned first with the world as transcendent, i.e., with its

giveness as transcendent to consciousness; and it is concerned second with consciousness itself, but exclusively as transcendental consciousness, i.e., insofar as it transcends itself in meaning the world."[2] Carr adds, "Phenomenology looks at everything from the perspective of this problem."[3]

What is essential to the way in which consciousness is intentional, however, and as such is fundamentally related to the world which it means or intends , is the *synthetic activity* which it employs to constitute the meant unities of worldly phenomena. Consciousness is intentional in the sense that it is always consciousness of something, but the way in which the "objects" of consciousness are *intended* and, as a result, meaning is brought into the world, is *fundamentally* described in terms of the synthetic acts consciousness performs. Husserl writes, "only the peculiarity we call synthesis makes fruitful the exhibition of the cogito (the intentional subjective process) as consciousness-of, and actually lays open the method for a descriptive transcendental philosophical theory of consciousness."[4] Hence synthetic genesis - i.e., constitution - not only grounds the possibility of experience and meaningfulness generally speaking, and as such is at the origin of intelligibility, ultimately consciousness itself, i.e., absolute subjectivity, will be described in terms of the synthetic acts which give rise to its *own* universal genesis. Husserl writes, "the whole of conscious life is unified synthetically (and) the fundamental form of this universal synthesis, the form that makes all other synthesis of

consciousness possible, is the all-embracing consciousness of internal time."[5]

Hence, in an abstract way we have noted the following:

1. how intentionality is fundamental to consciousness,

2. how synthetic genesis is fundamental to the way in which consciousness intends meaning in the world, and

3. how temporality is fundamental to synthetic acts.

In Husserl's philosophy this way of describing consciousness and meaningfulness can in turn be approached from various points of view. For example, the *synthetic genesis* or *constitution of meaning* can be described in two ways which correspond to what Husserl calls static and genetic phenomenology, but Husserl also divides synthetic acts into their passive and active forms. In addition the intentionality thesis, that all conscious acts intend meant unities, holds not only for signifying acts like thinking and judging but also for perception and for egological development itself. My intent here, therefore, is to show how temporality is at the heart of Husserl's descriptions of intentionality in particular with respect to perception in an active and passive sense, and with respect to the genesis of subjectivity. This anticipates Heidegger's account of within-timeness and, corresponding to it, his important notion of disclosure. In addition, by focusing on Husserl's account of perception and the temporal character of consciousness, we will anticipate Levinas' critique of intentionality from the point of view of the sensible. More generally, we want to show how time-

consciousness is at the core of the phenomenological attempt to align consciousness with the "making of sense" and, to the close of this chapter we want to show that this limitation also informs a narrativist account of experience.

How, then, is the world given? So far the only concrete thing we have said about consciousness is that it is always intentional. In this way consciousness is taken to be a directedness-beyond-itself toward the meant or intended unities which appear to it as such, that is to say, as "objects" of perception. A first distinction which we can make then, is between the presented object which is given to consciousness (no matter how clearly defined or as yet unformed it may be) and the presentation or mode of giveness of this "object". Husserl writes, "For example, possible perception, retention, recollection, expectation, intending as something symbolized, intuitive representation by analogy are such types of intentionality, which pertain to any conceivable object, as do their types of synthetic combination."[6] The world, then, is given to me in many different ways - a tree, for example, as a memory, as a concept, as something imagined, as something to be drawn or cut down and so on - and the different modes of giveness will correspond to different kinds of presented "objects". In this regard, the phrase "objects of experience" does not mean "real objects" in any ordinary sense, but means rather, objects of experience precisely as given or meant, or, if you will, as experienced. This suspension of the "real world" which facilitated Husserl's analysis of experience as experienced, or,

of meaning as meant, is Husserl's famous phenomenological reduction: the return to the things themselves as objects of perception. As Kockleman explains, "memory, after reduction, yields the 'remembered as such'; expectation, the 'expected as such'; phantasy, the 'fancied as such'," [7] even if in each case the 'object' considered may be the 'same'.

This distinction, then, between the *mode of giveness* of an object and the *presented object as such*, i.e., as presented or meant, allows us to introduce two new concepts in the Husserlian exegesis which are indispensable to an adequate grasp of how consciousness intends meaning. They are the *noetic* and *noematic* components of meaningful experience. With respect to perception the noetic component of experience refers to the meaning giving act, such as seeing, apprehending, touching and so on, but includes in addition, the *ideal correlate*, i.e., the intended *sense* or *meaning* of what is seen which can always be abstracted from particular acts. Noematic reality on the other hand, refers to the *content* of experience - what Husserl calls the fulfilled intuition - which, as sensuously given, is *present* in an inter penetration or identification of sense with the sensuous. At the static level of analysis, we may note, Husserl is concerned with this fundamental form of identification, i.e., with the meant unities of perception as the inseparable unification of a perceptual directedness informed by sense and a sensual giveness informed with *presence*. Hence the noema is the object of perception understood as given - the seen as such, the apprehended as such and so on - and the noetic component of the

object is the meaning which animates it together with the mode in which it is so animated, i.e., as *seen*, as *apprehended* and so on. In reality the noema and noesis are not two elements placed side by side, rather they constitute two related aspects of a lived act. But this cross-sectional account of perception which Husserl called static phenomenology is limited in its explanatory power because of its abstractness, and for this reason Husserl himself favored a *temporal* account of experience. Moreover, the noematic component of experience is particularly problematic as Gurwitsch, Dreyfus and others have explained.[8] As a result, before moving on to Husserl's temporal account of the constitution of meaning we would do well to expose this first sign of difficulty in the Husserlian exegesis. It is my belief, moreover, that the problematic character of the noematic component of experience ultimately expresses the problematical nature of temporal synthesis and, indeed, of phenomenology itself.

It is often claimed of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology that it is an idealism. Of course no reader of Husserl could marshall this claim to mean that consciousness is worldless, that nothing exists except me and my private view of things, since consciousness has been defined in terms of a directedness beyond itself. As Husserl writes, "Consciousness is what it is solely in relation to intentional objectivities."[9] On the other hand, no one could deny that for Husserl meaning is *intended* meaning, something that is grasped *by* consciousness, at the level of perception, in the unity of noesis and noema.

Indeed, the very meaning of experience, the being-there of the world and the being of the world are all constituted by acts which consciousness performs. Husserl writes, "This world derives its sense and its existential status ... from me myself, from me as the transcendental ego."[10] Of course, it is true that the "world" is not lost from the point of view of *themes* developed by transcendental analysis. Husserl insists elsewhere that "with respect to the being or non-being of the world, we have not simply lost the world ... we retain it after all *qua* cogitatum."[11] And yet, the cogitatum or noematic component of experience is precisely *intended*. The "world itself" in this sense is the thetic correlate of an intentional consciousness, in short, the world is *taken* to exist.

Likewise in Husserl's Fifth Meditation otherness appears in the Husserlian world precisely as a *theme* for the transcendental ego. The other appears as *my* other, the world as *my* world. Even if the theme of objectivity arises in the transcendental analysis of "world", the objectivity of the world and the otherness of the other still remain structurally constituted by the ego. In short, noematic analysis may reveal otherness and objectivity with respect to what the other or the world may *mean*, but the *meant*, as we have seen, is owing to the work of consciousness and its intentionality. Hubert Dreyfus writes in this regard, transcendental phenomenology is "a theory of how objects are taken or intended but not how they are given or presented."[12] This may seem paradoxical. Husserl's intention after all was to describe the giveness of the world, however it

is one thing for the world to be "there" and quite a different thing for it to be meant. For this reason we can doubt if Husserl remains true to his own transcendental philosophy. And, that Husserl's concept of intentionality, from Levinas' point of view, excludes the possibility of experiencing the world as *there*, is a theme Levinas exploits at some length.[13]

In any case, it is not surprising that the full presence of an intuitive intention - co-determined if you will, by the interpenetration of noetic and noematic components - finds no easy expression in Husserl's philosophy, and, similarly, that the present itself will elude Husserl's account of time-consciousness. Husserl claims perceptual acts always fulfill a signifying intention *and* are sensuously present. He adds that the latter, the fulfilling component, can also be divided into its signifying and intuitive components. For example, if Husserl explains my experience of this cup is informed by a signifying grasp which takes it as such - the ideal correlate or idea of "cup" being easily abstracted from the individual acts which employ it - he also wants to say that the full presence of the cup, here and now is itself informed by a meaning or sense component, namely the intentional correlate of the fulfilling component. Two acts, then, are necessary for a perceptual act to take place. A signifying act whose correlate is the ideal meaning or sense of the perception, and whose analysis Husserl calls noetic analysis, and an intuitive act which entertains an intentional correlate itself and whose analysis Husserl calls noematic analysis.

But herein lies the ambiguity. Is the noema, the "object" experienced *as such*, the sensuous presence or the intentional corelate of the intuitive act, what Husserl calls the "fulfilled *sense*"? In either case, it is extremely difficult to see how the intuitive act or sensual presentation of, say, this cup, could *itself* ever be informed by sense. Could there ever be anything about the *sensuous* presentation of a cup that could be identified with , or would coincide with, its sense? Dreyfus writes, "A regress develops in which sense coincides with sense indefinitely. At each stage we arrive at a fulfilling meaning for an intending meaning, but at no stage does the fulfilling meaning or sense imply a sensuous filling. How are we to end this regress of meaning superimposed on meaning and account for our knowledge of the world?"[14] It may be objected that Husserl never intends to say anything about the "real" world, that, after the phenomenological reduction, it is only the world as meant that interests Husserl, but it is precisely the world, not as meant, but as given that has emerged in our analysis of perceptual acts. The constitution of meaning in perceptual acts seems less an *identification* of sense with a sensuous filling than an *ascription* of sense to a sensuous presentation. But to what could sense be ascribed if it is a condition of presentification per se, i.e., of experience, that meaning already be present, that *something* be given to consciousness?

Husserl's account of passive synthesis is intended to reply to these possible objections. Our description of intentionality and constitution to this point has turned on the

active participation of consciousness in the production of sense. I take this white thing to be a cup. I identify "it" with this meaning, it is for me that it is such and such, an *instance* of cupness and so on, and this is not surprising, for it is toward a world of experience *as meant* that Husserl has turned our attention. Husserl recognizes, however, that below this active taking of sense or ascription of sense the world is given in a more passive way. In *Experience and Judgment*, he writes:

> If we take this field as it is before the activity of the ego has as yet carried out any sense-giving operations whatever with regard to it, it is not as yet a field of objectivities in the true sense of the term. For as has already been mentioned, an object is the *product* of an objectivating operation of the ego ... But even so, this field is still not a pure chaos, a mere "swarm" of "data"; it is a field of determinate structure, one of prominences and articulated particularities. *A field of sense.*

And he adds,

> It is the phenomenon of associative genesis which dominates this sphere of passive pre-giveness, established on the basis of synthesis of internal time consciousness.[15]

Hence even before I ascribe meaning to the cup as such, or, as is more likely, use it, my passive field of perception is hardly chaotic. Colours naturally contrast with other colours, shapes with shapes, and, things more or less *remain the same* over any given period of time. In addition, elements in my field of perception form unities synthetically. For example, the colour, shape, and size of the cup on my desk not only contrasts with other colours and shapes in my field of perception, they also compose a sensual whole which, as such, is the product of passive synthesis. In short, Husserl is saying, in my field of

perception, things can be contrasted but they also go together, i.e., *my field of perception is structured in determinate ways.* Moreover, *my* field of passive perception is always *before me* and I myself serve as a unifying structure in the most passive forms of experience. Hence, Husserl claims the sensuous presentation of the world is itself structured, not only associatively, but also with respect to the ego, and, as he explains, its "turning-toward" or away from things.[16]

And because the sensuous presentation of the world is already structured in its own way, the passive presentification of fields of sense provides the ground upon which sense ascription can easily take hold. That is to say, because my passive experience of what I take to be my desk, my cup etc. is already structured in determinate ways, because, in short, it is already a field of distinguishable unities which I automatically survey, *signifying* acts find already existing unities to which ideal meaning can easily be ascribed. In truth, do fields of sense, then, not provide the *sensuous*, yet *intentional* correlate of intuitive acts, that is, the required sensuous filling which is at the same time a *sensuous sense*? In other words, does Husserl's analysis of fields of sense and passive synthesis not respond to our objection that the noetic-noematic thesis cannot account for the "thereness" of perceptual objects?

Now the *synthesizing structure of internal time consciousness* is key to Husserl's analysis of sensations. In point of fact, we have reached a pivotal point in Husserl's philosophy which is crucial not only for the establishment of

passive synthesis, but for the universal genesis of subjectivity itself. If temporal synthesis establishes the possibility of associative genesis in the passive field of experience, and Husserl appeals to the passive level of associative genesis as the founding level of *active-synthesis*, temporal synthesis *per se*, or, what Husserl also calls the self-constitution of time, must be at the root of his philosophy of consciousness. Indeed, the self-constitution of time is really absolute subjectivity itself. Hence by looking into the problem of the noema in Husserl's static analysis of intentionality and the passive sphere of giveness whose analysis was intended, at least in part, to respond to this problem, we have arrived at the heart of Husserl's philosophy, i.e., his philosophy of inner-time.

Our experience of the world, Husserl wants to insist, never so to speak happens *all at once* but is spread out over time in a series of perceptual acts that are self-related. In this way the giveness of an object is never *given* all at once or once and for all, and, similarly, while in an abstract way we may talk of ideal meanings, in reality meaning itself always appears against the background of other meanings and is really inseparable from these *horizons*. Once this is understood, static analysis is revealed to be wholly inadequate to the task of describing experience if not misleading, if only because Husserl wants to claim experience is temporal. In addition, egological life and the historical character of transcendental consciousness can only come clear in light of Husserl's account of absolute subjectivity in terms of time. Temporality, as a result, not

only *founds* consciousness but reaches out to inform its various aspects.

In his analysis of time-consciousness Husserl likes to describe "objects" of perception which are "temporal objects", like melodies or motion. He does this to show that sense ascription must take place *over time* if the intelligibility or followability of such things is to be possible. We, however, can return to our static analysis of stationary objects to make the same point. As we mentioned, one of the fundamental characteristics of a *passive field* is its unity, i.e., that it is composed of unities which are more or less homogeneous, which contrast, blend, yet remain distinct and so forth. We saw, moreover, that underlying the structural determinacy of passive fields of perception is the *durability* of its prominences and articulated aspects. However, to the extent that anything is or can be contrasted with something else, it must endure *over time*. In addition my perceiving of a cup not only takes time in the sense that the cup itself endures, my eyes constantly refer across the perceptual field in which the cup appears, from the cup itself and its inner distinctions to its surrounding environs and back again. Indeed to focus my attention on anything per se requires a certain effort on my part which is realized by a sort of constant re-introduction of the perceived thing against the horizon or field in which it appears. Perception according to Husserl, is not chaotic because one thing in my survey of a perceptual field already anticipates the next; in short, my experience is not made up of distinct moments of cupness and

deskness and so forth, which, by some Humian mental operation, I unite or associate. Perception, whether of "temporal objects" or not, is only possible if I experience spatially configured things in *temporal* configurations as well. *Fields of sense* are structured temporally in this way.

This, moreover, is true because the temporality proper to consciousness itself is constituted in the same way. Experiences per se do not appear "out of the blue" but against the background of just past ones (what Husserl calls *retentions*), and, anticipate the immediately foreseen, (what Husserl calls *protentions*). As Carr insists, experience always confirms or disconfirms what I had at least implicitly anticipated to occur, and this is a condition of my experiencing anything at all. But this claim runs deeper than may be apparent. What Husserl wants us to understand is that it is the *self-constitution of temporal consciousness* that is at work in the continuous *synthesizing of experience* that animates *any* focus of attention. Even if I do not move and nothing in my field of perception moves, in order to see my eyes must move and in so doing they pass over configurational wholes, or, more specifically, constitute them in an active associative genesis of contrasts and similarities, all of which could only occur *in time* via a temporal grasp backwards and forwards of a perceived space in its *enduring* and determinative qualities. This level of experience is none other than the passive synthesis of inner time-consciousness which, we can now see, not only founds the possibility of active-synthesis, but also *constitutes its own unity and direction.*

Active-synthesis, or what we have also called active intentionality,can also be described temporally. At this "macro" level of temporal analysis what comes clear is the equally temporal way in which we ascribe, 1) ideal meaning to the world at large, and, 2) together with our understanding of the world, form similarly stable conceptions of ourselves. If I begin to move around an object, the immanent objects of my consciousness are seen to be constantly changing. How, during this process, do I manage to see only one object? How, in short, do the multiple moments of my consciousness form the unity of one object (and ultimately, one world), and, of course, not many distinct, but *one* consciousness or subjective process? A worldly object, Husserl writes, "is a unity of synthesis: not merely a continuous connectedness of cogitations ... but a *connectedness that makes the unity of one consciousness*, in which the unity of an intentional objectivity, as "the same" objectivity/belonging to multiple modes of appearance becomes constituted."[17] Husserl adds, "The 'object' of consciousness, the object as having identity 'with itself' during the flowing subjective process, does not come into the process from outside, on the contrary, it is included as a sense in the subjective process itself."[18] Hence, what guarantees the unity of *objects* and the world at large is not a subjective act that would *impose* an order and unity on experience but, rather, the structure of consciousness itself. And we may now say that the unity of objects and of the world at large *results from the unity of consciousness*. At base consciousness *is* the work of temporal synthesis, but, as we saw at the start, it is also foundationally related to the world,

and, hence it follows that the unity of one would guarantee the unity of the other.

Hence the ego, according to Husserl, is an identity pole of subjective processes, and in a general way, our ego accounts for the continuity of life *on the whole*. From this point of view, the ego represents a substrate of habitualities which persists over time, with which the ego identifies itself as *I myself*, and, in view of which, as self-generating, the ego can change. Husserl remarks, "If in an act of judgement , I decide for the first time in favor of a being and a being-thus, the fleeting act passes; but from now on *I am abidingly the Ego who is thus and so decided*."[19] To decide about myself, of course, is to decide about my world, - consciousness is, as we have seen, only to the extent that it relates to the world - but what is significant here is that the ego organizes *itself* and that this takes place *over time*; I am the one who has decided about this or that, and who *will* be this or that; and, throughout possible changes, I remain I, that in respect to which *change* can occur at all. With this in mind Husserl writes, "The ego constitutes himself for himself in, so to speak, the unity of a 'history'."[20]

But what comes clear once Husserl has established temporality at the heart of consciousness and egological life, is the important sense in which consciousness is *historical*. From the preceding analysis of consciousness it would appear consciousness constitutes itself out of nothing. This is impossible. Man does not fabricate his sense of things and of himself out of nothing but learns the potential horizons for

things and for himself. My potential change in perspective vis à vis myself or the world is not limitless (although it may be so in principle) rather my limited disclosure of life is always confined to the possible horizon of meaning which exist for me. A conversion in my thinking or way of being is only possible if something in my former life had lead me to that new way of thinking or being precisely as a *possibility*. From this point of view, however, how can we say consciousness is *self*-constituting? I, of course, do not choose what language I will speak, what culture or historical epoch I will be born into and so on, and yet it is precisely in terms of these realities and the cultural and temporal horizons they provide that the world is meaningful at all. In short, are we not obliged to conclude now that experience is determined by the historical and cultural contexts in which individuals themselves discover who they are and what they are doing?

The problem of the self and its *constitution* is central to our understanding of time-consciousness theories but we would do best to put off our discussion of the self and its constitution for the time being. Suffice it to say Husserl became increasingly interested in the historical character of transcendental consciousness, an interest, we can note in retrospect, which was anticipated from the beginning in his descriptions of intentionality in terms of time. What emerges in his later writings is the idea that, even the world as *given*, i.e., which is revealed *after* the phenomenological reduction, must be informed by a certain historical relativity. In this

way, although the synthetic structuring consciousness performs is absolute, ones concrete presence to the world must be equally determined by the cultural and historical prejudices that are born from the engagement of consciousness in a particular historical situation. This emphasis on the situatedness of consciousness is a theme Sartre and Heidegger will develop at some length. However, to what extent our cultural worlds consist simply in inherited ways of thinking about or interpreting the world, or, rather, actually flow into and affect the nature of our *experiencing* itself is an interesting problem.[21] In this regard though, what is potentially relative is precisely the synthetic consciousness Husserl describes. All of this of course, anticipates both Heidegger's historical account of Da-sein and Levinas' insistent rejection that history is the constituting feature of man's existence. But prior to a consideration of Heidegger's notion of *within-timeness* and the *narrativity* of lived-time, let us return now to what remains the problematic nature of time synthesis itself.

