IMAGES OF SELF AND OTHERS
Philosophical Investigations

CONTENT

Editorial

IMAGES OF SELF AND OTHERS
Belonging to and Intertwining in Communities

According to Wittgenstein, "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one's eyes)."[1] That human beings are bodily beings with non-physical dimensions and that they are not solitary individuals but belong to communities are such obvious facts that the articles in this issue of the *Journal of Dharma* reaffirm.

In the fundamental human quest for personal identity, both the philosophical and religious traditions came to the conclusion that body is not a sufficient object of self, though we generally identify human beings referring to physical features. Though I am bodily, I am not my body. If body is not a proper object for self, we feel forced to posit an immaterial substance as that which makes a being a human being. Though Aristotle, and Aquinas following him, argued that the rational soul as the substantial form that makes a being a human being, they did not identify human being with soul. The self is not merely present in the body, but rather very intimately joined so that soul and the body form a composite unit, the unity of which is described differently by different philosophers.

According to Wittgenstein, the concepts relating to the physical and the spiritual relate to each other in a variety of ways in the stream of our life and thought: "The inner is tied up with the outer not only empirically, but also logically."[2] It is not just as an empirical fact but also a logical fact, that human beings are neither bodies nor bodiless selves, but beings with distinctive psychophysical characteristics. Our use of "living human being," as

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[1]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe, trans., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953, 129.

[2]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on The Philosophy of Psychology*, Vol. I, (ed) G. H. Von Wright, and Heikki Nyman, (trans.) C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue, London: Basil Blackwell, 1990, 63.

Evans observed, "simply spans the gap between the mental and the physical, and is no more intimately connected with one aspect of our self-conception than the other."[3] "All the peculiarities we have noticed about 'I'-thoughts are consistent with and, indeed, at points encourage, the idea that there is a living human being which those thoughts concern."[4]

As we have seen the intimate union of physical and non-physical aspects of human beings, there are complex forms of relations among individuals and communities. Persons are living human beings who are substantially present in the world in collaboration and conversation with fellow human beings. It is a fundamental fact that "we belong to a community;"[5] it is not just a homely reminder of an empirical fact but an existentially fundamental fact of life that is given showing who we are and how we live. Belonging to a community does not mean, however, that an individual is always surrounded by a group of people; it is rather a basic presupposition in our characteristic practices and are fundamental to being and becoming human. Individuals and communities are not contraries nor do they stand at opposite poles. They are related to each other not just empirically but logically. We are not just solitary individuals; we are in collaboration and conversation with other human beings in an inter-subjective world. This is not just something additional and consequent, but something constitutive and existential of being human. The world is made a human world, rather than a biological environment through our co-reflection, conversation and collaboration. As active and free agents living in the world, we realise ourselves not in seclusion but in a life of conversation and collaboration with fellow human beings. Belonging to a community is a fundamental way of our being human.

We fundamentally belong to a community. We live, move and have our being in the physical world, in conversation and

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[3]Evans, G. *The Varieties of Reference*, J. McDowell, ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, 256.

[4]Evans, *The Varieties of Reference*, 256.

[5]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, G. E M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, eds., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969, 298.

collaboration with other persons. We are not only the products of nature, but also products and projects of nurture. We have an existential relation to the society as we are formed by a community and form a community. To exist as human is therefore to co-exist and to pro-exist. Others are always present in our being and becoming. One could see a number of modes of human co-existence: Indifference – Concern, Conflict – Unanimity, Exploitation – Promotion, Dependence – Rebellion, Justice –Injustice, and Love – Hate. It is love that makes something personal and intersubjective and genuinely human. Love transforms I-it relation to I-Thou relationship. Love creatively transforms the persons, both the love and the beloved. The experience of being together-in-love is expressed in terms of fulfilment and completeness. Love directs and energizes the process of becoming fully human. It is the relations that define and decide our identities - self and others, and these are not fixed once for all, but dynamic and flexible. Conceptual clarifications on the complex relations between physical and spiritual, natural and cultural, and individual and social in these images of self and others is important in our efforts to know ourselves and to lead meaningful lives.

The first paper, "The Bright Lights on Self Identity and Positive Reciprocity: Spinoza's Ethics of the Other Focusing on Competency, Sustainability and Divine Love" by *Ignace Haaz*, presents the human being in a monistic psycho-dynamical affective framework, instead of a dualistic pedestal above nature, without naturalising the human being in an eliminative materialistic view. Spinoza finds an important entry point in a panpsychist and holistic perspective, presenting the complexity of the human being, which is not reducible to the psycho-physiological conditions of life. From a panpsychist holistic perspective, qualities and values emerge from the world. Human reality, though a social reality, supposes a basis for shared competencies, which author presents as grounded on the sustaining character of the essence of the animal-man as will-to-power. Negatively speaking we all share same asocial tendencies and affects. This aspect is not only negative but it is

also a will to develop and master the environment, because values have an onto-metaphysical immanent dimension in nature, not because there is an individual bottom-up will to survive, but rather a will to live in harmony with the surrounding world. Spinoza understood and described perfectly the power of the mind over the power of the affects, as a co-constituting dimension, which is alienating natural dependencies, leaving an inner space for the objectification of ethical values, not related to mere compensation mechanisms. The author first presents the proto-ethical conditions for the sustainability of life as affective and dynamic grounding into the immanent world, and then the realistic principles of an ethics of competency and sees how far mutual recognition, as the concrete activity of mutually serving each other, has been presented in a convincing way by Spinoza.