With respect to their reading of Husserl, what Levinas and others have wanted to reveal is that Husserl's account of intentionality - even in terms of passive synthesis and the inner constitution of lived time - is incapable of accounting for the "over-flow" of sensations from the unifying thrust of consciousness. Richard Cohen, for example, claims that Husserl was aware of this excess himself and that Levinas' philosophy simply takes off from this lacuna in Husserl's phenomenology which he left behind. In what ways, then, is passive synthesis

and its temporal format inadequate to the task of describing sensations?

We will recall that Husserl made the move to a passive account of experience in order to allow for the passive presence of the sensual component of intuited acts of perception, in short, in order to account for the *thereness* of the perceived world apart from its meaning or constitution *as meant*. Husserl's response to the problem takes him to the core of his philosophical thesis. He tells us, *consciousness itself is a passive posing and unifying of experiences in time*. Indeed lived time is constituted by the overarching embrace of moments in time which consciousness performs. Perception, active-synthesis, and egological life are all constituted similarly in a synthetic structuring which reflects this basic structure of transcendental/intentional consciousness. Hence, from the perspective of absolute inner time, the present in Husserl's philosophy constitutes a kind of "source point", a constant peeling off of moments; the present is this peeling off and continuous relatedness to retentions. But Husserl claims with respect to this original source point that, as a result, the fundamentally constitutive feature of inner time is flux. He writes, "In principle no phase of this flux is to be broadened out to a continuous succession; therefore, the flux should not be thought to be so transformed that this phase is extended in identity with itself."[22] Husserl adds, "the temporal flux is absolute subjectivity and has the absolute properties of something to be denoted metaphorically as 'flux', as a point of

actuality, primal source point, that from which spring the 'now', and so on. In the lived experience of actuality, we have the primal source-point and a continuity of moments of reverberation (Nachhallmomenten). For all this, names are lacking."[23]

Now this description of lived experience seems a far cry from the noetic-noematic analysis of experience we have gone over, but in addition it would appear to lack the emphasis on synthesis which, up to now, characterized his descriptions of passive fields of sense, associative genesis and the like. The naked "thereness" to experience would appear to look like something we have yet to encounter or describe in a successful way. Hence the critical question that remains is whether or not Husserl's admittance that the lack of identity attributable to the constitutive flux of consciousness points us in the direction of regions in our being (namely sensibility) for which significative and associative sense are precisely lacking, and, as such, Husserl's theory of intentionality, and later, historicality, were unable to approach in principle.

In other words, at each stage of Husserl's philosophy consciousness has been aligned with the making of sense, at every stage, that is, except with respect to its origin in time flux. And yet it seems, rather, that consciousness, on Husserl's view, is a kind of self-constitution despite itself, a temporal flux or peeling, over which, at root, it has no control. Husserl writes with respect to absolute subjectivity, "we find necessarily and essentially a flux of continuous 'alteration', and this alteration has the absurd property that it flows exactly as it

flows and can flow neither 'more swiftly' nor 'more slowly'."[24] Is consciousness, at root, a laying hold of itself even when there appears nothing but flux to lay hold of?

Husserl may allude to the fact that the brute presence of the world to consciousness, from the point of view of time flux, is absurd, or constituted in a series of reverberations with respect to which no meaning can be ascribed, but his analysis in this direction stops there. Indeed, later in his life as we just mentioned, Husserl becomes more interested in the historical character of *transcendental consciousness* than is he interested in a critique of transcendental experience from the point of view of time flux and the inner movement of the sensible. But Husserl never could have limited the extension of time synthesis to time flux or the brute thereness of *hyletic* data without limiting at the same time his notion of phenomenology and the intentionality thesis. Because for Husserl consciousness is "consciousness of", and because, he believes, only phenomenological reduction can display the structure of this opening *onto* the world, the other and history, whether we are speaking of passive or active synthesis, static or genetic phenomenology, *passivity*, a realm of pretheoretical life - i.e. prior to phenomenological reduction - cannot enter Husserl's philosophy. Husserl gives himself the "appearance" as such, forgetting that, while phenomenological reduction may reveal realities inaccessible to empirical reduction, the analysis of the reduced appearance cannot be naive either, not just because consciousness is historical but because, in reality, not all of life is posed about us in the manner of a

presentation which is open in principle to analysis. Not surprisingly then Levinas criticizes Husserl from this point of view. What in short is the status of the phenomenological reduction if life is also made up of experiences that are not presented to consciousness or posed before consciouness in a comprehensive *hold* on life?[25] One *surveys* a field of hyletic data. But if the noematic component of perception refers to the brute thereness of the world, i.e., that concreteness which *fulfills* signification, temporal synthesis does not stop the regress of sensuous "matter" from the activity of intentional consciousness and the unity of perceptual fields. In short our discussion of time-consciousness has deepened our understanding of *how* intentionality works and it has demonstrated the extent to which realms of subjectivity are informed by a temporal and synthetic grasp of meaning, but our discussion has also failed to describe the realm of the sensible insofar as it *impresses* us with its qualities.

Part II - Heidegger and Dasein

Heidegger's philosophy of Dasein is both a continuation and ultimately radical departure from the phenomenological research of time consciousness pioneered by his teacher Edmund Husserl. With respect to time experience per se, however, and in particular, with respect to the synthetic and ecstatic structure of consciousness itself, Heidegger's account of Dasein seems not so much a departure from , but an extension of Husserl's view. A narrative account of experience, moreover, takes some of these common elements from Husserl and Heidegger, joining them in a new

way as the fundaments of a narrative picture of lived-time. And, because we take issue with precisely these fundamental characteristics of phenomenology and, by extension, narrative theory, our analysis here is at once both simplified by, and, rightly focused, on Husserl's and Heidegger's synthetic account of temporality. How does Heidegger's notion of within-timeness relate to Husserl's configurational reading of time-consciousness, and how does it anticipate a narrative picture of lived-time?"

To anticipate, and to keep in mind the narrative description of lived time and its coherence, we want to ask, "as that being for whom its own being is always an issue, or, in other words, as *projected*, is it accurate to say of Dasein that it is primordially the teller and telling of its story?" We may assume an answer to this question will hinge on how loosely we are willing to construe the term 'story'. In an everyday way we think of stories, whether they are true or not as once removed from the real world. Stories, as Louis Mink writes, are told, not lived. "Life has no beginnings, middles and ends."[26] In addition , stories are always told after the fact and this temporal position of the story teller permits the description of events in relation to later ones, an understanding which, understood in a strict sense is closed in principle to the agents of real actions. In short, the detachment and after the fact character of stories have led, not just philosophers, but literary theorists and historians as well to insist that although our descriptions of life often assume a narrative form, such form

imposes an order and continuity on a reality which lacks such structure. Hayden White writes, "What wish is enacted, what desire is gratified by the phantasy that real events are properly represented when they can be shown to display the formal coherence of a story?"[27]

Of course White is required to tell us what he thinks "real" events are, for it is precisely human reality that Carr believes is storied. Nonetheless it is interesting - if not uncomfortable - to note that we may share something with a naive realist and\or empirical approach to experience, namely the claim that there is a realm of experience below configured or "storied" consciousness. At any rate no one wants to claim that lived time and narratives are identical. Carr, for example, claims only that narration is an extension and confirmation of life's primary features. He writes, "The art of narrative is not the mirror of life but its confirmation and in some cases its completion and perfection. In fiction it can make things come out right, it can produce a wholeness and closure that life, it is true, never achieves."[28] Hence the source of narrative on Carr's view is the narrative structure of lived time itself, but, obviously, this does not mean life *is a story* in a strict sense, rather, as a condition of its meaningfulness, life entertains a story like structure which stories embellish upon. Just as Husserl's and Heidegger's synthetic description of time consciousness is understood to provide the conditions of experience per se, likewise the narrativist account of experience insists the interpolatable quality of experience per se determines its

possibility. It is this thesis which we hold to be true - or at least true in part - with respect to intelligible experience, but manifestly false when intended to extend to *sensibility*. The onus, of course, remains with us to indicate what falls through the narrative net, nonetheless, just as our analysis of Husserl left behind clues as to the direction of Levinas' descriptions of the sensible, Heidegger's existential analysis is similarly fruitful in this regard.

Husserl's account of time-consciousness, as we have seen, is inseparable from absolute subjectivity which is itself the passive, overarching, and ecstatic embrace of temporal horizons. Likewise Heidegger's notion of Dasein turns out to *be* the temporalizing of time. In short, its being is temporal. Husserl describes the temporal being of consciousness, and by extension, intentionality, in terms of the protentions and retentions that make up its configurational grasp of things. Heidegger on the other hand, describes Dasein in terms of its ecstatico-temporal structure which is, on his view, the unity of Dasein's *existentiality, facticity* and *falleness*. What do these primordial modes of Dasein's being involve?

I have mentioned that Dasein is that being for whom its own being is always an issue. This characteristic of Dasein Heidegger calls Dasein's *existentiality*. Another way he puts this is to say that because Dasein's being is always an issue for itself, Dasein is that being which *has its being to be*. That is to say Dasein is delivered over to itself and abandoned in the

face of its existence, and this, not just as a matter of practical concern, but as a reckoning with itself and a laying hold of itself ontologically. Hence Dasein's existentiality also contains the meaning of its essential freedom. Delivered over to its own potentiality to be Dasein is always free to choose itself. Indeed Dasein only realizes its essential freedom when it recognizes its possibility for being is precisely its own. And it follows that Dasein's existentiality is essentially futural; that is, Dasein must realize its existing as a projection of itself into the future. Dasein is, in point of fact, this projecting of itself and as such, Heidegger claims, Dasein's existential mode of being is to be a *being-ahead-of-itself*. Heidegger writes, "Ontologically, Being towards ones own most potentiality-for-being means that in each case Dasein is always already ahead of itself. Dasein is always 'beyond itself' as Being towards the potentiality-for-being, which it is itself. This structure of Being which belongs to the essential 'is an issue' we shall denote as Dasein's Being-ahead-of-itself.[29] But what is significant here, for our purposes, is that Dasein's existentiality is defined in terms of its temporal existence - i.e., Dasein is primarily futural - and the way in which Dasein must reckon with itself already implies a reckoning with time.

In addition to being a projectedness of itself, Heidegger claims Dasein is also primordially a *fallen* and *factical* being. Falleness expresses the idea that Dasein is also primordially a *falling-alongside* the *ready-at-hand* affairs of everyday life. What this means is that, as fallen, Dasein is for the most part

opened on to a world of tools and equipment which Dasein understands unthinkingly and whose meaning is immediately graspable and *ready-at-hand*. Heidegger also insists that we apprehend ourselves, for the most part, as we apprehend the things in our world, and, from this point of view, the ready-at-hand grasp of oneself and the world removes Dasein from the sphere of its project, or, at least, in the course of our daily lives, we can hardly be said to project a self and world in the way in which Heidegger speaks of Dasein's existentiality. We may say that as fallen being, Dasein's existentiality is covered over.

Similarly, on Heidegger's view, language is something we principally use in such a way that it is ready-at-hand. Indeed the disclosive power of language is only possible so long as its relativity and historicity proper to myself is forgotten or overlooked in everydayness. When my language is drawn into question so is my world and so am I. Hence, as fallen being, Heidegger insists Dasein is not only a "falling-alongside" its tools and primordially instrumental ways of fixing worlds and possibilities, it is also primordially fallen from the point of view of language, i.e., from the point of view of that disclosive power through which a matter of fact world could be named at all. For the most part, we talk as others talk, we work as others work, and throughout, lay hold of ourselves as we lay hold of ourselves. To be sure, Being Fallen is, as a result, the most dominate mode of Dasein's being, but it does not exhaust it. If for the most part we do not project a world for ourselves, but,

rather, allow a world to be projected for us, and if, for the most part our language circulates among us in the manner of what "one says" or, what "we say", it is equally true that at moments in our lives we do choose *for ourselves*, and speak as no one else has spoken. For Heidegger, indeed, it is a question of responsibility. Our existentiality calls to us, faces us, indeed, in our very mortality.

Facticity expresses the idea that Dasein is always a being which is *thrown* into a concrete situation which the past has made manifest. Dasein's factical being expresses the *being-already-in* of Dasein and it makes known, he says, the *having been*. In short, people always find themselves in situations, that is to say, living in a certain community and so forth, which, whether of their own doing or not, determines in part the possibilities open to them now. The present, in this way, is always "opened" from the past in the manner of a situatedness. Hence, if for Husserl the synthetic structure of inner time and the historical character of consciousness was a condition of experience itself, Heidegger claims similarly that the being-already-in of Dasein expresses the fact that the always already on-going state of affairs handed down from the past are as much a condition of Dasein as its essential projectedness or temporal thrust into the future *from* the being-already-in.

Therefore, as Dasein, that is, as *Being-there* we can distinguish Dasein's facticity and falleness from its existentiality by focusing either on the active way in which Dasein must take up its own being and be or exist in one way or

another, or by focusing on the passive way in which the possibilities for Dasein's projectedness are tied to its past (i.e., factical situation) and everydayness (i.e., falleness) in so far as every project involves a projection from some situation or other *and* involves an everyday "dealing" or "laying hold" of the world in one manner or another. When we understand Dasein as a *Being*-there, what we have in mind is the act of being; however, what we understand by Dasein's Being-*there* is the fact of its concrete situatedness and its everyday apprehension of that situation as a matter of fact.

That being said, we may note that the unity of Dasein's existentiality as projected, facticity as thrown and falleness as alongside the world is provided for by the unity of the temporal ecstacies from which these primordial features of Dasein get their meaning. It must be repeated, however, that Dasein is an opening or disclosedness of meaning as *being*-there, and it follows that the unity of Dasein's ecstatico-temporal structure, while describing Dasein's being, describes the very possibility of meaning at the same time. Heidegger writes, "as existing in the unity of the projection which has been fallingly thrown (Dasein) has been disclosed as a 'there' and disclosedness (per se) is that basic character of Dasein, according to which it is its 'there'."[30] This alignment or coincidence of Dasein and the possibility of meaning is similar, of course, to the coincidence of absolute subjectivity and its passive synthesis of inner time in the Husserlian text. In both the origin of meaning and the possibility of experience per se coincides with the origin of an

ecstatic consciousness which not only discloses meaning in the world but also discloses itself in the same moment as related to that world in one way or another, e.g., as "care", or as a "turning away" or "toward".

But the Heideggerian thesis makes much of the way in which Dasein is given over to itself as a primordial moment in the disclosure of meaning whether Dasein accepts this responsibility or not. In short, Heidegger insists that Dasein only knows itself fully as projected, i.e., as itself responsible for its disclosive power, which, opened from the past and taken up in everydayness is nonetheless an *opening into a future*. If Husserl has stressed past retentions as the backdrop for experience and its possibility, Heidegger stresses the futural character of experience not just as an implicit anticipation of the eminently foreseen, but also as an active taking up of its own possibility for being. The problem of the self and its constitution, therefore, is more important to Heidegger than it was to Husserl for this reason. In addition, if at the active level of synthesis Husserl's analysis of comprehension stressed the subsumption of experience under ideal unities of *sense*, Heidegger's account of comprehension is more a power to take hold of the world and its possibilities than a coincidence of sense with content. This in itself serves to focus on Dasein as a laying hold of itself and as an always already *dealing* with itself and its world, and, as a result, Heidegger's analysis of the origin of meaning and Dasein is much removed from the

Husserlian analysis of intentionality and is focused instead on the everyday way we live in a world of on-going affairs.

At any rate the connection between Dasein's existentiality, facticity and falleness and the temporal ecstasies can be drawn in the following way. In brief, Dasein's existentiality relates it to its future as a *future-as-coming-towards*. This future is not an abstract future present, but the future toward which I am always already turned in the manner of an anticipation and projectedness, and consequently, holds the meaning of my existence insofar as my being (as an issue) is always grasped in terms of what *will be*. In this way Heidegger adds, Dasein is a *letting-itself-come-toward-itself*. What this means, in other words is that Dasein is its possibilities for being and it realizes itself as a projectedness into the future, in an awaiting of the self which will be. As Michael Gelven points out my ability to have possible ways of Being and the consequence that I must reckon with these possibilities as mine, is what the future *means*.[31] It is also in this sense that Dasein is futural.

Dasein's falleness relates it to its present and the way in which, for the most part, it *falls alongside* the *things* of its world. For the most part, as we have seen the present does not emerge in our everyday life as the meeting place of the retained having-been and the projected future. In this regard we only feel the weight of the past when we try to free ourselves from it and only face the future as ours when our way is uncertain or open to change. For the most part Dasein is *absorbed* in its

everydayness, lost in its concernful dealing with others, things, and itself, and consequently is unaware of the extent to which it does not retain or project itself, but allows its possibilities and understanding to be formed by the anonymity of the "one". Hence, because the present is taken up in everydayness it is marked by an inescapable tendency toward *inauthenticity*. This, as is well known, is an existential theme Heidegger shares with Sartre. Dasein is primordially fallen because it is primordially related to the world and to itself in ways which are *not its own* - e.g., in its language - and, hence, covers over Dasein as projected. Both Heidegger and Sartre leave little room for authentic existence for this reason, nonetheless, as we will see shortly, Dasein is brought to itself in moments and a heightened awareness of Dasein as fallen, existing and factical, is , presumably what these moments of contact achieve. As Otto Bollnow writes, "Inauthenticity can endure as a permanent condition; authenticity on the other hand is never a *condition* but an *event*."[32]

Dasein's facticity on the other hand, relates it to its past as its primordial situatedness. Situatedness, we will recall, defines the horizon of meaning and the temporal horizon which provides Dasein with its possibilities. It is, as we have said, out of its past that Dasein's "there" is opened. Whether I chose to be in my office by nine o'clock this morning or not, I am here now and my possibilities as far as my day is concerned are determined by this fact. More importantly, of course, Heidegger's point is that I am my situatedness insofar as I am

unable to extract my sense of self from the world I find about me and the possibilities for being which *that* world, i.e., language, community, skills, and so on, afford. The having-been is retained in the present in this way, not as a series of past presents, but as the ground or horizon from which the present is "made present". Into this world that pre-exists the present, and, indeed, pre-existed me altogether I am *thrown*.

Heidegger, however, considers another reading of facticity and of Dasein's throwness which relates Dasein not so much to the having-been and the past as to the present. Facticity as we have said, binds Dasein to a concrete situation which represents the concrete range of its possibilities and which is issued from the having-been. Heidegger writes, "Thrown into its 'there', Da-sein is always 'factually' referred to a particular world, its own."[33] If, however, Dasein's being is taken up with the world in an everyday way - i.e., as fallen - and maps its future in a temporal thrust that deals or lays hold of its time, - i.e., as projected - Dasein is also brought to its "there" or factical situation in such a way that *nothing but that it is and has to be is disclosed*. Heidegger details the primordiality of moods from this point of view. He writes "to be disclosed" does not mean "to be known as this sort of thing," and even in the most indifferent and inoffensive everydayness the being of Dasein can burst forth as a naked "that it is and has to be."[34] He continues, "A mood makes manifest 'how one is and how one is faring' (and) in this 'how one is', having a mood brings Being to its 'there'."[35]

So it is in moods that Dasein is brought to its existence, and, anxious for itself, feels its requirement to be, i.e., its own projectedness. This constitutes Dasein's authentic contact with itself. Dasein is its own openess or disclosure, but moodwise and anxious as thrown, it is in effect an opening onto nothing, or, if you will, opens on to Dasein itself as a pure possibility. The 'is an issue' and 'that it is and has to be' characteristic of Dasein is to be strongly contrasted with everydayness. In the nakedness of a mood, "the pure 'that it is' shows itself, but the whence and whither remain in darkness."[36] And distinguishing facticity from falleness, Heidegger writes, "Facticity is not the factuality of the factum brutum of something present-at-hand, but a characteristic of Dasein's Being - one which is taken up into existence ... The 'that-it-is' of facticity never becomes something that we can come across by beholding it."[37]

This moment for Dasein which it cannot behold and into which it is thrown is nothing less than the concrete contact with itself, in effect the existential ground of Dasein's being and, as such, constitutes an essential point in the Heideggerian text. Indeed, while the primordiality of moods is focused in the present, and hence, from our point of view, can be understood to dislodge Dasein from its everyday falling alongside which dominates its "there", moods relate Dasein to the unity of its ecstatico-temporal structure. In the unity of Dasein's moods, it is at once thrown into a situation which the past has provided, taken up in its "that it is" in the face of that facticity, and

anxious for itself in its "has to *be*" as self-projected unto its end. The primordiality of anxiety expresses this temporal direction of Dasein, 1) mindful of its end, 2) informed by self responsibility and, 3) informed by the inescapability of its situation.

Hence it is in this regard that Dasein is a temporal being and that meaning and time is tied to the disclosedness of Dasein itself. But how does Dasein live in time per se? Heidegger writes, "We must show how Dasein as temporality temporalizes a kind of behaviour which relates itself to time by taking it into its reckoning"[38]. Heidegger's response to this challenge is predictable. He writes,

> "Everyday Dasein, the Dasein which takes time, comes across time proximally in what it encounters within-the-world as ready-to-hand and present-at-hand. The time which it has thus 'experienced' is understood within the horizon of that way of understanding Being which is closest for Dasein; that is, it is understood as something which is itself somehow present-at-hand, (my italics)."[39]

Hence Dasein's mode of being *within-time* is characterized, Heidegger says, by everydayness, that is, we use time, put it aside, forget about it, name it and so on in much the same way we use, put aside, forget about and name 'things'. Similarly just as our management of things may involve a high degree of technological skill, so too our measurement of time may be highly refined. In addition, while, as a society, we are much concerned with selling "things", it could be said we are equally concerned with selling "times", vacation "times", entertainment "times", and the good "times" our things are also intended to provide.

Indeed, there is a close relationship between our falling-alongside the things in our world and our falling-alongside our time. Perhaps the reason we use our time in the same way we use things is because, as fallen, our time is, for the most part taken up with our things and their everydayness? Heidegger writes, "Such concern, as concernfully reckoning up, planning, preventing, or taking precautions, always says (whether audibly or not) that something is to happen '*then*', that something else is to be attended to '*beforehand*', that what has failed or eluded us '*on that former occasion*' is something that we must '*now*' make up for."[40]

But the tie between Dasein as fallen alongside its things and fallen alongside its time is not coincidental. It is not just that both being and time are, for the most part, opened up by Dasein in the mode of everydayness. Whenever we refer to the present, that is, to some "now", Heidegger writes, "we always understood a '*now that* so and so ...' though we do not say all this. Why? Because the 'now' interprets a *making-present* of entities."[41] In other words, the simplest reference to the present, e.g., "It's snowing" or "The door is locked" and so on, also refers to the presence of something *in* the present and this because every present is a making present of something. Each "now" implies a "now that"; each "on that former occasion", an "on that former occasion *when*". This simple point is nonetheless central to Heidegger's thesis. Dasein is an openness or disclosedness, which, as we have seen, expresses the unity of its ecstatico-temporal structure. As a disclosedness, Dasein

projects a world, or if you will, makes a world present to itself in such a way that it lays hold of that world and itself at the same time. But this "opening up" and "laying hold" of things is at the same time an opening up of the "present" per se. Disclosedness, in short, is a "temporal" affair, not just because disclosure involves the unity of Dasein's ecstatico-temporal structure, but also because disclosedness understood up to now as the disclosure of things and of Dasein itself, is a disclosure of time.

As a factical being, Dasein was shown to be a being *thrown* into an always already ongoing state of affairs. This reality Heidegger calls *Being-within-the-world*. We can now see that *Being-within-time* is really just the temporal dimension of this reality. To see the world, to touch it, to use it, takes time, and to live in a world is also to live its time. The on-going state of the world requires that we respond to it and our response is limited to the concrete situation which provides our possibilities. Similarly, time is such that I am always already somewhere doing something, having just done something else and awaiting what will follow. The ongoing nature of time, in short, requires that we reckon with it in one way or another. Indeed, time is already taken up or already in use, when, if for a second, we stop in order to see how we will use it next. So with Husserl, Heidegger must insist that, as a being within-time, temporal horizons are indispensable to an adequate description of Dasein and the possibility of it experiencing anything at all. Temporal horizons, in short, overlap Being-in-the-world and in

this regard at this fundamental level, there is little difference between absolute subjectivity and its *synthesis* of time and world, and the unity of Dasein's ecstatico-temporal structure and its *disclosedness* of time and world. In both consciousness is at the seat of time and in such a way that, 1) an analysis of lived time leads us to the essence of consciousness, 2) an analysis of temporality leads us to the root of meaning, and, 3) an analysis of consciousness reveals it to *be* itself, the making of presence, or, if you will, the seat of intelligibility.

However, if for Husserl, the intelligibility of experience is ultimately traced to the unity and continuity of a synthetic-temporal consciousness, and, hence, if for Husserl, to be *within-time* means, loosely speaking, to make sense of things, Heidegger radicalizes lived-time in his analysis of Dasein as projected and *moody*. While for the most part Dasein is falling-alongside the world, that is to say, absorbed by everydayness, and, by extension, "coming across its time as ready-at-hand", it is not always. *In its most naked moments Dasein opens onto itself as a pure possibility.* Moodwise it cannot behold itself but feels only "that it is" and "has to be". When Dasein loses its project and consequently its laying hold and mapping of its time, it also loses itself. However, on Heidegger's view, this is not a falling out of time, but its very reality as projected. Indeed, Dasein's temporality is *mortal time*, a responsibility unto death and an openness onto nothing insofar as nothing and no one but Dasein can map out for it its time. The radical

projectedness of Dasein unto its death, in short, Dasein's *Being-unto-death*, is a theme Husserl does not develop.

In addition, Heidegger focuses on disclosedness per se, i.e., the openness characteristic of Dasein, in such a way that distinguishes his thought from Husserl's altogether. Indeed, Heidegger develops a notion of truth and of Being from this notion of openness which creates a direction in phenomenological research that is also completely foreign to a narrative account of experience. Dasein is, we will recall, an *opening* on to the world; the unity of its ecstatico-temporal structure describing a disclosedness, a "there", or a presence, if you will, which all experience involves. As such disclosedness not only describes the essential in Dasein, it also describes the origin of meaning. This disclosive power, however, is by its very nature finite. This is because, as projected, Dasein organizes a world of finite possibilities which the limitations of its concrete situation make possible. In addition, as fallen, Dasein's disclosedness is marked by everydayness, that net of understanding and instrumentalities which realize the unity of one world among many and one project among many. Professor W.B. Macomber expresses this well in the following way. On Heidegger's view, "Knowledge presupposes the familiarity of things which issues from their being organized in a structure which knowledge itself does not create. Things originally organize themselves around human activity as it proceeds from a project, and not simply a project which Dasein *has* but one which it *is*. The intelligibility and accessibility of things - human knowledge and all other non-

cognitive forms of experience - are grounded in this project."[42] Hence, because projectedness is a condition of experience per se, and a project is always one and finite, my *knowledge* of the world is proper to me in principle, and it follows that Dasein's disclosedness must be not only a bringing into presence of things, but a movement which thereby excludes and veils other possible disclosures and other possible projects.

It also follows that Dasein could never bring the source of its own project into view. "If our experience depends upon the project which we are, we cannot discover the source of the project within experience."[43] Similarly, if the background or horizon of everyday practices, including language, makes disclosedness possible, one can never dig below disclosures to the root of disclosedness per se because any further elucidation of the background will be itself "situated" and so on *ad infinitum*. This regress, Heidegger claims, in reality, describes the *hermeneutics of the understanding*, which, we may have guessed, defines the being of Dasein itself. He writes:

> This circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move; it is the expression of the existential *fore-structure* of Da-sein. It is not to be deduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle to be tolerated ...The "circle" in understanding belongs to the structure of meaning, and the latter is rooted in the existential constitution of Da-sein, that is, in the understanding which interprets. An entity for which, as Being-in-the-world, its being is itself an issue, has, ontologically, a circular structure.[44]

In short, from an epistemological point of view, the unity of Dasein's ecstatico-temporal structure can be interpreted in this way. What interests Heidegger in his later work however, is the

relation between disclosedness per se and disclosures, between the origin of disclosures and the disclosures themselves. But what is at stake here, of course, is the relationship between *Being* itself - i.e., the origin of all truth and reality - and the *beings* which everyday Dasein discloses. The difference between the two defines, in short, an *ontological difference* and the elucidation of its meaning, Heidegger claims, is the goal of thinking par excellence. Indeed, because Dasein is primordially and predominantly taken up with *beings* as fallen, the truth of *Being* can never be known and the openness, or, what Heidegger also calls, the clearing in Being which Dasein is, while allowing Being to appear, nonetheless covers it over in a concealment, the nature of which Heidegger refers to sometimes as a mystery. This necessity in virtue of which Dasein reveals beings and yet conceals Being (and other beings) leads Heidegger to the conclusion that if the truth of Being should ever be known, it could not be said. Saying always involves delineation and delineation the presencing of beings, not their *Being*. In so far as philosophy has thought it could think Being it has *appropriated* Being in this regard. If the truth of Being cannot be said, if the truth of Being remains forever "Being as the event of Appropriation."[45] Being as the event of disclosedness and everydayness, what remains for philosophy? Only this: to show up Appropriation as appropriation.

As for Heidegger's thinking, the origin of his notion of Being as a mystery is clear. Dasein as a disclosedness, as the presencing of the world in the unity of its ecstatico-temporal

structure, lets Being be, brings things into view, but in so doing cannot help but conceal Being per se at the same time. Even in an authentic opening onto itself as a pure possibility (a pure opening) it is taken up in anxiety as the intuition of its projectedness per se and *being-unto-death*. Dasein remains the key to Heidegger's thought throughout his work and it is his attachment to Dasein as the source of meaning (the opening, indeed, in Being itself) that hints at a certain anthropocentrism at the core of his project. Here we must ask of Heidegger the same question we asked of Husserl. Is experience really aligned with the presencing of consciousness or of Dasein? Is appropriation as everydayness exhaustive of human life? In short does the essence of man really lie with his understanding, this power to lay hold of things and of oneself in an ecstatic embrace of potentialities? Heidegger sees that Dasein is most naked in its moods, he understands that at times the intelligible world which we project can lose its ground, but even moodwise and vulnerable in the face of the brute "that one is", Dasein finds itself in the unity of its *project* which has been fallingly thrown. Experience is determined by this existential thrust.

Heidegger's philosophy, as it turns out, while radicalizing Dasein's temporality in its ecstatic thrust toward its own nothingness, and describing the possibility of presence from the point of view of absence, is, nonetheless a consciousness philosophy which never catches sight of life *absorbed* in the materiality of the sensual. Heidegger never sees the importance of moods and of the sensible as the indication of

a concrete existent which enjoys life and is equally pained by it irrespective of its direction. And this is true, of course, because Dasein *is the temporalizing of its time*, i.e., it *is the making present* of things and of the world and *of itself* if only as a pure *making present* and a pure possibility.

Part III - Carr and Narrative

Surely the most compelling thing about Husserl's and Heidegger's account of experience in terms of time is the apparent truth of the view that all experience must take place *in* time, and that to the extent we live in intelligible worlds at all, their intelligibility must be established somehow *over* time. We will recall in this regard how Husserl's notions of protention and retention were employed to explain just how a multiplicity of profiles nonetheless formed the unity of enduring objects and how a multiplicity of experiences nonetheless formed the coherence and continuity of one subjective process. Emphasizing the projective character of time synthesis Heidegger shows how the unity of life and in particular of the self is *achieved* by consciousness in an irrevocable, singular and mortal thrust. Carr's narrative theory adds a new dimension to these pictures of time-consciousness and of self-hood - in brief, he claims, the beginning, middle and end structure of narrative embodies the essential principles of ecstatico-temporal consciousness.

However, even Carr questions the apparent universality of this reading of time-consciousness and, by extension, the narrative picture.[46] Are there other forms of lived-time, other

ways of living in a world that makes sense? This seems more than likely if we consider the synchronic ways of understanding experience characteristic of some cultures. For example, events that unfold in time can express timeless relations, cyclicity or the intervention of gods, a description of which would not require the synthetic account of time-consciousness. At any rate, a different reading of time is just what Levinas believes is required if a more complete account of corporeality (and of otherness) is to be achieved. Yet as far as our understanding of intelligibility is concerned the essential picture of lived-time which Husserl and Heidegger provide seems apt. And the narrative development of this essentially configurational account of the intelligibility and coherence life achieves seems only to improve our understanding of this characteristic of life, i.e., that for the most part, it "makes sense". What I am at pains to show of course, is that this picture of life is limited nonetheless.

What, then, is involved in a narrative account of lived-time, how do the configurational and ecstatic pictures of consciousness support this view, and why do we insist narrativity similarly aligns experience specifically with the intelligible, leaving aside, if you will, the corporeal aspects of life, not so much in their *unintelligibility* but in their *materiality*? Professor Carr researches the various conceptual themes that have gone to describe narration in order to see if their configurational aspects might be informed by a certain narrative reading of experience itself. If this could be shown Carr will have strong evidence for the position that, far from distorting

experience or being informed by some wish, the kind of stories we read in fiction and in historical narratives in reality embellish upon experience proper. At the most fundamental level Carr wants to show that passive experiences and the simplest sort of actions are of a narrative form. In this regard he refers to the beginning-middle-end structure of experience generally speaking and the means-end structure of action, the latter of which, he insists, not only involves a *temporal* closure but also a *practical* one. This analysis anticipates the way in which we *lay hold* of ourselves and the world on a larger scale, and, hence, the sense in which we may be said to *narrate our own stories*. The social dimensions of Carr's thesis are, as a result, introduced, and a narrative account of "self" and its coherence naturally follows.[47]

Husserl's analysis revealed that the world is given to us in configurational wholes that take time, and that this was true not only of "temporal objects", like melodies, but of experience per se. When we examined the perception of a cup it was shown that my seeing it involved a constant referring across the perceptual field in which the cup appeared, from the cup itself and its inner articulations to its surrounding environs and back again. From a temporal point of view, similarly, a configurational reading of perception is obtained. If nothing else, my eyes must move across a perceptual field in order to see any given object and this takes time. Moreover, should I move around an object, my perception of it is guided by the synthetic way in which each modification is precisely a modification of

something just past and the confirmation or disconfirmation of what I had anticipated to appear, and this manifestly involves a temporal configuration as well. Would this experience not constitute an event involving, quite simply, a beginning, middle and end? This is not to say, of course, that all experiences have clear beginnings or endings, or that any lived experiences have the kind of beginnings and endings we find in novels. Life never achieves the kind of coherence and unity stories do, but this is not to say that life has no coherence or unity at all. All experiences, as Husserl also noted, endure, and to the extent that they endure, they begin somewhere and end somewhere else. "Experiences," Carr says, "have a temporal thickness", beginning, let us say, with certain qualitative features distinguishable from past ones, ending with others. Awareness is itself guided by protentions and retentions, and hence, it really goes without saying that experience must have temporal thickness to occur at all, the most passive form of experience, on Carr's view, involving an ecstatic embrace of temporal horizons.

Following Husserl, Carr's example of listening to a melody brings home this point once again. While listening to music, the music sort of "happens to me", I need only open my ears to it. But of course my experience of music is, in reality, more complicated than that. Appreciation of music requires that I "follow it", however, "following" anything is precisely a synthetic operation whereby I unite past experiences with present and anticipated ones in such a way that my experience of the whole, i.e., the growing configuration of past, present and

future, determines my *experiencing* at any given moment. Listening to music is hardly an additive process whereby memory sounds are joined to present sounds in a "mental" operation, rather a note in a melody appears precisely as a digression from past ones *and* as an anticipation of what will follow. Similarly, if, all of a sudden, the lights go out in my office, the experience of darkness is inseperable from the light that preceded it, not because I immediately associate the blackness with a mental picture of my office full of light, but because the darkness itself appears as a sudden change *in* a temporal whole, which, moreover, is also open onto a future which is determinate or indeterminate to more or less a degree. Therefore this synthetic hold on music and on experience generally, Carr insists, is not really an activity per se because it belongs to the basic structuring of consciousness, i.e., to its mode of *being*.

(I will have more to say about this "passive" experience of music and the like later on, but suffice it to say that listening to music in an effort to follow it and to understand its subtleties can be an intellectual *activity* of the greatest complexity. It is for this reason, moreover, that music of any complexity is tedious and boring to the ears of the general public. But all music entertains some structure and the question is not so much whether an effort to understand is required of listening to music as whether or not the followability of music and of experience can explain in an adequate way why we *love*

music and *enjoy* life. The enjoyment of music and of life would seem to approach experience from a different perspective.)

Nonetheless, as for beginnings and endings and the synthetic structure of experience, it is all a question of context. No singular event in my life can feature in an "objective" sense as the beginning, middle or end of any given configuration. My first day at school, for example, marks the beginning of my school years but the end of my pre-school years, and presumably could also feature as just part of my childhood. And similarly the event of the lights going out could be understood as the beginning, middle or end of something depending an ones perspective. Carr's point is that even the most passive forms of experience, as far as he understands, entertain a story-like structure, i.e., generally speaking, they have beginnings, middles and ends to the extent that they endure at all and to the extent that we are conscious of "what's going on".

If passive experiences seem to lack definitive beginnings and endings, actions are more easily described in these terms. All tasks must begin at some point, and if completed or not, end off at another. It is true that certain actions or tasks may take years to complete, and, in the mean time, many other events, experiences and actions may intervene. Life, indeed, is composed of many on-going projects in this way, but it still holds that long term actions of this kind are *followed through*, have temporal thickness, begin, and end like shorter actions. Indeed to follow through with any action at all requires the kind of temporal structure we are describing here; in short, one must

know what has so far been achieved, what one is doing now, and what is to be achieved on the whole. Hence the *means-end* structure of action can be read more completely in this way. Action, as Carr writes, "begins with a divergence between what is the case and what is to be done,"[48] and it follows that I am responsible for bringing about the desired end, an achievement I can only bring about if, at the same time, I also know what has *already* been achieved. This may all sound rather banal, but the salient point on Carr's view is that all action is structured in this way. Prior to reflection, action "makes sense", is held together, maintains a continuity even when interrupted, and this because of the temporal embrace of retentions and protentions consciousness performs. It is a short step to see that there is a narrative element to this coherence and temporal directedness, both backwards and forwards, in the realization of action.

Now if experience is to be described on the basis of a narrative model, it must exemplify not only the presence of beginnings and endings, but the presence of a story-teller and someone to whom the story is told as well. To clarify this once again Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness is instructive as a point of departure. We have seen that together with the unity of one world, the unity of one consciousness for whom the world exists is posited as well. Indeed our analysis to date has demonstrated the sense in which lived-experience looks nothing like a mere series of events but is always disclosed in the unity of an ecstatic embrace. That this temporal reach includes an embrace of self is also the key to Heidegger's description of an

essentially "death bound" consciousness responsible for its self. Heidegger insists, moreover, that Dasein is predominantly in-the-world, using it, aligning instrumentalities and possibilities, and that, as a result, its relationship with the world and itself is informed by the various *practices* that bring the world and its self into view. This too is what Carr means when he explains that narrative structure is preeminently *practical*. The means-end structure of action and the beginning-middle-end structure of experience in its passive forms account for the way in which *consciousness holds things* (and itself) *together* and, consequently, can follow things through even when they are interrupted or criss-crossed with competing projects. And, involved in this "laying hold" of the world, is the insight that we close off our actions and in so doing close off whole moments and periods in our lives. This character of action then, namely the synthetic way in which it is "held together" and the way in which, in one way or another, it is "completed", likens action to the configurational coherence and closure typical of narration. This, as should be clear, is another way of describing how we make our lives intelligible, say its meaning, and so on.

Therefore the synthetic unity of action is also tied to the unity of the self who acts. This self as Sartre has shown, is not always present to consciousness. While reading a novel, for example, my self or ego is not present to the experience of reading. Indeed to read a novel I must put my "self" behind me, or at least, my self must assume a secondary role as a general *horizon* of meaning, inseperable too from the world and my place

in it, as a general backdrop to what I am doing. This backdrop, therefore, can be more or less explicite to consciousness. But if asked what I am doing or why I am doing it, my sense of self - as the unifying theme in my life and as that horizon of understanding inseperable from the me-world relation - can be made explicite to consciousness in a flash. At any rate, no matter how we conceive of this relationship between consciousness per se and the self, it is apparent that selfhood is an integral part of action if only because the meaning of any activity, including reading a novel, is always tied to a larger context, namely to myself as the one who acts and to the world as a site for action. Action, in short, is not only achieved across a configured grasp of what is ready-at-hand, action also implies a configured grasp of the self and of the world even if this is only implied. Hence to the extent that the coherence of action implies comeone who acts, can we not say of the self who is responsible for action that, in order to act meaningfully, he who acts must have a synthetic prasp of "what he is doing" in such a way which likens his actions to a story which he is telling? Are we then, not the authors and/or narrators of "what we are doing" and, therefore, of the story into which "what we are doing" can always be cast?

And if my actions are structured like a series of connecting or overlapping "stories" is it not also true that my life *on the whole* always tends to form the configured unity of a story which I tell? In short is my life-story not just a more comprehensive grasp of life which entertains a similar kind if

coherence and structure. That is not to say that my life-story has objective beginnings, middles or ends anymore than experiences or actions do. Moreover our life experience is hardly characterized by a configuration, indeed a life-span is always made up of many lives, which, in addition, are often simultaneous. Nonetheless, life is always lived from the point of view of the present, and, no matter what other perspectives one may bring to the analysis of life - e.g., the psychological, the sociological, the purely scientific - it is clearly true that, in an autobiographical sense, we are in the constant process of "laying hold" of ourselves, telling the world and ourselves who we are, telling, in short *our story*. This too involves the bringing together of past, present and future, but the alignment is on a much larger scale, and, what gets organized is really a selection of smaller events; my childhood, my year in India, my university years and so on. It is not always clear how certain periods in our life fit into the whole, in point of fact, certain events or periods may never find their place in the coherence my life on the whole may achieve. Nonetheless, recollection and foresight certainly tend toward this kind of synthesis. The important point, perhaps, is that, given the opportunity, if asked we can all give fairly extensive accounts of who we are and that this always involves a telling of what we've done, what we're doing, and where we're headed, even if that only involves some account of how we've managed to go astray.

Therefore if the narrative model of time-consciousness requires a narrator or author of the stories we tell, and, moreover, an audience to whom our stories are told, is it not true that each individual consciousness or self is the narrator (if not the author) of himself in an on-going way, and is it not also true that we tell our stories, not only to ourselves but to others and that insofar as we do, others and ourselves are our audience? This situation however, can be rather complex. For example, as Carr explains, we not only tell our stories individually to other individuals, but collectively too we tell a story with respect to who we are. This mutual feeling for a group subject, what Carr describes as the *we-subject*, can be as small as two people or as large as a whole society, but to the extent that I understand myself as a group menber of any kind, my sense of self, and, hence, my narrative, will be inseperable from the group narrative for which I am equally responsible. Indeed to the extent that others could function as an audience for me and my sense of self, to some extent they would already have to participate in an understanding of life, of norms and so forth, which we share.

Now to what extent a shared language or a shared way of life constitutes the existence of a we-subject per se is a problem we need not address. For our purposes, whether or not we describe the self as taking part in a *community* of selves, each self capable of understanding the other at some level of shared experience, what is clear is that to the extent consciousness is storied - i.e., insofar as we tell our story as a fundamental way

of being in time and of being in the world - our sense of self and our sense of reality is not produced *ex nilo*. Only against the background of family, community and society, and the historical dimensions of these, is my life-story ever truly mine. For example, at the heart of my sense of self is the presence of the fact, no matter how explicit to consciousness this may be, that others too are like me or have been like me. It is a paradoxical feature of selfhood that "I must be me", but at the same time, that, "I must be like (or perhaps unlike) the others". In short, the self must not only be able to distinguish itself from the others, it must also be capable of being recognized. In this way our narratives and our very sense of who we are and what we are doing is shot through with cultural and historical significance. And yet, for these reasons, in what the self consists, as a seperate existence, remains problematic.

Although Husserl, Heidegger and Carr all claim that experience is somehow, of itself, organized, it is equally clear to each that the synthesis time-consciousness performs is always situated, it is always made, that is, in terms of existing traditions and horizons for which each individual consciousness is not responsible. The appearing of the world at all in this sense is both, in broad terms, "social" and "historical". From a narrative point of view, hence, what we must navigate is the problematical notion of self-authorship.[49] Who, or what, is responsible for the stories we tell? This problem, of course, refers us back to historical consciousness on Husserl's view, and Heidegger's distinction between authentic and inauthentic Dasein.

Authentic Dasein, we will recall, assumes responsibility for its disclosive power, understands, in short, that its "there" is a product of mediation, while inauthentic Dasein refuses or is ignorant of its historicity. One must choose ones own life even if the life one chooses is not *ones own*, that is to say, one must *choose* one story or another even if this does not mean one is its author. Even for Heidegger one is never the author of ones existence *ex nilo* as is obvious not only in view of his insistence that Dasein is preeminently fallen, but also in view of his discussion of historicity. In the second part of *Being and Time* on temporality and historicality, Heidegger writes with respect to authentic being:

> The resoluteness (and authenticity) in which Dasein comes back to itself, discloses current factical possibilities of authentic existing, and discloses them *in terms of the heritage* which that resoluteness, as thrown, *takes over*. In ones coming back resolutely to ones throwness, there is hidden a *handing down* to oneself of the possibilities that have come down to one.[50]

And yet, one is *thrown*, and, as such, brought to ones "there" in the anticipation of ones *own* death. Being-toward-death guarantees Dasein's existentiality, i.e., if I die alone, it is also true I live alone.

If this view seems somewhat paradoxical, Carr's solution to the puzzle of self-authorship in a world of pre-existing possibilities is equally problematic, and I think, for the same reasons. Distinguishing the author of a story from its narrator, Carr suggests that what is vital to narration is not so much who is responsible for the story but that one knows how the story

goes. Carr believes that in so doing he preserves what was sound about the existentialist's concern over self-choice, with the understanding, nevertheless, that we are not the sole author of the story we tell. Sensitive to Heidegger's descriptions of anxiety and the obvious truth that people go astray in life - i.e., that at times they cannot "lay hold" of themselves or the world - Carr agrees that the "narrative coherence of a life-story" is something that is achieved and, more often than not, is the result of some struggle. The responsibility the individual shoulders in life, on this view, is to live out or live up to a narrative *and* to choose or take over one narrative or another, but not to choose, *ex nilo*, a life for itself. With this in mind, Carr writes, "The moral aspect of this is that the question of responsibility is not entirely despised of by reference to the relation between a given conduct and the story which renders it intelligible. For I am responsible not only for the particular action itself but also for the story or stories in which I 'find myself' involved."[51]

In both Heidegger's and Carr's account, however, we must wonder who is the "I" that chooses, if the unity of Dasein and the unity of a self is *already* determined by its temporal reach, and, likewise, by a disclosedness which is owing to a given project? Because Heidegger and Carr align experience, like Husserl, with the protentive-retentive grasp that for each makes experience possible, it follows, in short, that either the intelligibility, or as we will see more fully, unintelligibility of experience, is guaranteed, and this, always, in terms of the

project which can or cannot "make sense" of its experience. If, in other words the synthetic and projective gesture consciousness realizes is always in terms of some pre-given horizon of meaning, or, as we have also seen, configurational grasp of what could count or would not count as an instance of meaningfulness, it follows that the world will always be disclosed in view of some criterion for meaningfulness or other, in short, in terms of some "story" or other. This being true, I could never be responsible for the story I have chosen because my very ability to choose can only be understood from the perspective of an already existing narrative. Nothing pre-exists Dasein as that being who interprets, and nothing, as Carr says, if experienced, is unstoried. It follows from this that the very possibility of experience is thoroughly embedded in the practices and traditions, which, as Heidegger says, bring Being into view. Once one has aligned experience with intelligibility one cannot avoid this result.

It might be objected that, even if experience is configurational, and, hence, configured or storied from a point of view, any given narrative will admit of different renditions, even radical changes or conversions, and in the face of these possibilities "I" (who ever "I" may already be) must choose. This is a convincing point but the puzzle remains as to the identity of the self. Even if "I" must choose between competing narratives, from what has been said it follows that there is no self who must choose between competing narratives, nor the possibility of experience itself, apart from the intersection of

stories I "find myself", from the earliest of ages, within. For Heidegger, as we have seen, and for Husserl as well, absolute subjectivity is a kind of *anonymous openness*, a *temporal flux*, aware only that one is despite oneself, as Husserl seems to want to say, and, "that one has to be", as Heidegger insists. The anonymity and absence of narrative at this level of experience approaches the kind of *ground* Levinas sees at the root of ipseity. What he still wants to contest at this point in Heidegger's text, however, is the insistence that inside the "that one is", Dasein must also feel the "that one has to be". He contests this because it leaves no room for the anonymity of a *happy enjoyment* of the "there is" or "that one is", at the level of sensibility. These remarks refer us back to our analysis of Husserl and his seeming inability to account for the brute "thereness" of experience.

But if Husserl, and, in particular, Heidegger takes us in the direction of the anonymity of experience at the origin of self, Carr seems less willing to do so. His sympathy for existential themes does not move beyond the appearance in our lives of choice. The non-necessity of any given course of action in life, according to the existentialists, as Carr notes, and the language of the emotions and even literally of the "guts", did not *only* reveal "the inevitability of self-choice", but also the weight of a *material* world which suffocates in its materiality. Our ability to lay hold of the world and ourselves in the coherence of a narrative form is indeed an achievement but not just an achievement in the face of *competing* narratives, either

in myself or in the world, it is also an achievement in the face of a material world which oppresses our being from the start. As we will see, not only enjoyment but suffering, likewise, cannot be described in terms of narrative coherence, i.e., in terms of the intelligibility of lived-time. On my view, what the existentialists saw correctly was the potential brutality and absurdity of a world revealed in its elementality. What they failed to see was the role the elemental also plays in enjoyment, and this, because, on their view, consciousness is the "making of sense", the laying hold of itself, or, the longing to know ones story.

What is telling about Carr's text is the way he opposes narrative coherence to moments of "distraction", "disconnection", "mere sequence", "senselessness", "formlessness", "frantic confusion" and so on. Prime matter, the elemental, the immediate as such, incorrectly aligned, it seems to me, with mere sequentiality, (and madness), is, he writes, "not something we could ever experience. It is a limiting concept: the thought of what lies beyond our experience". In a classic Hegelian move hence Carr aligns the unstoried and the unformed with the "beyond" *belonging* to the storied, and the formed. One, as Levinas writes, is *allergic* to this other. If experienced at all the formlessness of the elemental and the sensual, the "there is", is subsumed in consciousness as the *absence* of direction, and of coherence, i.e., it is brought into experience if at all as its opposite, as chaos and madness. In any case, the narrative prevails. "The dark and looming outer limit of

experience," opposed to order, is anticipated as such, that is to say, as the potential break up of my world. This is a condition of its appearing at all. Carr writes, "After all, experiences and actions must already be *mine* if I am to worry how they hang together or make up a coherent life-story". This might be true, but it only repeats the existentialists' mistake, namely, to claim that synthetic consciousness is always present to experience. With-in-timeness, Husserl, Heidegger and Carr all insist, guarantees the intelligibility (or unintelligibility) of ones existence. But their views, it seems to me, are all based on an over-estimation of the role, quite simply, that consciousness and understanding plays in our lives. Consciousness, awareness, laying hold, taking stock, understanding, synthesis, projection, or, some evidence of their dissolution are, from every point of view, exhaustive of life. But it is this idealism with which Levinas wants to take issue.

chapter 2

Sensibility and Enjoyment

Part I - Bathing and the Elemental

We have researched at some length and in considerable detail Husserl's and Heidegger's descriptions of with-in-timeness, Carr's narrative account of lived-time, and the temporal notion of consciousness that corresponds to each of these views. What has come clear is the way each of these views situate the origin of experience per se with consciousness and its power to "lay hold" of life, or, if you will, to "make sense" of that life. What status we ought to give to consciousness and the intelligibility of life, however, is a question we can now raise. We, of course, are at pains to show that in addition to the coherence and intelligibility of life, experience can and indeed ought to be described from the point of view of the sensible and the embeddedness of life in its corporeality. This embeddedness, moreover, expresses an utter *dependence* with respect to the *elemental* which is not owing to the work of consciousness, and consequently cannot be described in terms of time-synthesis, instrumental dealings, or narrativity.

We have seen moreover how Heidegger and Carr give a pre-eminently practical reading to both the temporal structure of

consciousness and, by extension, the conditions of meaningful experience itself. Heidegger describes meaning predominantly in terms of the *ready-at-hand* accessibility of instrumentalities and of Dasein's *projected* mapping of its future. Carr insists on the practicality of *narrative coherence*, not only with respect to action but also with respect to experience generally speaking and our overriding need for things to "make sense", indeed for our lives to form some kind of continuous and coherent whole. Following Husserl, temporal unity in both cases is the condition for intelligibility and meaning but this ability to "lay hold" of oneself and the world is realized for the most part in our storied dealings with the world, either individually or collectively. In other words, while all three align consciousness with the "making of sense", Heidegger and Carr want to emphasize that "making sense" of the world is something of an achievement, which, nonetheless, is thoroughly taken up in everyday activities and engagements. The emphasis these views put on the projectedness of consciousness and the coherence of action, however, is telling and points to some obvious ways in which Levinas' account of sensibility differs widely from this approach.

In point of fact the thetic or posing character of intentional consciousness, even in its most passive forms, remains close to action. This is because a configurational *grasp* of things, a laying hold of possibilities, or, just seeing "how the world holds together", involves the *distance* and synthetic grasp consciousness requires before it can use the world or act

upon it. In this regard *distance* and *seperation* are at the heart of "laying hold" of the world, whether this involves actually manipulating it or surveying it in an associative and configurational embrace. Heidegger and Carr are correct to claim, moreover, that our lives are "preoccupied" with activity that can and ought to be described in this way, activity, we must insist, that includes everything from waiting for the bus to reading Kant. Hence even the most passive form of experience which we *understand* in this way is capable of providing a site or reason for action.

Similalrly a distance is required if I am to "lay hold" of myself, and as we have seen, represent myself to myself in the manner of a story. Again, the simplest and most passive experiences like waiting for a bus requires this kind of attention and self-awareness. As is well known, time may appear to be passing more or less quickly depending on ones mood and ones situation, but, to the extent that things "make sense", I am always at the center of time, configuring time in the manner we have described. The self too, in this regard, is close to action. The self is not only the seat of "sense" and action, as Carr notes it requires me to act, i.e., to live up to or live out the "story" I have so chosen. Indeed the profound insight of time-consciousness theories was to conceive of the self as a kind of activity, i.e., an on-going, non-static, dialectical embrace of temporal and worldly aspects. Narration, of course, is also an activity which requires a seperation and a distance from the story one tells, and in real life, what is more, one requires a

further distance in order to see how various stories criss-cross, follow and make up the whole which is my life-story. Reflection, self-hood, action, representation, all of these can be understood here in terms of the seperation and distance configured time involves.

Levinas' account of sensibility is dramatically different from this approach. His descriptions of corporeality outline the nature of a dependence which is prior to the posing character of a consciousness that *could* survey a *field* from a given point of view, or, lay hold of the world in an ensemble of possibilities. We *live from* good food, good sleep, working, breathing, walking and so on, and not just as a machine needs fuel to run, but in a dependence which is "happy for its needs."[1] Life is not a bare existence, nor a pure possibility or choice to be; life is not only "preoccupied" with projects and activities, it is also "occupied" by the material *contents* of living well or ill. Levinas writes, "The things we live from are not tools, nor even implements, in the Heideggerian sense of the term... They are always in a certain measure - and even the hammers, needles, and machines are - objects of enjoyment."[2] But "living from" certainly does not express an appreciation of objects, as if one enjoyed the quality of a thing from a distance, judged it, contemplated ones dinner from an aesthetic point of view. Even tools and the most practical activities, it is true, are enjoyed or not, but enjoyment per se denotes the dependence and affectivity of life. To live from the contents of life, is,

above all else, to be sustained and supported. This sensibility procures me; I am it, this air, this light, this ground.

The conditions of life are also its contents, and, as such, are enjoyed, as one *enjoys* breathing and walking. Levinas writes, "Life's relation with the very conditions of its life becomes the nourishment and content of that life. Life is love of life, a relation with contents that are not my being but more dear than my being: thinking, eating, sleeping, reading, working, warming oneself in the sun. *Distinct from my substance, but constituting it*, these contents make up the worth (prix) of my life."[3] He adds, "moreover, action itself, which unfolds on the plane of being, enters into our happiness. We live from acts... What I do and what I am is at the same time that *from which* I live. We relate ourselves to it with a relation that is neither theoretical nor practical. Behind theory and practice there is enjoyment of theory and practice."[4] In this way all means to the achievement of life are always lived as ends. Our work, our family and social life, may "hang together" in the ways we have described, but they are never lived for their coherence alone. The work place is always well lighted or not, the chair comfortable or not a social engagement with someone more or less comfortable and so on. Levinas writes, "Action implies being, to be sure, but it marks a beginning and an end in an anonymous being - where end and beginning have no meaning. But within this continuity enjoyment realizes independence with regard to continuity: each happiness comes for the first time."[5]

Historical consciousness opens up the horizons of meaning with respect to which the meaningful can appear as such at all. The circle in the understanding expresses the truth, that, for these horizons to be made explicit, they can only be understood from but another point of view, the criterion for meaningfulness, as it were, constantly receding from our grasp, for every possibility for "laying hold" of something assumes some such criterion. From an epistemological point of view, this circle captures the very meaning of Dasein. In this regard Levinas claims historical consciousness lays open the *infinite*, or, to be more precise, the infinite recession of being from thought. Sensibility, on the other hand, Levinas locates with the *finite* and the limited. This distinction is intended to show that while consciousness already involves a distancing and seperation between it and what it thinks or "makes present", and, because of this, can seek out the conditions and ground of such and such a presentation, *sensibility is wholly absorbed in a content*, unable nor wanting to withdraw to a "point of view". Levinas writes, sensibility "finds itself immediately at the term; it concludes, it finishes without referring to the infinite... Objects *content* me in their finitude, without appearing to me on a ground of infinity. The finite without the infinite is possible only as contentment. The finite as contentment is sensibility."[6]

The body that moves and the mouth that eats, the lungs that breath and the eyes that are filled with the luminosity of things are immersed in the *qualities* of the ground, the food, the air, the light in such a way that is distinguishable from the way

the reciprocal referentiality of determinative aspects is *surveyed*, and, though implicit to be sure, *posed* by a consciousness. The life of the body that we designate by the *sensible*, i.e., to sense the ground, to be *held* by the air, the light, the ground, does not "hang together". It is precisely not given in a synthesis as if the world was always viewed from afar. That is why Levinas calls the proper relation with what is sensed - i.e., with the elemental - *bathing*.[7] To this level of experience we must admit a passivity below historical consciousness, which, it is true, we also undergo in certain respects. But if I am born into a language and a culture long before I could ever choose either, as a corporeal being I also experience the elemental qualities of a material existence before I can name it, use it or move myself about in a "world".

The elemental, as a result, looks nothing like a *field of sense*, and it is also to be distinguished from a *field of perception* as Merleau-Ponty would have it. Although they feature at the level of the body, motile dealings with the world are no less "practical" than "ready-at-handeness" or "narrative coherence". To be sure when I move about in the world things appear across my own corporeal schema. When I reach for the door nob I find it in a network of spatial relationships and possibilities of which I am myself included. I anticipate its *weight*, the weight of the door and so on. In this way "the very sensuous materiality of things is given in a motor apprehension...Thus the synthesizing agency is not the spontaneity of the mind, but the corporeal schema, which does not

engender or posit the ideal term of their unity, but focuses upon a thing as upon a traversal unity of the different sensorial tones and textures concording, fitting together, expressing one another."[8] Lingis writes in addition, "To be sure, there is an intentional, or transcending, movement in our existence and this intentional arc is in fact the very essence of our body as a being that *poises itself before a field of tasks and propells itself down the paths of a space it inhabits (my italics)*."[9] Being-in-the-world, for Merleau-Ponty, does not involve a "laying hold" of instruments but of a material world "axed" across my own corporeality. But ones motility, and to "lay hold" of the world across this possibility, is still an activity. At root my sensibility does not refer me to a "world" nor to myself, much less to the narrative coherence of an act or the interpolatableness of an experience among others. *Sensibility refers me to the elemental which, without support itself - without opening a field of infinity - supports me.*

It would be enough, perhaps, to think of ourselves as fish in water, surrounded by a contact, or, better, bathed in a medium from which and for which life is lived. Contact with the elemental involves this kind of immersion. Fish displace water, we displace air. Similarly gravity pulls all corporeal beings to the center of the earth. From a phenomenological point of view this is something we feel. We do not question the solidity of the ground, we live *from* it. Levinas writes, "The earth which upholds me does so without my troubling myself about knowing what upholds the earth."[10] Lingis notes, "The forces with which we

hold ourselves in our posture and exert our motility have incorporated the supporting force of the ground. This incorporation senses the ground."[11] Indeed the body is designed not so much to *hold itself* in postures but, from the point of view of its skeletal structure, to balance or stack itself upon the support of the ground itself.[12] Our motility is not almost "magical", as Merleau-Ponty once said, but the alternation between balance and imbalance, falling and rest. Walking in this respect can be understood as the continuous falling and recovery of weight which swings from one to the other, first being pulled to the ground and then supported by it. This physicalistic description, of course, is not intended to be literal. Although weight can be measured, it is not measured weight and measured forces of resistence that we *experience* when we feel the weight of our bodies together with the solidity of the ground that supports it. Indeed we sense the ground and our corporeality together in the same way our eyes are held and sustained by the luminosity of the world. Light sustains sight as air fills up the lungs. We can describe this dependence biologically. But a description of experience reveals in its own way how sensibility enjoys this dependence as the very joy of life itself. Hence the sensible, like dependence, must be described from the point of vies of *sustenation* not understood biologiacally, but understood to mean an essential exposedness and vulnerability which we undergo.

To see things clearly, to breath freely - it is at this level of life that Levinas says "life is love of life." The

conditions of life cannot be described from a physiological point of view alone, nor is it sufficient to describe, food, for example, from the point of view of its meaning qua food, i.e., from the point of view of its presentation as fuel, as expensive, as beautiful and so on. Husserl's intention to describe experience, generally speaking, from the perspective of its presentation or giveness already involves, as we have seen, that kind of distance and seperation. The conditions of life are also *enjoyed* for themselves. "The human being thrives on his needs...(and)...The life that is life *from* something is happiness. Life is affectivity and sentiment; to live is to enjoy life."[13] Hence as affective and passive, to be sentient means that ones sensibility occurs in a medium, one is impressed *with* the various qualities of life, steeped in an element, but this sensibility is "happy for its needs." This happiness "suffices to itself... it is an existence for itself - but not, initially, in view of its own existence."[14]

In disagreement with Carr therefore we must insist that at this level of ones sensibility it is possible to experience a "present" confined to itself. This present is not, as a result, an "objective" point any more than it is the result of a dialectical or synthetic movement - to insist that experience must be described in one or other of these terms is to mistake the conditions of thinking for the conditions of experience per se - rather, the "present", at this level of life is always a sort of undulation and dispersal filled with the qualitative opacity of an element. At this level of experience we must refer

to reverberations, vibrations, adumbrations, pulsations, excitations, intensities, involutions and contractions without centers, not moreover, to indicate the absence of synthesis or coherence, or the angst of a projectedness, but to describe the positive reality of the sensible. Here too we can appeal to the source point or *urimpression* in the Husserlian text, which, as he writes, "has no seed". This present is "vertical" in the sense that it constitutes a pure contact and a pure passivity. Levinas writes,

> Here the movement comes incessantly upon me, as the wave that engulfs and submerges and drowns - an incessant movement of afflux without respite, a total contact without fissure nor gap from which the reflected movement of a thought could arise. It is to be within, to be inside of... This situation is not reducible to a representation; it *belongs to sensibility which is the mode of enjoyment*. It is when sensibility is interpreted as representation and mutilated thought that the finitude of our thought has to be invoked so as to account for these "obscure thoughts". The sensibility we are describing starting with enjoyment of the element does not belong to the order of thought but to that of sentiment, that is, the affectivity wherein the egoism of the I pulsates. One does not know, one lives sensible qualities: The green of these leaves, the red of this sunset(my italics).[15]

And with this distinction between the mode of thinking and the mode of sensibility in mind, he also writes,

> Torn up from all the implications, from all the prolongations thought effects, all the instants of our life can reach completion, precisely because life dispenses with the intellectual search for the unconditioned. To reflect on each of ones acts is, to be sure, to situate them with respect to infinity, but the unreflected and naive consciousness constitutes the originality of enjoyment... We enjoy the world before referring to its prolongations; we breath, walk, see, stroll,....[16]

One is held by the ground itself, the eyes are engaged by the luminosity of the light and the lungs are filled by the quality of the air and all this is a matter of enjoyment and bathing. Here nothing is configured. The seperation between an active sensing or awareness and the "thereness" of the sensed which intentionality and configuration requires is precisely absent. Like certain types of delirium or madness, it is true enjoyment destroys the distinction between subject and object, or form and content. *Enjoyment has no orientation, no point of view, no center, no sense. It has similarly no end and no beginning. It is to be nourished.* It is to move and to be happy for moving, to bath in the qualities which surround and penetrate. We must say one *lives* or *undergoes* the contents of life because one is held by them. One baths irresponsibly. Lingis writes, "The solidity of the ground, the airiness of the atmosphere, the luminosity of the light, are not invariants, matrices of a system of profiles, or schemas elaborated in the reciprocal referentiality of sensuous aspects... Here one does not see why the essential would be in our motility; sensing the element is not a "prise", a taking hold of it; it would rather be a being taken, being held, or being taken in by it."[17] One is passive with respect to that which sustains; in ones corporeality one is held by the earth, the sky, the sea - the elemental qualities that fill us up.

Sensibility, then, which is the mode of enjoyment according to Levinas, and whose way of being contains the meaning of dependence - i.e., the way one "lives from" the *contents* of life - must be described in terms of the passivity of bathing and

this sensibility can be expressed temporally in the following way. From the point of view of configured time and the "laying hold" of the world which it effects, configured time always comes too late as far as sensible experience is concerned. Dependence and bathing (and, in addition, the independence of enjoyment) are experienced before time-synthesis assumes existence for itself, either in the manner of Dasein or as an implicite structuring of a perceptual *field*. Hence, in a moment prior to the ecstatico-temporal structure of configured experience, the qualities of a material world, are impressed upon us. And the present in which this subjugation is realized Levinas calls the *instant*. Existence at the level of ones sensibility is not presented or given to consciousness, it possesses us. In other words it is precisely this level of life that falls through the intentionality thesis and, consequently, the narrative net as well. The instant of sensibility corresponds to the *urimpression* or primal source point in Husserl's text and to the importance of moods in Heideggers *Being and Time*, but moods, and time itself, must be released from the over-arching movement proper to consciousness.

Hence Levinas finds in the instantaneousness of the instant a contact with the qualities of "material" existence which breaks with the configured picture of time. But this instant looks nothing like the serial or objectivist account of time which consciousness theories of time strongly contest. Levinas writes, "We too agree with the criticisms which, since Bergson, have been made of the confusion of abstract time with

concrete time. But the two have to be distinguished not because abstract time is spatialized and homogeneous, and concrete time is a *duration* inseperable from its heterogenous contents, continually renewed and unpredictable, but because in abstract time there is an order of instants, but no central instant; there is not that instant par excellence which is the present (my italics)."[18]

Enjoyment, I have already mentioned, always comes as if for the first time. Levinas notes, "Before linking up with the instants that precede or follow it, an instant contains an act by which existence is acquired. Each instant is a beginning, a birth."[19] But the mode of this continuous birth is *bathing*, and, hence, already denotes dependence and the "living from" of contents. To be steeped in a medium is to be held and to be born already signals the weight of a corporeal existence we can never survey. Lingis writes, "There is something vertiginous in the weight of this being, fully, definitively, effected, which one can never get to the bottom of, or put oneself at the beginning of."[20] Moreover we have seen in what sense Levinas claims the sensible finds itself in a finitude, bathed in a medium which, while supporting me, is itself without support. These themes organize themselves about the meaning of the instant. The instant, like the elemental, has no form but is pure content. This is why Lingis insists the density of the elemental is a "pure depth" which, "through condensation and rarefaction, blotting out the wake of the passed through (and) obscuring the horizons of the future," has no orientation, no sense, is not

going anywhere but is "there".[21] It is in this sense too that Levinas writes, the "world", in the Heideggerian sense, "answers to a set of autonomous finalities which ignore one another. To enjoy without utility, in pure loss, gratuitously, without referring to anything else, in pure expenditure - this is the human."[22] And, conversely, he writes, "The 'act' of representation discovers, properly speaking, nothing before itself."[23] "Representation involves no passivity."[24]

But because the instant cannot be conceived of as one moment of a continuous flow of time which aims at a future and develops from a past, it is true as Richard Cohen writes, that the instant is only *quasi temporal*. Cohen notes moreover, "the instant is not a moment of duration."[25] Indeed Levinas insisted at an early stage in his career that while philosophers have always thought existence from the perspective of time, the instant is in point of fact insubordinate to the passing of time. Enjoyment does not collect itself. It is carefree, "agreeing to the world as wealth." A configurational reading of time, accurate as far as it goes, gives us time from the *perspective* of an "I" in view of itself, already straining to retain a present which it watches sinking away. It is after all for this reason that Husserl's phenomenological project was inadequate to the task of describing the sensible from the start, for the instant, strictly speaking, is not a phenomena, it is not *given* to consciousness. "The sensuous element - the light, the colour, the tone of the world - is not"...(precisely from the unity and

stability of a *point of view*)..."*a tide already passing*, but an oncoming abundance (my italics)."[26]

This is not to say, on the other hand, that the instant is somehow static or that it is not passing, that the past does not pass, nor that the future is not coming. Precisely because the instant is always taken up in the elementality of a *content* it changes, it moves on, it flows. But the movement proper to the sensible does not watch itself. There is change but not as from one moment *to the next*, rather each instant is like a new uplifting. This naiveté contains the meaning of the world as a kind of wealth, an excess and, precisely, the groundlessness of an *an-arché*. In this way the instant is free from its past, lets it go, but, paradoxically, can also "live" its past as a result. Time, at this level of experience, we must insist, does not endure but is distended in a movement that quickly vanishes, is forgotten. Naive happiness, "the very ease of good time", is only possible in view of this liberation. Cohen writes, "In the happy instant, the past is neither retained nor recollected; it passes."[27] It is instructive to note that tne present per se, from the perspective of the non-recollecting instant of enjoyment, is already past. "The re-presented, the present, is a *fact*, already belonging to the past."[28] And, similarly, once I've withdrawn, implicitly to be sure, to a point of view from which the world could *appear* and *dis*-appear in the strain or work of a prolongation or duration, even a retained past is already distanced from the instant and its pure youth which is heedless of this "passing time".

It is something of an abstraction to delimit the sensible and its instantaneous time format in terms of the temporal ecstacies. I do so only to distinguish it from configurational time. Strictly speaking one cannot delimit the sensible at all - neither its instantaneous time format nor the density of the elemental in which it is steeped. Nevertheless just as the instant is carefree and heedless with respect to the passing past, it is similarly carefree and heedless with respect to the future. "Nourishment," Levinas writes, "comes as a happy chance."[29] Hence the instant never confirms or disconfirms the protentive work characteristic of time-synthesis and narrative coherence. The instant never features in my experience having been a possibility. The future *comes as from no where at all*, and while this, as we will see, can also be horrifying, paradoxically it defines the very meaning of enjoyment from the point of view of time. Only from this perspective, moreover, will we be able to see the full meaning of intoxication, of obsession and related themes. Levinas writes, "This coming from nowhere, from 'something' that is not, appearing without there being anything that appears - and consequently *coming always*, without my being able to *possess* the source - delineates the future of sensibility and enjoyment."[30] To be engulfed, to be drowned, that is, to be subjected by the elemental, sensibility can be sketched temporally with these themes in mind.

The *elemental* therefore, deserves our attention in a more explicit fashion. In Levinas' earlier work *Existence and Existents* he refered to the elemental as the "anonymous rustling

of Being". In that work Levinas located the identification of the "I" in its ability to detach itself from the *there is*,[31] which, above all else is viewed as the site of horror and darkness. This understanding of horror, to be sure, is close to Sartre's account of nausea. Lurking behind the identity of things and oneself one discovers the "impossibility of escaping from an anonymous and uncorruptible existence."[32] Only through sleep, Levinas claimed, is one capable of preserving an *interiority* and *position* indispensable to the establishment of a subject. His novel idea, then, was to locate the possibility of the self - the very contraction of its identity - not in ones freedom nor the ecstatico-temporal structure of consciousness, but with the body and its power to sleep, and in so doing to recoil from the invading presence of a material world which never goes away. His later emphasis on enjoyment and the *positive event of happiness*, therefore, marks a considerable change in his thinking.

What remains of this earlier work, however, is his emphasis on the qualitative opacity of the elemental, in which, as we will see, the self finds its concrete *base*. As dependent, we've seen how the sensible *baths* in a medium - the eyes filled with light, the body grounded in the qualitative features of the ground and so on. The elemental, then, is clearly not anything like a thing. "Things refer to possession, can be carried off, are *furnishings*; (but) the medium from which they come to me lies escheat...essentially non-possessable, "nobody's": earth, sea, light, city."[33] Levinas continues:

> The element has no forms containing it; it is content without form. Or rather it has but a side: the surface of the sea and of the field, the edge of the wind; the medium upon which this side takes form is not composed of things. It unfolds in its own dimension: depth, which is inconvertible into the breadth and length in which the side of the element extends. To be sure, a thing likewise presents itself by but one unique side; but we can circle round it, and the reverse is equivalent to the obverse; all the points of view are equivalent. The depth of the element prolongs it till it is lost in the earth, and in the heavens. "Nothing ends, nothing begins."
>
> To tell the truth the element has no side at all. One does not approach it. The relation adequate to its essence discovers it precisely as a medium: one is steeped in it; I am always within the element.[34]
>
> Quality manifests itself in the element as determining nothing.[35]

But it follows, as a result, that the elemental can never be experienced per se, as if the elementality of the light was somehow distinguishable from the luminosity of the light itself. Beneath the appearance of "things" or fields of sense or fields of perception we do not intend to locate a "noumenal" reality, which, in the Kantian sense, is excluded from our view in principle. Sensibility is defined by its *dependence on a content* - the light, the air, the sun - and the elemental, understood as such, refers to this dependence and nothing else.

Like Carr, Cohen seems to feel the elemental (or "prime matter") cannot be "genuinely experienced", that, in its pure formlessness it constitutes a "boundary for experience; that is, essentially beyond subjective experience though defining a limit for that experience." But far from constituting a limit to experience, the elemental supports it in its very *being*, procures

the material reality of things as well as of myself. The elemental, it is true, is never understood, but this is far from saying it is not experienced. With respect to the dependance and sustenation which the sensible and the elemental involve, Lingis notes, "The look does not only probe with its own forces in a space emptied out by the light; in fact is not the space rather filled with the light, and the gaze buoyed up by this radiance and activated by it? Is not the chromatic field also sustenance for sight?"[36] It is in this respect that sensibility is "held up" by the elemental, not just in a literal reading of its physiological dependence, but, phenomenologically, from the point of view of enjoyment and bathing.

Part II - The Exotic and the Erotic

Having established, then, the general format of sensibility in terms of bathing and the elemental, in the sections that follow I will discuss more particular aspects of life in which our reading of the sensible is born out. To begin, two related themes which can be established on the basis of the sensible, and, hence, also display a movement beyond the temporal embrace of time-consciousness, are the Exotic and the Erotic. Both Levinas and Lingis have explored these themes at some length. In particular Levinas discusses the erotic as part of his treatment of intersubjetivity and the ethical relation. But the following in no way sticks to nor developes the work Levinas has done in this area. In addition I must mention my treatment of the following topics is necessarily brief. I have chosen to introduce them here to show the wide application I believe

Levinas' account of sensibility has for other related topics, and I hope, to deepen our understanding of the sensible at the same time.

(A) THE EXOTIC

Exoticism, in the etymological sense of the word, Levinas explains, refers us to the "outside", and, from his point of view, to exteriority.[37] Exteriority itself, of course, is a philosophical theme (essentially non-thematizable on his view), which is absolutely central to Levinas' philosophy. *Totality and Infinity* is subtitled, "An essay on Exteriority". Indeed it is toward a metaphysical ethics that his thinking is always turned, i.e., it is turned toward an account of the other as other precisely in terms of his exteriority. Alterity, however, is not only experienced in the face of the other person. The elemental itself, we want to insist, is non-circumscribable and irreducible to the themes that would organize a "world" in the same way the other as other can never appear, strictly speaking, *in my world*. However an ethical reading of sensibility, of corporeality and exposedness, no matter how central to Levinas' work, is not something I choose to explore here. We are principally concerned in this work with sensibility per se and its irreducibility to the coherence of a configuring consciousness, and in the themes we will explore now, we are still centered on the sensible and its relationship to the elemental qualities of life.

In chapter four of *Existence and Existents*, "Existence without a World", Levinas mentions briefly the exoticism and

alterity of art objects.[38] An art object of course, is an object like any other in our world from a certain point of view. They can be sold, possessed, packed away, thrown away, even made the instrument of some use. Art too can be an object of pleasure, something pleasing to the eyes or to the ears, an intellectual curiosity, "a tickling of bells" as Nietzsche once said.[39] But, Levinas writes, "reality remains foreign to the world in as much as it is given,"[40] i.e., revealed in the non-circumscribable presence of a *thereness*. This, to my mind, is the most amazing and yet least understood function of art, i.e., its power to direct our attention to the brute *thereness* of a material world, to the naked potentiality of a body for movement, to the potential of a voice for sound itself and so on. All art, as Levinas has said elsewhere, is plastic.[41] Indeed, "The aesthetic orientation man gives to the whole of his world represents a return to enjoyment and to the elemental on a higher plane."[42]

Hence art is exotic because it removes the plastic elements of life from the "everyday" realm of instrumentalities, indeed, of "sense". Poetry too not only depends upon an extra-ordinary use of language from the perspective of meaning, but is also inseperable from its sound, its musicality and texture. Art always comes as from the "outside" of intelligibility, and this, not because it is inspired by genius, but because it is plastic. Levinas writes,

> The movement of art consists in leaving the level of perception so as to reinstate sensation, in detaching the quality from this object reference. Instead of arriving at the object, the intention gets lost in the sensation itself, and it is this wandering about in sensation, in *aesthesis*, that produces the esthetic

> effect. Sensation is not the way that leads to an object but the obstacle that keeps one from it, but it is not of the subjective order either: it is not the material of perception. In art, sensation figures as a new element. Or better, it returns to the impersonality of elements.[43]

In art one is returned, or, perhaps, awakened to, the anonymous dimension of the element. Colour and light is *sustenance* for sight. "It is the richly coloured zones, and not only the spaces between them, that elicit the look, that concentrate, fortify and uphold it."[44] One cannot look for the elemental anymore than you can ever *experience* Art, as if Art was one comodity among others, something else to be bought or sold. The "artistic experience" does not engender an experience of Art but a return to life and its dependence.

If for Heidegger, art does the "work of Being", perhaps we will want to say art does the work of the elemental? But the elemental is the medium in which enjoyment baths, its truth, at root, can only be expressed in terms of dependence. To that end, is art, like life, not "love of life?" For Levinas art is clearly a *return* to enjoyment on a higher plane, in this regard. Somehow then art must be a "conscious" affirmation of life, a "conscious" affirmation of the elemental. How is this possible if the elemental cannot be sought, cannot be made the theme of an articulation?

It is true the elemental cannot be said. Moreover it cannot even be experienced per se for it expresses the concrete event of a sensibility which *baths* in a medium, is held and sustained. What one experiences is the luminosity of the light

itself. I am fortified by the light as the ground supports me as I walk. We *sense* the ground and this support, *feel* it, and not as a contact expressing a "positing of sense" captured across the medium of the body's *postural* schema, i.e., captured at the convergence of corporeal and sensuous aspects including my own, but in a contact in which I am utterly engulfed, lost, and yet, paradoxically, and because of this, sustained. The materiality and plasticity we find in the elemental, likewise, "is a materiality which no longer has anything in common with matter as opposed to thought...here materiality is thickness, coarseness, massivity, wretchedness...formless proliferation."[45] Hence it is similarly true that one could never draw the elemental per se, but paper and ink and paint are already luminous, already opaque, the very *medium* of art already embodying the elemental. And one paints with the pigments of life itself, one needs only to move and one moves with the body. The elemental, therefore, is never the conscious expression of the artist but at once both the very stuff of life, and, as the affirmation of life, the very stuff of art.

Play and *obsession* bring out this pre-conscious *attachment* of the artist to the "materials" of his art and, what's more, the reflection of art in the erotic and vice versa. Art on Heidegger's view, does the work of Being because it makes disclosedness and presence explicit. This disclosedness, as a result, already refers us to another "world" - for example, to the life of the peasant depicted in Van Gogh's "Peasant's Shoes".[46] But disclosure is already concealment, and the mystery

of painting and poetry alike is also the mystery of Being itself. But is play and the obsessiveness behind play already the expression of an ecstatic consciousness which "makes present" a world of possibilities, perhaps, even, possible worlds? Play which is already enjoyment does not belong to the sphere of sense at all, nor, we must insist, is it its negation. Indeed play follows the same pattern as enjoyment. It is taken up and held in the density grass and dirt and blocks, captured by the pure qualities of things, which, it is true, can *mean* anything at all. The fullness of a rug can be an ocean, a forest, a beach or just a soft place. Qualities, the elements of play, can *mean* anything, and indeed support play because they are detachable from objectivities. A certain fascination, it is true, informs this *transformability*. But play is always upheld and sustained by the qualities themselves, this density which has no name. What I want to suggest is that play has nothing to do with the "world" to which, even children are inevitably returned, not because it imaginatively produces other ones, but because it wanders in a carefree affirmation of life itself at the level of ones sensibility. This describes, at any rate, the essence of a kind of play we find most frequently in smaller children - exemplified, perhaps, in the innocence of the infant - and which is most akin to the artistic process. Play, then, at this level, is not only different from instrumental activities because it is without utility and because it leaves the real "world" behind, but also because it loses itself in the sensible, which, we have been at pains to show, has nothing to do with sense or non-sense equally.

Hence the obsessive behind play, namely the attachment to and affirmation of life itself in its elementality is fundamentally the same in art - its production and appreciation - and the erotic. It is not surprising, with this in mind, that what is also common to play, art and the erotic, is *love*. In all three, moreover, we find an activity which sustains itself, which pursues itself endlessly and, for the most part, without direction. Lingis too unites art and the erotic at this level of an affirmation "without sense".[47] He writes with respect to collage, "Here the contingent, the insignificant, the ephemeral, the broken, the haphazrd is not composed but just affirmed, set forth...The given non-sense no longer given sense (as non-sensical), but *valued*, for itself."[48] And, Lingis continues, "Perhaps the libidinous impulses in a life attach that life unquestioningly, unreservedly to erotic objects without those objects being objectivities, without that attachement being purposive or significant to itself. Perhaps the libidinous impulse is the very form of an attachment that does not know what it is doing."[49] As far as obsession is concerned, the elemental leads the way. But obsessiveness does not follow a direction, rather it is absorbed in that in which it *baths*, an enjoyment always close to torment, always excessive. The artists life, like that of the lover, Nietzsche wrote, "must contain a kind of youth and spring, a kind of habitual intoxication."[50]

(B) THE EROTIC

However if obsessiveness is key to understanding the elementary features of the "artistic process" and the appreciation of art, and is similarly central to a description of the erotic, the two, of course, are not identical and they can be distinguished in important ways. The artistic process, for example, it is true, is always *directed* toward the completion of a *work*. With this *telos* in mind, the production of art is distinguishable from the erotic and from play as well. Play, it might be said, never lacks some determinative structure either, but on the one hand, its directedness is never equal to the seriousness with which the artist works, and on the other hand its determinativeness takes nothing away from its essential carefreeness and enjoyment. Play, depending upon the age or character of the child or adult can be more or less organized, more or less "rational" to more or less a degree a simulation or creation of "worlds", and, moreover, artists too are guided in relative respects by a certain self-reflexivity and direction in their work. Depending on the artist art can be more or less geared toward an "intellectual" approach, more or less conceptual, but the potential "sense" or form which play or art can be said to express can never efface the elemental entirely. It is to the qualities of life that we are always returned and which sustain us in our corporeality. Play and work, like theory and practice, is first of all *enjoyed* or not. However, in addition, art and play are inevitably turned to the "surface" quality of things, that is, to sensations and the qualities

inherent in them, and, in this respect, the erotic is very similar.

Levinas' account of the erotic develops his philosophy of exteriority and the ethical relation at the level of human sexuality and love. Levinas writes, "in sexuality the subject enters into relation with what is absolutely other."[51] A phenomenology of eros, it seems to me, cannot overlook this fact. But I am not concerned (principally) with an account of intersubjectivity in this paper, nor with the ethical implications of Levinas' work concerning the sensible, and, inspired by an essay by Lingis on sense and non-sense and the libido, I want to explore here a reading of the erotic which refers us, once again, to the sensible per se. In other words, it might be true that the other as exteriority is revealed to me in my sensibility and exposedness, and it may be that a complete description of the erotic could not overlook the relationship with *another* which, at some level, it always involves, but sensibility is first of all an affair of the senses and sexuality, an affair of bodies.

But the realm of the sensible and the realm of the body, we are told, is not without its own kind of sense. Husserl's analysis of passive synthesis, for example, discovered a field of determinative structure, one of prominences and articulated particularities, in the sensible. This is guaranteed, moreover, by the structure of inner time consciousness which is synthetic, is configuring, already a brute kind of coherence. Husserl's whole philosophy, as we have seen, depends upon this base. And

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, what's more, finds the emergence of the world itself across the postures, comportments and directionality of the body. Opposed to Husserl, Merleau-Ponty does not find in perception a world of objects constituted by signifying intentions and fulfilling components, nor, opposed to Heidegger, the ready-at-handness of instruments, what he discovers in perception is a *body that sees*, seeing from a position which is not primordially historical but corporeal.

According to Merleau-Ponty the body indeed sees itself but from the *point* of view of the eyes in the head. The body the eyes see, moreover, develops in the unity of convergences; the eyes converge on one space excluding others, the visual and auditory converge in the localization of tapping fingers; the visual, tactile, olfactory and inner feeling of organs converge in the experience of eating something and so on. And because my body is already unified in this way - i.e., it sees, touches, tastes, feels, smells and hears across one perceived body-space - the world and the body open up toward each other as a convergence of outer and inner, in the analogous way in which one reality emerges at the converging point where I touch myself and consequently am touched at the same time. In other words, I refer to the world and the world refers to me, and perception is no longer understood as a kind of survey of a world outside myself, but the laying hold of a matrix of possible perceptions, "a certain pregnancy", the locus of which is the body world relation.

Strictly speaking, then, I don't see from my point of view but with my body, which is itself a coagulation of organs and possible postures. "Laying hold" of the world Merleau-Ponty describes from the perspective of corporeality itself. But both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty deny what was idealist about Husserl's theory of intentionality, namely the ideality of a "world" posited by consciousness. Husserl does not discover a world already and inextricably bound up and inflicted with the affectivity of moods, the absurdity of the in-itself, or the naked corporeality of a body. As Gary Madison has noted, existentialism breaks away from transcendental philosophy over these themes.[52] But, like Husserl, Merleau-Ponty also shows that there is a coagulation of "sense" and determination at the level of the sensible itself. How will our account of sensibility and, in this instance, obsession, differ from this account of sensibility and its inherent sense?

The comparison of the erotic with art is instructive once again. It is obvious, for example, that Husserl's analysis of passive synthesis or Merleau-Ponty's account of corporeality *could* be brought to bear to describe either a painter at work, the appreciation of his work, or human sexuality. The painter's hands and eyes do not flail about in a haphazard way, but are directed, sometimes even exacting in their intentions. Hence not only does the painter have a cognitive grasp of *what he is doing*, he also paints with a body that knows where things are and where they are going. His creation of space on canvas, moreover, is possible only because he has his own space, i.e., his body-space

and the self-world relationship it articulates. This is analogous to the work of the writer or narrator. His creation of stories and the temporal coherence they display is only possible because he has his own time, i.e., the narrative coherence of his own life story. The same follows for people who appreciate paintings and read stories. To appreciate art and not a bunch of colours is to see relationships, to understand their structure, to follow the coherence and dynamics of the painting into the world of perception from which it drew its inspiration. This sense or coherence, moreover, is not applied to ones experience of a work anymore than it is merely applied to life. With respect to painting, Lingis writes with this in mind, "It is in this sense that Merleau-Ponty wrote that the unity and the essence of the body and of a life are comparable to that of an art work...Where the sense is accessible only through a direct contact, where the sensorial matter radiates its significance without leaving its temporal and spatial site. The sense of a painting emerges at the confluence of the spots of colour themselves".[53] Similarly, one might add, the temporal sense or coherence of a life emerges in the very passing of time, in the constant configuring and synthetic embrace of temporal aspects which informs experience per se. These approaches to the coherence of life and to the coherence of painting and narrative run parallel to each other. But is there another way of describing sensations, another way to describe space and time?

As for the erotic and the sexual, Merleau-Ponty's analysis is predictable at least from a general point of view.

The sexed body structures a certain comportment vis-a-vis its sexuality, exposing genitalia, preparing the body to be touched, preparing for an exposure of oneself to contact, initiating a *direction* of ones whole body toward the possibility of touch and feeling. Lingis writes, "The erotic significance of a person and of a situation is not produced by cogitations, and is not even a representation, but the way a perception itself is structured so as to accentuate the erogenous zones and address them immediately to kisses and caresses, to erotic gestures. Structuring the sensuous configuration itself, adressing it to the embrace of the witness, the carnal sense is an incarnate meanings."[54] Hence, "the release of sexual functions depends upon the emergence of a meaning-structure."[55]

Even the sexed body is organized, related to a world and to the presence of another, one body, exposing itself, poised to be denuded, posturing to be dispossessed in the intensity of pleasures. Indeed the essence of sexuality for Merleau-Ponty repeats the essence of corporeality itself which, in brief, is this very possibility of being both object and subject, master and slave, feeling shame and being shameless, exposed and exposing. He writes, "The importance we attach to the body and the contradictions of love are therefore, related to a more general drama which arises from the metaphysical structure of my body, which is both an object for others and a subject for myself."[56] "Experience" in general, according to Merleau Ponty, is realized as the ambiguous act of taking up a *de facto* situation, of laying hold of the *incarnate sense*, which, as he

says, turns chance into reason. For Merleau-Ponty existence can be described as the coagulation of meaning across this ambiguous structure, and in the reciprocal acts of touching and being touched, of being exposed and exposing, of being directed and directing. Veering toward slavery and mastery at the same time, on his view, the sexual catches this ambiguity perfectly. Reality may be contingent but we make it otherwise; the space and time we experience is organized. Merleau-Ponty writes, "Even if I become absorbed in the experience of my body and in the solitude of sensations, I do not succeed in absolving all reference of my life to a world", and if I do manage this, "behaviour degenerates into the absurd, and the present itself...takes on an air of eternity."[57]

On the other hand, if paintings exhibit a certain structure and form, it is equally true that they are composed of parts which have a radiance and scintillation of their own and, analogously, we will be able to view the sexual in this light as well. Perhaps, even, the structure of a painting refers us to its parts, "the richly coloured zones", in such a way that does not return us to the whole but captures and holds. The enjoyment of art follows the same course as enjoyment itself. To begin one enjoys paintings, one enjoys, very simply the colours, the lines, the textures, and while structured in determinative ways, the enjoyment of these qualities is not reducible to this structure. Moreover, as one wanders ones eyes over a work, there is a kind of leaping from one instant to the next that is analogous to "the ease of a good time". One is returned to the whole almost as an

afterthought in, what is likely, an attempt to understand and to judge. Obsession refers us here to a love of elements, to a love of qualities sown into the very fabric of things. Paintings, like novels and music are organized, or, at least, some paintings are - but even when art is highly crafted it always returns us to the elementary, to movement per se, to sound per se, to colour all by itself. And the obsessiveness behind play and the erotic - indeed behind the erotic as play - is likewise a case of sensations which are not *un*organized, but that bath in the qualities of specific pleasures. Like in collage one values the pieces and the parts in themselves. Art is not necessarily composed at all but it is always an affirmation. Parts valued, not as parts, but in their individual qualities.

Similarly in the case of the erotic the body loses its comportments and posturing altogether. Becoming non-functional, becoming flesh, the body *delights* in its parts. Everything is to be touched and every touch *enjoyed*. What is affirmed is the possibility of sensation itself. This too refers us to that level of life which Levinas says is "love of life" - agreeing, affirming, delighting in its wealth. Lingis writes, "Is there not here a specific kind of relationship with the future which is not a hold on the possible but rather a being held by the impossible - that alone could account for the essentially exasperated nature of voluptuous feelings."[58] And what is this impossibility if not the sensible itself, the impossibility of the instant? The erotic, like enjoyment, is always lived for the first time, the softness of the skin as if never touched before.

This impossibility which informs the sensible however is also *here* and *now*, too present, if you will, to be understood, i.e., to be the subject of an embrace.

Lingis writes in this regard, the impossible "which afflicts the orgasmic sensibility is simultaneously absolutely impossible, out of reach, unrealizable, and present with a presence that is too close for any action and even for any receptivity, a presence one has not taken the initiative of opening oneself to...Too close to be taken hold of or even envisaged, it enflames the sensibility."[59] Hence in ones sexuality one is returned to the full weight of an existence which is inflicted with *being*, which finds itself *there*, uneasy, troubled with itself as desire, as flesh, saturated with feeling in a present too present to be presented. But obsession and the erotic gestures affirm this dependence, this owing of ones being to the elemental in which it baths. The erotic is frenzied. Existing essentially as impulse. Touching for the sake of touching, opening ones eyes not to see *something* but to be engulfed by the luminous in general. It is a cliché, but nonetheless true, that the orgasmic is not limited to the sexual.

Always coming as from nowhere at all, essentially unimaginable, it is for this that the sensible and the erotic are also exotic in the etymological sense - "divinity or beast" - they come from the "outside", from beyond the powers that put us in our place, in our *world*. The erotic, and the sensible, refer us to an irresponsible animality. The gestures of the orgasmic body are no longer *expressive* but everywhere regressing to an

infantile frustration, orality, excitement and naiveté. The erotic is always excessive to the point of laughter, "rambling toward a state on the far side of organization and sense, toward a state where action loses its seriousness and becomes play."[60] With respect to time we place erotic enjoyment alongside enjoyment itself and its instantaneous time format. To be sure time passes, but one does not hold on to it, cannot retreat to a point of view in terms of which it could be watched, for to bath, to be enflamed by a touch or touching is to be "inside", to be lost. Play similarly lacks a watchful eye, touches things freely without knowing it. And the artist too loses himself in his work. For all his direction, becomes absorbed in the materials themselves, what ever they might be, precisely *requiring* a retreat, or a return to a point of view in order to see, in a reflective move, what has been done and what needs to be done. And space too can be finite. Not mathematical, but there - the light, the sound, the smell, the richly coloured zones.

Lingis also remarks, "Rather than historical moments, are not the moments of orgasm almost the reverse, essentially mortifying moments of birth, where nothing is any longer strung out between birth and death as a line of sense or a project?"[61] And, I suggest, is the sensible itself not orgasmic, i.e., erupting in a point of intensity? It is as if birth and death called to each other beneath the "world", in ones sensibility. Never admitting the possibility of a re-group, of a synthesis, the sensible *impressess* us with its qualities.

Part III - Dwelling

I mentioned at the outset that Levinas' book, *Totality and Infinity* is structured as a phenomenological study of different and variously related strata of life. From a discussion of sensibility engulfed in the anonymity of the elemental through to an account of the self capable of speech and representational thought, Levinas invites us, at each point in his thinking, to understand man's ability to enjoy, to labour, to think, and to engage in the life of others as the work of an ambiguous self, at once both self-sufficient and independent because satisfied with the "material" contents of life, and essentially egoist, self-preserving and seeking the mastery of its world and of others. Dwelling plays an important role in this monumental movement by way of which selfhood begins in anonymity and ends up with consciousness and language. There are features of Levinas' account of dwelling, however, which, independent from his treatment of labour and the concretization of the "I", succeed in affirming once again what we take to be the salient features of the sensible.

Sensibility is bathing. To sense something is not only to grasp it or to have an idea about it, it also means being exposed to pain and gratification. The occupation of the world requires that I can move through it, diagram its possible being, and map out *my* future possibilities in an orientation that includes past horizons. Sensibility on the other hand has no direction, no telos, no sense - it appears as from nowhere at

all. Nonetheless sensibility agrees to its dependence and, in so doing, it agrees with the wealth and fullness of being. But *where*, if not when one is *at home*, is this fundamental agreement with life possible?

As we have seen life must cohere if it is to be lived at all. The self, for example, is our key to social engagements, and it is also indispensable to action. The self is not given, it is won, but when things are going well are we not precisely "happy with ourselves", i.e., happy with the life we have achieved? This, at least, is one dimension of self-satisfaction. Indeed achieving a degree of balance and continuity in our lives is something we all seek in one way or another. Moreover if we move below a narrative picture of experience to the more mundane level of continuity and homogeneity in our perceptual world, is it not true, as Aristotle said, that the eyes *enjoy* seeing, but that they enjoy contrasts, similarities, shades, differences, types, a world of perception in short, that "makes sense". I think it could also be shown that we empathize with the world of perception, i.e., with its movement, its sound and shape and so on, because we too move, make sounds and shapes and the like. As Merleau Ponty has sought to demonstrate, does the world of perception not constitute a system of compossibilities which are integrated with and emerge across the converging points and confluences of the body itself. Is there not, then, a kind of rational to perception and to enjoyment that envisages the effect of sensible qualities across my own corporeality? Is it not true, moreover, that in addition to the coherent structure of

corporeality, that we seek sensible pleasures, that for example, we pay to go to the beach or to the museum, and that, like the painter, we are always aware in some regard of "what we are doing", and of how this experience fits into a larger story? Do we not enjoy the knowledge that we "have time" to relax, to see the sights, to sleep, to eat and to be at home with ourselves?

At any rate, it would appear that dwelling in particular serves this function of providing the self with a safe place to which, in a sense, all of ones activities and stories that make up the day are ultimately returned. In this respect the home is a kind of point de départ for all our stories and the place where we also put our selves and our stories to sleep. The home also serves the function of standing between us and the world at large. Like sleep it provides us with a place to withdraw to, but it also provides us with a place where we can open ourselves to others. As Levinas points out the home represents the concrete possibility of a welcome. These remarks, nonetheless, are open to a narrative interpretation. The home itself features prominently in my narrative as my place, but often the home is also understood to have a story of its own insofar as it is filled with the stories of the people who have lived there. In another sense too my "world", inseparable from my sense of self, is also my home, i.e., it is the place where I belong, where I am recognized to be who I am. And in these different ways a description of dwelling would discover a place, no matter how big or how small - always at the heart of my sense of self - that functions as a site that mediates the me-world relation.

On the other hand the mode of being which dwelling admits, the being of ones sensibility, puts us "at home", not only in a *world of others and of things*, but also at home with ourselves, and, in a certain sense, at home with life itself. Gaston Bachelard writes with respect to the home, "The house is not experienced from day to day only, on the thread of a narrative, or in the telling of our own story...Being is already a value. Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house."[62] Philosophy, Bachelard insists, cannot overlook this fact, that the home, prior to being-in-the-world, is a place where being human is being well, a place of intimacy associated with dreams, reverie and the gratuitous wealth of the elemental. Bachelard continues,

> From my viewpoint, from the phenomenologist's viewpoint, the conscious metaphysics that starts from the moment when the being is "cast into the world" is a secondary metaphysics. It passes over the preliminaries, when *being is being well, when the human being is deposited in a being-well, in the well-being originally associated with being.* To illustrate the metaphysics of consciousness we should have to wait for the experiences during which being is cast out, that is to say, thrown out, outside the being of the house, a circumstance in which the hostility of men and of the universe accumulates...Being reigns in a sort of earthly paradise of matter, dissolved in the comforts of an adequate matter. It is as though in this material paradise, the human being were *bathed in nourishment*, (my italics).[63]

Man cannot live without a home. The home not only protects the self from the elements, it injects life with a continuity, a stability and a familiarity that is indispensable to living. But the space opened up in the home ceases to be part of the world or part of my narrative. It opens up that timeless space where one is content with being itself.

This dwelling in the earthly paradise, "bathed in nourishment" has no "objective" limits. For some it is enough to live "in the city" or "in the mountains". In a sense ones home is always a universal negation of what is unfamiliar to me, but as such it is also an affirmation of where I am at peace. Suffice it to say that where I live need not be my home. I may live in a strange land or never leave my place of birth and my home, that place where I belong, can be somewhere else. By dwelling we want to indicate the peace of being-well. To be sure dwelling always has an "objective" reference, that is, one dwells somewhere in-the-world, but the interior dimension to dwelling, that timeless space which it permits, always responds to the earth itself in the sense that, for everyone, the earth is our home. Dependence on the earth, however, is not just a biological fact. It is also a value. Lived experience reveals how we are supported by the earth, buoyed up, nourished, fortified and so on. Life, as we have seen, is love of life. The dependence which informs dwelling, therefore, is of the elemental, it belongs to the elemental because engulfed and sustained by it. Hence, although this is rarely said dwelling is always a dwelling on the earth. And when we describe the sensible as passive we articulate the inner structure of this dependence and this dwelling.

Both Bachelard and Levinas also indicate an intersubjective encounter in the dwelling which, below the level of self-consciousness or an understanding of the world, they call the "feminine presence". The other revealed in the intimacy and

familiarity of the home is not, Levinas says, "the *you* (vous) of the face that reveals itself in a dimension of height", (and of language), "but precisely the *thou* (tu) of familiarity."[64] It reveals in short, an understanding or communion with someone without words, an intimacy without a "world". Hence Levinas' account of dwelling does not begin with the mastery of labour and possession, nor with the possibility of representation, it begins with an account of gentleness. Levinas claims all our projects and activities in-the-world require this base and this reprieve, "in the bosom of the house". This is the constancy that provides a rebuff to all contingency.

But the "feminine presence" is also a nurturing. Nurturing is a promotion of life which not only *recognizes* the other as other - and, therefore, in the Hegelian sense, gives the other his *being* - nurturing also recognizes the need for the *well-being* of the other. To welcome the other in the home is to answer this call and Levinas' whole philosophy, in a sense, is designed to explain this *responsibility*. Nonetheless in the first contact with the other in the home, nurturing is as yet a responsibility, it is a condition of intimacy. Indeed even if we live alone, we take time to be good to ourselves, to care for ourselves and to make the home a place of nourishment, rest and well-being. Nurturing is not just a nurturing of the other, one can nurture oneself, or ones pets, ones plants and ones livestock. The essential in nurturing, in point of fact, is a promotion of well-being of being in general. At any rate, the "feminine presence" in the home signals this kind of care which

is never reducible to the intelligibility of a situation or to the recognition of another as other. I can promote myself as a self among others or I can try to instill in others a positive sense of self, but it is something else to nourish another or to nourish oneself. It is one thing to safeguard the well-being of my world or my country and something else to provide for the well-being of people and of the earth.

And even if his later thinking remains firmly planted in an ecstatic picture of consciousness, Heidegger's analysis of dwelling does not stray very far from these observations. Heidegger discovers for example, that man's most primordial relationship with being is dwelling on the earth, being at peace and letting being be. Heidegger writes, "To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence. The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing".[65] Like letting openess do its work, which, as I mentioned, is the function of the work of art, *sparing* being lets being be by making disclosiveness explicit - and this is understood now as a function of dwelling. Hence, if on our view dwelling always implies dwelling on the earth and the dependence of bathing, Heidegger wants to understand dwelling not as a kind of timeless agreement with being and its *wealth*, but as a kind of timeless *openess* in being and its mystery. But what is important here for our purposes is to see *sparing, openess* and *letting the mystery of being be* in terms of the possibility of peace and the peace of

dwelling. Only in the peace of the dwelling, if you will, can man be at home with being.

What is more, Heidegger relates openess to an openess in the "four-fold" - i.e., the earth, the sky, gods and mortals - which are ultimate realities that he describes as a wealth and an abundance. "Earth," he says, "is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal".[66] But mortals dwell in the fourfold "in that they save the earth". Therefore, opposed to the mastery of expertise which he claims is merely one step from boundless spoilation, Heidegger claims that dwelling is an ontologically distinct mode of being that does not seek to appropriate Being for its own ends, nor even to say its meaning, but to let it be. In short, if there exists an ontological difference between beings and the mundane reality of being-in-the-world, and Being and its mystery, a difference which we cannot say, Heidegger offers us at least two ways of living which reveal Being. Both modes of living make openess explicit - and, therefore, reveal appropriation as appropriation, *the* task left for thinking - the first is knowledge of being through art, the second is knowledge of being through dwelling.

What is similar, therefore, in the accounts of dwelling we have reviewed so far is their mutual adherence to the idea that in addition to configured consciousness, there exists an ontologically distinct realm of life that can experience the elemental qualities of life without this experience being reducible to the absurd, nausea, a thrust toward comprehension

anxious for itself, or the non-existence of a limit concept. In Bachelard's and Levinas' understanding in particular, dwelling is envisaged as a contact, either with another or with the elemental qualities of nourishment, both of which fortify and uphold us. This fortification is revealed in lived-experience. Heidegger's account of dwelling never really loses sight of ecstatico-temporal Dasein and he pays the least attention to the material *wealth* of the earth insofar as it procures our being, but even Heidegger likens the earth to a kind of promise of sustenance and he acknowledges modes of being human that are not adequately described in terms of storied-dealings or, if you will, an everyday laying hold of things.

Dwelling, therefore, in the sense that one lives *from* the earth, the sea, and the air, is important to our understanding of the sensible because it shows us in what sense the narrative self, dealing with the world and dealing with itself, is returned to an enjoyment of life and the contents of life in the intimacy of the home. As Levinas has explained, it remains true that all means to an end are lived as ends as well. One enjoys or does not enjoy even the most mundane or instrumental tasks. This too refers us to the elementary features of life in general. And if the home is not the only place where the dependence of sensibility shows itself, we have seen too that the home is in-my-world, performing the important function of mediating the me-world relation in a concrete way. But the home opens up the possibility of living well, of well-being and of being at home with oneself, indeed of being-well-at-home-with-being in an

important way. Thus dwelling has two sides. My home is in-the-world, but it also secures me a place in the world where, literally, I leave the "world" behind. Dwelling is a place where we nurture and where we are nourished. Dwelling has no "objective" limits. We feel "at home" in the city we love and so on. The important point is that dwelling secures us a place where life can be at peace, where one enjoys life, and this autonomous and self-satisfying dimension of life is, as a result, released from being-in-the-world and from the time of being-in-the-world.

Part IV - The Labile Self

In the preceding sections we have examined various themes that explore the non-configurational mode of being of sensibility. Our aim has not been so much to discredit time-consciousness theories as to demonstrate their limited relevance to a theory of coherence. In particular Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world, Carr's narrative interpretation of being-within-time and Merleau Ponty's analysis of the body-subject has succeeded in demonstrating how extensive this approach to experience can be. But the character of experience and of existence which an analysis of coherence overlooks is important and of course, vital to the possibility of a true descriptive philosophy. The problem of time has been a key to our exegesis, but the problem of the self has also shown itself to be central. Indeed in what the self consists remains an open question left over from our discussion of time-consciousness.

We have seen, that is to say, that once experience is aligned with coherence and intelligibility, it is difficult to understand in what sense the self could be separate from the historical and social horizons in which and/or out of which it projects a self and a world. And yet, as Heidegger explains, it is certainly true we die alone and that we face this inevitability alone. Death bound consciousness cannot be utterly historical because only "I" can be ultimately responsible for the meaning of my death, i.e., the annihilation of the universe from my point of view. This is paradoxical because Heidegger does claim that the being of Dasein is, as we have seen, thoroughly temporal and therefore historical. On the other hand, like Sartre, Heidegger claims that consciousness is at base a pure possibility. Consciousness is situated to be sure, but it is its own *nothing* insofar as it *has* its *being* to *be*. According to existentialist philosophy, it was this break with history and with society owing to the mode of being of consciousness itself, that guaranteed the ontological separateness of the self and, hence, its real responsibility. To repeat, it was precisely the absurdity of this pure consciousness faced with pure being that distinguished existentialism from Husserl's transcendentalism.

Carr has explained that he finds this demand for self authorship to be unrealistic. Carr believes that we are responsible for choosing ourself and for living up to this self we have chosen but this does not require that I am responsible, in the larger sense, for the narrative per se which my sense of self involves. In short I can be the narrator of my story

without being the author. But as for the ontological status of the self this only pushes the problem back one step. Who is responsible for the narrative implicit in the choices I make?

Levinas claims the self is separate from history and from society, not because consciousness is a pure possibility to be but because it has *position* in being insofar as it exists concretely as a sensibility.[67] Levinas' notion of self, as I mentioned, is multilayered. He does not reject the idea, for example, that at the level of consciousness, the self must maintain its self and that this maintenance involves a synthetic structure which lays hold of the world and its possibilities. This self, however, is undermined in two ways. The first way the self is undermined is from without by the *other*, who, being *other* than myself or my world, contests my being, but the second way the self is undermined is from within *by the very sensible existence which supports me*. Levinas' notion of self is essentially ambiguous in this regard, and this ambiguity describes the ambiguous regime of corporeality itself. He writes, "*To be a body*, is, on the one hand, to stand (se tenir), to be master of oneself, and, on the other hand, to stand on the earth, to be in the *other*."[68]

Levinas claims that in order to understand the self as truly separate, we must emphasize the constitution of self-hood and its independence in terms of its fundamental agreement with life, i.e., in terms of enjoyment. The absolute sovereignty of the self, therefore, is inseparable from the passivity of bathing and an *enjoyment* of the elemental. He writes, "Enjoyment

separates by engaging in the contents from which it lives. Separation comes to pass as the positive work of this engagement; it does not result as a simple split, like a spatial removal."[69] It is not clear, however, at what stage in Levinas' text the experience of enjoyment separates to the point of reaching *self-consciousness*, or, if Levinas' text is not intended to read as the *progressive* development of self-hood, it is not always clear when he refers to moments of sensibility that are pure or when his understanding of sensibility includes its affirmation as such by a consciousness. For example, on the one hand he clearly claims that the experience of the elemental is an experience of pure sensation. The elemental has no form. "Unreflected and naive consciousness," we have seen, "constitutes the originality of enjoyment." Moreover, "Sensibility suffices to itself...it is an existence for itself but not initially, in view of its own existence."[70] But on the other hand the independence of the "I" is animated by a conscious affirmation of dependence, and, sensibility, as the very egoism of an "I", is precisely attached to that subjectivity. Hence, if there exists an experience of sensibility prior to configured consciousness one wonders, "what is responsible for the appearance of configured consciousness?" Existence, Levinas has always claimed, (like the instant) is not given to consciousness in a synthetic embrace, it is an event which is acquired. Moreover, Levinas writes, the "I" is "produced as self-sufficiency and is maintained in an instant torn up from the continuity of time dispensed from assuming or refusing a past."[71] But if separation does occur at the level of the instant and the sensible as a naive happiness and an

agreement with the elemental, we are still left with the problem of the origin of self-consciousness. At what point in Levinas' text does configured consciousness emerge?

I profess that there is no easy answer to this question and that what we find in *Totality and Infinity* is a philosophy that describes the existence of at least two selves, the nature of which exclude each other. One self is born in the instantaneousness of the instant in which existence is positional - i.e., in the body that sleeps, fatigues, goes hungry and baths. The other self is born in the conscious affirmation of this positionality and happy dependence which also *recoils* from the insecurity housed in the elemental and its instantaneous time format. But this move from the sensible and the labile self that senses to the configured consciousness that finds, before itself, something to recoil from, is difficult. In *Existence and Existents* Levinas conceived of ipseity as a localization and a position, i.e., an instantaneous birth irreducible to duration. Levinas writes, "my sensibility is *here*."[72] But this contraction of subjectivity occurs in the *anonymous rustling* of the *there is*. In this way the localization of the self finds at its outer limits an experience of being in general. Levinas writes,

> (The) *there is* transcends inwardness as well as exteriority; it does not even make it possible to distinguish these. The anonymous current of Being invades, submerges every subject...(The) there is is an impersonal form, like in it rains, or it is warm. Its anonymity is essential. The mind does not find itself faced with an apprehended exterior. The exterior - if one insists on this term - remains uncorrelated with an interior. It is no longer given. It is no longer a world. What we call the I is itself submerged by the night, invaded, depersonalized, stifled by it. The disappearance of all things and of the I leaves what

> cannot disappear, the sheer fact of being in which one participates, whether one wants to or not, without having taken the initiative, anonymously.[73]

Now this description of the *there is*, which Levinas more or less abandons in *Totality and Infinity*, is equated with the elemental. What is confusing, however, is that Levinas also equates the *there is* with an experience of horror. And if in *Existence and Existents* Levinas had conceived of localization in terms of the body and the bodys propensity for fatigue and sleep - and, hence, its ability to suspend its contact with being in general in the unconscious - in *Totality and Infinity* he claims, "Against the anonymous *there is*, horror, trembling, and vertigo, perturbation of the I that does not coincide with itself, the happiness of enjoyment affirms the I at home with itself."[74] And yet, he continues, "Enjoyment is without security...The element extends into the *there is*. Enjoyment, as interiorization runs up against the very strangeness of the earth."[75]

But how can enjoyment be informed by an insecurity? What turns the carefree and unheeding welcome of an unexpected future into an insecurity about that *indetermination*? Why would an experience of being in general incite horror unless there already existed a self conscious of the *threat* the anonymity of being can pose? If "the I is *produced* as self sufficiency (i.e., as enjoyment) and is *maintained* in an instant torn up from the continuity of time, dispensed from assuming or refusing a past," then this self is not in possession of itself in the first place, it separated from the *there is* only as an instantaneous localization, and it cannot, nor would it need to withdraw from

the elemental. Enjoyment does not establish itself or separate itself *opposed* to anything or anyone. Levinas writes, "One becomes a subject of being not by assuming being, but in enjoying happiness."[76] Therefore Levinas' notion of the ambiguous self - independent because happy for this dependence, and standing itself up but supported by the earth - is either too ambiguous in the sense that it tries to unite a consciousness aware of its happiness *over and against* the *there is* with a body that is dependant, or, if the body that feels itself and has localization is already separate then we have yet to account for the origin of configured consciousness. If, on the other hand, there is no real experience of the sensible in Levinas' work, that is not attached to an existing subjectivity or configured consciousness, Levinas' description of the instantaneousness of existence, of the on-coming abundance of the elemental, or of the ipseity in either of these, makes no sense.

These are important and troubling questions for Levinas' philosophy, made all the more so in view of the fact that the concretizing and self-preserving movement in dwelling and labour is precisely motivated by a "laying hold" and securing of the formless and insecure character of the elemental. Although Levinas does not explain the temporal dimension of work very carefully it is clear he means by it something very similar to the Heideggerian analysis of tools - Levinas writes, "My body is not only a way for the subject to be reduced to slavery, to depend on what is not itself, but is also a way of possessing and of working, of having time, of overcoming the very alterity of

what I have to live from."[77] Now while a possession of ones time is perhaps the characteristic of time-consciousness, how the body *can* act, how it *can* effect this possession of things and of itself is never really explained.

If, however, we arrest Levinas' thinking at that point where he establishes the existence of a discreet sensibility, an image of "self" emerges that does not contradict the narrative self but does open up a dimension of "individual existence" that would be otherwise ignored. The consequences of this, nonetheless, are far reaching. As Lingis explains, can we not liken life to a kind of collage whose meaning is composed of sensible parts and coherent parts, each affirmed, not as parts, but in themselves? Projects and sensuous elements coexist or succeed one another without forming a significant integrity. It is true we turn in the irremisability of the sensible and the sensuous elements, unable to get outside our suffering and agreeing to the elementality of nourishment, but overlapping this sensitivity we also project ourselves through temporal and spatial possibilities, suspending the weight of existence and its vertiginous effects. Perhaps consciousness is positional - as opposed to a consciousness of position - as Levinas believes, that is, perhaps consciousness finds *its* concrete base in *its* sensibility, but this sensibility which is *mine* does not indicate sensibility or bathing per se, and conversely, the narrative self affirms a life of possibilities beyond its position, that is, it affirms a life beyond the "materiality" of sustenance. We can also see the sensibility as it is perceived across the unity of

the body-*subject*, but the sensible is more than this diagram of possibilities or eye movements emerging in the very contingency of the world, it is also a source of pain and gratification that *inflicts me* below this stance of the organism. Therefore we can describe sensibility and coherence in such a way that we try to see a kind of sense in the sensible itself, or, as Levinas insists, we can try to read configured consciousness as a positionality requiring a sensible base, i.e., susceptible to fatigue and so on, but ultimately the realms of life to which sensibility and coherence correspond must be set adrift. Sensibility is not reducible to a kind of sense or coherence nor is coherence, that is, the realm of configured consciousness, reducible to a dependence upon, an appropriation of, or a responsibility for the sensible and elemental in which it baths.

Life is composed of many lives and not one life. Could it not be, for example, that there exists a third self, irreducible to sensibility or coherence, which partakes, as Bachelard explains, in the infinite dimension of dreams and reverie? Now one can always argue that there is a dimension of coherence or incoherence to dreaming, or, that reverie finds itself in temporal and spatial horizons - e.g. the comforts of the home that "has time" to dream - but would this catch the essential in dreaming? Does daydreaming, for example, not leave the concreteness of the me-world relation behind? Is one not engulfed in the contents of phantasy and imagination beyond the necessity of subjectivity as one is absorbed in the contents of the sensible? But it follows from our discussion of sensibility

so far, that the "individual existence" that is sensitive is itself labile.

As Levinas explained in *Existence and Existents*, there always exists a lag between the body and the consciousness that embraces it or lives through it as perception. This lag indicates the dimension of an existence which is not a possible being but a being wracked to the instant in which being swells. The body that suffers or fatigues is prey to this weight. And the body that is nourished is exalted by this dependence. And as far as the individual existence at the level of the sensible is concerned we can conceive of it as a labile identity not just because it lacks the continuity of the storied self - although it is without configuration - but because it is contracted in the positive reality of the sensible whose temporal meaning can be sketched as an instantaneousness. Lingis writes,

> Against the empiricist conception of sensation, which conceives of the sensuous as a multiplicity of impressional points collected in the undifferentiated unity of a passively one psychic sphere, and against the intellectualist conception, which conceives of the sensuous as a manifold of givens synthesized by the original and originating identity of one ego, it seems to us that sentience is a manifold of points of ipseity contained in the undifferentiated unity of the sensuous element...[78]
>
> The pleasure of sensation is not identifying, neither in the sense of positing an ideal ego identity-pole to which to ascribe its differentiated temporal phases, nor even in the sense of directing itself back to itself as to one focus. To feel oneself sensuously contented is not to posit oneself, objectify oneself or identify oneself; it is not even to take up a stand, to stand in oneself. It seems to us striking that no one has noted that the pleasure of sensation, in its reflexivity or its ipseity, refracts each time,

disperses, spreads, such that the one that is contented with the sensuous content is a labile identity.[79]

Perhaps the ipseity that feels itself contented with bathing is not a "self" as we ordinarily understand it. In everyday usage, for example, as in, myself, herself or themselves, the self refers to people in their own right, i.e., as existing individualities. Moreover we tend to describe *who* people are in narrative terms, that is, in terms of what they may have done, what they're doing and where they may be headed, but as Hanna Arendt and Levinas have shown, to mention only two, the self of another must be *experienced* to be known, i.e., their individuality and uniqueness is always missed in the generalities of a third person account. The other *speaks for himself* and in so doing his enunciatory power is not reducible to language per se. Indeed there is always something inexpressible about the other, there is always something about this other self that is irreducible to the narrative I *understand*.

What is this inexpressible element? Is it the ontological exclusivity of consciousness, his freedom and inherent unpredictability? Is it the reality of the other as flesh, himself a feature of the elemental? This situation is open to various interpretations but certainly if my "self" refers to me and my reality, i.e., to my existence, the self can be interpreted to mean something more than the narrative that tells my story and is my key to the "world". My existence, in short, is not reducible to the narrative unity and coherence, it is true, I am in the continual process of reworking. My "self" can

also mean my "existence" as a "sensible being". But if the meaning of selfhood means *one* self or if it means the identity of one overarching unity which we also attribute to things, how can one meaningfully posit the existence of many selves? To be sure if the self means overarching unity, which is already a temporal unity, the sensible self cannot be a self at all. Indeed even for Sartre, who insisted that the self is an object for consciousness and not a constituting feature of experience per se, the most carnal experience of the body is met with a unified resistance, a flight and a propulsion of one free consciousness away from the in-itself toward meaning. Similarly Dasein has at least two levels of self, the everyday self - i.e., the self who speaks as *one* speaks - and the authentic purity of self-projectedness. If human existence is truly labile then it must resist in some fashion the unity of consciousness per se which time-consciousness theories hold to be constitutive of experience even in its barest form.

But it is a myth that (my) existence is one, even if configured consciousness, which is indispensable to life, always seeks unity and depends upon it as a matter of fact. If there are many modes of being, which, objectifying consciousness attributes to the *one*, these modes of being must be ignorant of each other. That is, if consciousness perceives unity in the sensible when it *surveys* its inherent homogeneity, or is *open* to following its various possibilities, either as instruments or embodying that certain *pregnancy* Merleau Ponty tried to explain as the compossible aspects of the sensuous itself, consciousness

must miss the sensible per se which does not exist in an openess or in the possible but is nourishment and sustenance. Or when the sensible element is understood to be *mine*, i.e., my location in being, this does not reveal the sensible either, it reveals an egoism. Existing in the concreteness of an oncoming abundance that is unceasing, the ipseity in the sensible can only be described as the localization of feeling, feeling in the depth and excess of the sensuous element. Lingis writes, "The flux of the sensuous element piles up in pleasure, in the reflux of the first ipseity."[80] This experience of the sensible, like the experience of meeting another, must be lived to be known and cannot be expressed in words. Sensibility and bathing have nothing to do with sense or non-sense equally. This is the frustration all descriptive philosophy must face. But one can indicate the existence of a reality without pretending to capture it - as one addresses the other - and the inability of thinking, and its demand for coherence and sense, to capture the essence of the sensible only reveals its alterity. And just as the realm of the intelligible is ignorant of the depth of sensations, the sensible and ipseity in sensible existence is ignorant of the "world".

Perhaps it will be argued that one cannot merely "*indicate* the existence of a reality," without understanding what it is one indicates, just as ones address to another may presuppose a common language or the shared features of temporal and spatial horizons. How can we argue that sensibility and coherence indicate realities ignorant of each other when the

intent of this work has been to describe philosophically and, we hope, coherently the sensible realm, and the manner in which it differs from configured consciousness? But experience does not bear out the logical or dialectical notion of limitation. The *beyond* does not always reveal a beyond *of*..., the *other* does not always reveal an other *of*... As Levinas has sought to explain, the *other* person is not *my* other, or, if he is, I have already implied a reduction for which I am responsible. To *experience* ethics beyond ontology, according to Levinas, is to grasp this non-dialectical reading of alterity. Sensibility effects us, prior to any initiation of subjectivity, in much the same way. No matter how much control I may exercise over the earth, no matter how far I may be able to put it to my ends, the elementality of the earth, i.e., that which sustains me, cannot be made into an object which stands opposed to my subjectivity. One can describe the sensible without circumscribing it at the same time, i.e., one can describe its qualities without saying its meaning. Therefore, when we refer to the labile self - or to sensibility as labile - we refer to sensible existence. But it is for this reason, i.e., that sensibility is labile and, hence, ignorant of the storied self, that existence on the whole does not form the unity of an overarching self that would be responsible for the sublation of sensibility and configuring consciousness.

Chapter 3

Conclusion: Sensibility and Coherence, and the problem of Death and Ageing.

We have seen how Husserl's transcendental phenomenology called for a return to "lived experience" and a description of the very appearing of appearances. Putting reality in itself and all presuppositions about objectivities *in brackets*, and, therefore, showing up the naiveté of what he thought was mere psychology, Husserl wanted to give science a solid foundation in the concrete analysis of *how the world is given*. This description of the giveness of the world and of experience in general lead Husserl to posit inner time-consciousness and its protentive-retentive structure as the very origin and meaning of experience per se. But the phenomenological reduction is problematic for a number of reasons. For one thing the phenomenologically reduced world is not the world we live in. Of course by bracketing the world in itself Husserl did not deny its existence, in point of fact his descriptions were intended to reveal precisely *how* ones everyday belief in the world, or, what he called the "natural attitude", is constituted. In this sense Husserl brackets the "natural attitude" only to serve a description of it from a more sophisticated point of view.

But it is not surprising, as a result, that Husserl could never get back to the world "without brackets", that is, to the world which we experience in such a way that it effects us precisely prior to the constitutive work of consciousness that is revealed after the phenomenological reduction has been performed. Once one is committed to an *analysis* of how the world is given to consciousness one cannot throw off this theoretical attitude. From Husserl's point of view our study has also shown in this regard how an analysis of time-consciousness makes problematic the very flux and opaqueness of the world for which, in Husserl's own words, "names are lacking".[1]

We have seen too that despite the improvements or additions to Husserl's phenomenology his successors have made, their analysis of experience is also inadequate to the task of describing the dense "there" and essentially fecund character of sensible experience. For example, no matter how important moods and the naked facticity of existence may have been for Heidegger or Sartre, both of them align the possibility of experience with consciousness and its power to "make sense" of life. The palpableness of the present, the density of the flesh and the opaqueness of the sky itself reveals through anxiety the self-responsibility of consciousness and the absurdity of the world in-itself it *opposes*. Even Merleau Ponty discovers at the outer limits of a comprehensive grasp of spatial horizons, pivots, planes and so on, a sensible world which, in-itself, takes on an air of eternity and of the absurd. Carr's narrative interpretation of time-consciousness, moreover, while accurate as

far as it goes, says nothing about the non-configurational dimensions of experience. Life is not only capable of sense or non-sense, it is also capable of ecstasies. Life revels in life, it agrees to its wealth, and, conversely, it is open to the irremisability of suffering.

In any case it has followed from this that the realm of the sensible is not only open to a description of its formal properties. In addition to the homogeneity of sense fields even Husserl spoke of the ability of hyletic data to draw or turn us away, and in his later writings Heidegger wrote about the earth and its promise of sustenance. Levinas takes up this aspect of sensibility in an explicit way revealing not only the density of the elemental but its meaning as nourishment and the happiness of enjoyment. For Levinas this exposedness of the sensible also admits of an ethical meaning. It indicates on the one hand the absolute sovereignty and separation of the I capable of enjoyment and, on the other hand, the absolute vulnerability of the I and of the other who faces me. But we have seen how Levinas' notion of the self is *too* ambiguous insofar as it tries to unite dimensions of experience that exclude each other absolutely. In short, the ipseity that is torn up from the necessity of assuming past or future horizons and is maintained in the instantaneousness of the instant must be envisaged as a labile identity. But that being the case, the elemental could never feature as a threat to this labile identity because it is not in possession of itself in the first place, and, hence, the elemental could never provide the motivating force behind a

recoil and a movement toward self-consciousness. Or if the elemental is the *shock* necessary for a naive self to become self-conscious, *how* this shock could *produce* self-consciousness is never explained. If, on the other hand, the *other* is responsible for this *shock* it still seems that a recognition of the alterity of the other would already presuppose a self-consciousness. Two selves, therefore, emerge in Levinas' text, but they are not united.

So in addition to the "worlds" we occupy, i.e., in addition to the comprehended worlds we lay hold of, map out and story as a primordial way of being-in-the-world, life also dissembles around intensities, needs, obsessions, intoxications, desire, eros, suffering, enjoyment, exultation and play. The phenomenological analysis Husserl initiated cannot describe what is utterly passive in life, nor can it adequately describe the meaning of passivity as an aspect of nourishment. Even Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of corporeality is, in essence, a phenomenology of *perception* which articulates the dialectic of the body-world relation. Phenomenology, in short, succeeds to describe the dialectical features of the *understanding*, but insofar as it presumes to tell us something about experience per se or, indeed, about Being itself, it must give itself the ontological priority of consciousness. Once again we must keep in mind that Husserl did not deny the existence of "objective" reality, moreover he criticizes Kant for beginning with the Cartesian picture, i.e., focusing on the fundamental finitude of intuition over against the absolute.[2] But the phenomenological

reduction does give itself the reduced as such, the presented as such and so on, and Heidegger too begins with the *question* about the being of the question of Being, i.e., he begins with the disclosiveness of Dasein which is capable of questioning and in particular of questioning itself. In this regard both Husserl and Heidegger presuppose the being of the presented or the disclosed as such and approach the problem of pure science and of Being from this point of departure. According to Levinas this origin of phenomenological reflection is but another moment in the history of Western philosophy and its privilege of ontology. That is to say, like the philosophical tradition on the whole, phenomenology presupposes the *being* of the present and of the given as such. And from this point of view Heidegger's alleged overcoming of the tradition fails because it serves only to ontologize the finitude of disclosiveness which his description of presentedness had revealed.

On the other hand *could* philosophy begin without a question? If it cannot, doesn't this mean that philosophy can only begin with itself, i.e., with some prior determination of who or what is to be addressed? But it seems to us that Bergson saw correctly the inability of "thought" to describe sensibility and the richness of what he took to be pure time. According to Bergson if one begins with the *experience* of pure time - i.e., with duration - one can seek, beyond the concepts and the metaphors, a philosophical account of it, but one cannot reach pure time at all if one begins with thought and the philosophical categories, i.e., with being and nothingness, form and content,

presence and absence and so on.[3] When Levinas claims that the qualities of the elemental lack all determination or direction, in short that they lack all sense, he says essentially the same thing, although, of course, Levinas understands the sensible to embody an ethical dimension. At any rate from what has been said about the lability of sensibility and its ignorance of the narrative self, it follows that philosophy could never say the meaning of sensibility. And the origin of experience *per se*, therefore is clearly not consciousness, nor can the being of beings be reduced to their meaning for consciousness because the phenomenological report necessarily overlooks the "materiality" or elementality of beings, i.e., that in beings which *sustains* us. And to ask now after *the* origin of experience per se would only presuppose the unity of experience and the unity of the subject who is privileged in his very ability to pose a question about being, and in particular, to ask about his own being in all its dimensions, and, in this way, to bring the sensible into the fold of what can be asked about.

We have seen, then, that life is not *one*, but that it is composed of at least two modes of being that exclude each other, the sensible and the coherent. The former indicates an utter passivity to which, nonetheless, one agrees, as one agrees to the very wealth of sustenance and nourishment. The latter indicates an utter activity which, based socially and historically to be sure, describes the laying hold, mapping out and storying character of *consciousness*. We can see how sensibility and the coherence of consciousness differ by describing the way in which

experience is impossible or possible all depending, and we have described various sensible experiences and various modes of consciousness with this goal in mind. Death and Ageing, however, are two themes we have yet to treat which will bring home, once again, this *separation* of the sensible and the coherent.

The Heideggerian analysis of Dasein, as we have seen, is inseparable from the sense in which being-in-the-world and being-in-time is also a being-towards-death. Being ones own most potentiality for death indicates how Dasein's authentic relationship with being is precisely a responsibility for being in the face of death, in short, it indicates that if ones self-projectedness is authentic it must have the absolute impossibility of Dasein in view. For the most part this is covered up in the idle talk of the "they". Inauthentic Dasein understands death as the certainty belonging to everyone and therefore to no one in particular, that is to say, it stops at the fact of death which succeeds in hiding the Dasein per se that is *in* death to the extent that it exists at all as a self-projection Being-toward-death, therefore, is a constituting feature of Dasein which, as projected, defines its very freedom and separation from the "they" and, as we have seen, from the historical and social significance of Dasein in general. But is this analysis of death and being-toward-death an adequate account of ageing?

The "existential" meaning of death tries it to the self authorship of the subject who *dies alone* and, therefore, faces

life alone too. Death is understood as the nothingness or the impossibility against which my possibilities emerge. Now if Carr's interpretation of time in narrative terms envisages life as a story which the self tells as its very mode of being in the world and in time, the significance of death must be related somehow to the "existential" account. My death, "in short" must mean the "end of my story", but if the self is responsible for telling its story, the possibility of the end and indeed the inevitability of ending, must be an important element in the telling of my story. It is, of course, a distinguishing feature of configured consciousness and secondary narratives that the former has no clear beginnings and endings but that the latter do, nevertheless one has a sense of beginnings and endings in life and this embrace of time extends to life on the whole. Autobiographies, for example, often include accounts of ones birth, which, while not remembered as such, are understood to be meaningfully related to ones story if only as a bit of factual information. Indeed autobiographies often include a brief sketch of the lives of ones parents or even of ones grandparents suggesting that the temporal horizons reaching beyond ones life are indispensable to an accurate picture of that life. Similarly our narrative includes a picture of death, even if, like birth, it is never experienced as such. And as one approaches death in old age we go so far as to make practical arrangements for death, making wills, buying plots in cemeteries and so on.

However there is a responsibility behind ones narrative that reveals itself in this face to face with ones end. I choose

my possibilities and I have possibilities only because I also face the impossible. That is, my finitude on the whole has a concrete meaning only with death in mind. For Carr self-choice reveals itself in a practical context and it responds to a need to "push on" or "muddle through" in one way or another. We have seen, however, that this idea of self-choice is problematic at least as it concerns the ontological status of the self and the real issue of freedom and responsibility. If, in short, configuration and, hence, some semblance of coherence or incoherence, is a condition of experience per se, my self-choices will always be the result of existing criterion for coherence and meaning, for which, at least ultimately,, I could not be responsible. Dasein is that being who interprets. At any rate the existential meaning of death is past over on Carr's account. Does this imply that according to Carr, death itself can only have a meaning for us to the extent that it is storied too? Is death, like the elemental, a limit concept, i.e., that which we *understand* is *beyond*, but, as such, we do not experience? In this regard it is not surprising that in Heidegger's discussion of Authentic Being-towards-death, he mentions the brute "thereness" of moods. Heidegger writes,

> Dasein's mood brings it face to face with the thrownness of its 'that it is there'. *But the state-of-mind which can hold open the utter and constant threat to itself arising from Dasein's own most individualized Being, is anxiety.* In this state of mind, Dasein finds itself *face to face* with the "nothing of the possible impossibility of its existence. Anxiety is anxious *about* the potentiality-for-Being of the entity so destined [des so bestimmten Seienden], and in this way it discloses the uttermost possibility. Anticipation utterly individualizes Dasein.[4]

Therefore the ontological individualization of Dasein defines the very being of Dasein in such a way that it is that being who has-its-being-to-be-in-view-of-its-own-death. Even if one "passes down to oneself" the tradition into which one was born, ontological individualization guarantees Dasein's essential freedom and responsibility. But this contact with oneself *in anxiety* is absent from the narrative picture.

In any case, however we wish to describe the ontological foundations of configured consciousness, and it is precisely here that Levinas' account of ipseity *in terms of the sensible* would seem so promising, it is still not clear that ageing is being-toward-death, whether we cast this anticipation of death in narrative or "existential" terms. Indeed it is not clear that ageing is only meaningfully interpreted in terms of ecstatic time and death. Is ageing always an awareness of age? On the contrary, isn't senescence something that *happens* to me and *effects* me prior to my understanding of what it might mean?

Levinas claims that the meaning of death is not a being-toward-death, but that my more primordial relationship with death is a suspension of death insofar as I am alive and open to the possibility, not just of existing, but of living-well. This change in emphasis moves us away from the activity of self-projectedness and mortal Dasein to the passivity of enjoyment and its agreement to life over against the nothingness which anticipates me. According to Levinas the self suspends the alterity of death as one suspends the alterity of the other or the alterity of the elemental. Death, Levinas writes, threatens

me, it is hostile, "as though the approach of death remained one of the modalities of the relation with the other."[5] Hence for that being who not only represents things to itself and is open onto a world of possibilities, but is also subject to them, death not only represents the ultimate impossibility of my possibilities, it also contains the ultimate meaning of my vulnerability. The "beyond me" and my naiveté threatens, it "is *against me*, as though murder, rather than being one of the occasions of dying, were inseparable from the essence of death."[6]

But one must *agree to death* as one agrees to life. For in ones sensibility, as Lingis, and certainly Nietzsche would observe, one has already died a thousand times. Why does Levinas see the face of the other in the exasperation and futility of dying? Levinas writes, "Death approaches in the fear of someone, and hopes in someone. The Eternal brings death and brings life. A social conjuncture is maintained in this menace."[7] But will we believe with Levinas that death opens us to the Other, or with Nietzsche that the absolute comes in the image of terrible and beautiful destruction? The image and meaning of death, at any rate, is more comprehensive a meaning for human existence than the idea of an end. The instant of enjoyment, as we have seen, also comes as an impossibility. Lingis writes with respect to the erotic, in each encounter, "we bring all our infantile obsessions and, able to crave only mortal flesh and blood, each rendez-vous is an assignation with death."[8] He concludes, "Rather than historical moments, are not the moments of orgasm almost the reverse, essentially mortifying moments of birth,

where nothing is any longer strung out between birth and death as a line of sense or a project?"[9]

Ageing, therefore, is not just a matter of death and the end of life, as if , until the very end, our narratives hold sway, or, as if, propelled toward nothingness, we are turned back on our possibilities as our very structure of being. One ages in birth. To age, in short,is not only being aware of ones age, situating oneself in a temporal field, it is also to feel oneself sensibly, to grow and to grow old. To age means to know yourself as a sexual being, i.e., to be introduced to erotic feelings. And in fatigue and sickness one feels the sensibility become more vulnerable to suffering. One feels ones age not just in a knowledge of the end but in the body backed up into itself, in the body that gives way, not knowing death but feeling pain. To be sure we attach meaning to age. But we are often surprised to discover how aged our old friends have become, and in so doing, to face the age in ourselves. Like fatigue age tends to lag behind our intentions and projects, which, caught up in the "world" are unaware of the "material" changes, or, conversely, already defeated by the idea of death, our sense of old age may be exaggerated when compared to what are in fact our physical capabilities. Therefore it is true that we give meaning to age and that my on-going narrative is inseparable from this sense of where I am on life's road, but, precisely capable of being out of step with this picture, is the sensibility that feels itself. To age, finally, not only indicates time and the death at the end of time, it also means to be subject to time and to the inertia that

weighs on everything. Age is not just storied, it is also something I undergo, and no matter what I do, I cannot stop its progress. The body that betrays me, betrays the coherence of the storied self and not the sensibility per se which *is* all vulnerability and exposedness.

In any event, the life that exists *toward* its own nothingness possesses itself in the face of the inevitable end. It foresees the end coming as one anticipates the end of a story. In its very "there", which reveals, "that it has to be", the storied self does not feel the weight of a "material" world which sustains me in my being, rather it feels the weight of a necessity to "make sense" of life in one way or another. The latter need, which is also a responsibility, is thoroughly *historical* and *social* even if it can also give expression to the sensible, and, although we have not taken it up, the unconscious dimensions of life's dependence and attachment to the Earth. Sensibility indicates bathing. Dispossessed of itself and essentially labile, sensible existence expresses the need to be nourished and the enjoyment or suffering that results of that vulnerability. Subjectivity is not just set up before fields of meaning and of possibilities for being. Sensibility, like death, indicates the impossible. To sense something is to be filled up *in ones being*. And death doesn't only haunt life, it embodies its spirit in the sensibility whose mode of being is precisely to be engulfed, and, exasperated, to extinguish itself again and again in the excesses of the sensuous matter. The philosophies of coherence describe another realm of experience which

articulates the work of time-consciousness. To "lay hold" of the world and its future, to follow through with anything, indeed just to "pay attention", requires a synthetic embrace of temporal horizons which we have also given meaning in narrative terms.

But, "divinity or beast,"[10] the exotic character of the elemental and the agreement of life to bathing, is not reducible to *non*-sense, and, therefore, to the obscurity of the absurd or the impossibility of what is beyond thought. To sense something is already to be nourished and therefore to be buoyed up by the positive qualities of the prime matter. Human life forms the character of a labile identity, not because it admits the possibility of nothingness, nihilation or *discontinuity*, but because in addition to a configuring consciousness, life also involves the reality of an orgasmic sensibility which submits to the wealth in experience. And sensibility, therefore, does not *lack* coherence, it has nothing to do with coherence or incoherence equally. Configuring consciousness oversees itself, it comes into contact with its own configurations by turning the palpable into a survey of the possible, it begins and terminates projects bringing closure to whole chains of actions, laying hold of what has been possible along with what is foreseen, determining itself unto its own termination. But in addition to what we understand, life offers us another mode of being with which I am contented or inflicted before this contentment or suffering is *mine*. One savors the sensuous element. The unity and coherence of life is not exhaustive of its meaning. To age, therefore, is to feel the weight of this involvement with being

from which one cannot stand back. Ageing is not just a matter of following ones course. But is the elemental always experienced as a weight? No! Lightness and frivolity are also qualities of life. The luminous buoys me up, the night air washes over me, play is superficial in its approach, and the body is supported by the ground and not just held against it. Life admits of these various qualities none of which are reducible to the others or to the constituting features of an interpretation. Our existence, as Lingis says, is not only "destined for the world."[11]

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Notes

INTRODUCTION

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5. Emmanuel Levinas, ***Existence and Existents***, trans. A.Lingis (The Hague-Boston: Martinus Nijhoff), p.68.
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1. TIME-CONSCIOUSNESS

Part I - HUSSERL AND INNER TIME

1. Edmund Husserl, ***Cartesian Meditations***, trans. D.Cairns (The Hague-Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Pub.), p.27.
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8. See for example H.L.Dreyfuss, "Husserl's Perceptual Noema", and A.Gurwitsch, "Husserl's Theory of the Intentionality of Consciousness", in ***Husserl, Intentionality and Cognitive Science***, ed. H.L.Dreyfuss (Cambridge Mass.: M.I.T. Press)
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