A crucial question in a pluralist society is how justice can be done to alterity without endangering thereby one's identity. Roger Burggraeve, a leading Levinasian scholar addresses the question critically and creatively in his excellent essay, ""When in the 'Brother' the Stranger is Acknowledged": From Identity to Alterity and Dialogue, According to Emmanuel Levinas." Levinas' dialogical phenomenology of the same and the other, and of responsibility, sets us, according to the author, on the track of 'fraternity' as human condition. As ethical condition of 'solidarity' this fraternity transcends sex and gender, even if the concept is originally rooted in biology. Inspired by Levinas, Burggraeve explains how fraternity attains its full sense when, in the brother, the stranger is acknowledged (and not the opposite: 'when in the stranger the brother is recognized'). This 'ethical fraternity' makes it possible to realize equality in society, and to promote a respectful and authentic inter-religious, or rather 'interconvictional' dialogue. Such an open dialogue, the author concludes, appeals to an asymmetric and reciprocal mastership and critical learning from each other.

Don Adams in his creative reading of Levinas and Spinoza in "The Self and the Other in Levinas and Spinoza" argues that the Spinozan self within the context of his own ethical system,

we find that it also ultimately is other-directed, but in a manner quite distinct from that of the Levinasian self. Levinas himself, however, in his ethics elucidates his key concept of the other-directed self by opposing it to the wholly self-interested self, as he interprets it, in the ethics of Baruch Spinoza. The contrasting ethical selves of Levinas and Spinoza provide alternative models of existing ethically in the world, both of which are in insistent opposition to the modern humanist valorization of the autonomous egoistic individual as a valid ontological concept and worthwhile ethical ideal.

Another comparative study is made by Vinoy Thomas Paikkattu in his essay, "Knowing Self, Identity, and Otherness: An Epistemological Account after Aquinas and Wittgenstein." According to the author, discussions on the self, identity, and the other take an epistemological turn in Aquinas and Wittgenstein. Both of them leave ample space for it notwithstanding their ontological and linguistic philosophies, respectively. The epistemology that can be drawn from them does not limit itself to the 'process of knowledge', rather moves beyond the synthesis of knowledge to the integration of life and actions. The dichotomy between 'self' and the 'other' and the 'inner' and the 'outer' are overcome with the relational epistemology. Systemic epistemology is transformed to relational epistemology where relationality of knowing, acting, and being constitute a linguistic community. Human persons as the members of this community play distinct roles in the human world where other beings also exist.

The final article, "The Self: Metaphysical Reality *vs* Communicative Device" by Anil Kumar Tewari creatively juxtaposes the non-Buddhist and the Buddhist viewpoints of Indian philosophy on the notion of the self in order to see the rationality behind their conceptions. To pursue this objective, the paper is divided into four sections. The introductory section points to various usages of the expression 'self' in common parlance, which tends to encompass everything that matters to an individual. The second section describes various approaches adopted by the major systems of Indian philosophy towards the

self. It is shown that the conception of the self as a metaphysical substance is more amenable to those Indian philosophical systems that believe in the plurality of individual selves. The third section deals with the Buddhist counter-narrative to the notion of substantive metaphysical self. Since the parsimony of the Buddhist proposal lies in its metaphysical non-proliferation, the linguistic entities such as the self (*jīva*) or soul (*ātman*) purportedly referring to a substantive entity are declared metaphysically vacuous, but the convention of language enables us to pick out the intended referent which is nothing but individual person. Thus the metaphysical concepts of the non-Buddhist systems of Indian philosophy turn out to be a 'communicative device' in Buddhism, without any metaphysical bearing.

Identity of self and others is thus always composite and plural, though it is often used as a simple abstraction as if identities could be defined like chemical formulae. To borrow the analogy of thread by Wittgenstein, "in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres."[6] With sentiments of gratitude to all the collaborators may I have the privilege of presenting to the readers this issue of the *Journal of Dharma*, on "Images of Self and Others: Philosophical Investigations."

Jose Nandhikkara, *Editor-in-Chief*

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[6]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 167.

THE BRIGHT LIGHTS ON SELF IDENTITY AND POSITIVE RECIPROCITY
Spinoza's Ethics of the Other Focusing on Competency, Sustainability and Divine Love

Ignace Haaz♦

Abstract: The claim of this paper is to present Spinoza's view on self-esteem and positive reciprocity, which replaces the human being in a monistic psycho-dynamical affective framework, instead of a dualistic pedestal above nature. Without naturalising the human being in an eliminative materialistic view as many recent neuro-scientific conceptions of the mind do, Spinoza finds an important entry point in a panpsychist and holistic perspective, presenting the complexity of the human being, which is not reducible to the psycho-physiological conditions of life. From a panpsychist point of view, qualities and values emerge from the world, in a situation similar to what could be seen in animism, or early childhood psychology, where the original distance between the mind and the exterior thing is reduced ad minima, and both can even interrelate in a confusing manner. Human reality is nevertheless a social reality, it supposes a basis for shared competencies, that we will present as grounded on the one hand of the sustaining character of the essence of the animal-man as will-to-power. Negatively speaking we all share same asocial tendencies and affects. This aspect is not only negative but it is also a will to develop and master the environment, because values have an onto-metaphysical immanent dimension in nature, not because there is an individual bottom-up will to survive, but rather a will to live in harmony with the

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surrounding world. On the other hand, we shall see that Spinoza understood and described perfectly the power of the mind over the power of the affects, as a co-constituting dimension, which is alienating natural dependencies, leaving an inner space for the objictification of ethical values, not related to mere compensation mechanisms. We shall present the high standard of Spinoza's personal values and positive reciprocity, related to his crucial understanding of the concept of wholeness of life grounded in nature as the strong roots of a tree of life, but also the very metaphysical conditions for ethical values. The essential capacity of shared social affects is completed by a self-overcoming of the animal-man based passions, restraining and sometimes harming social or spiritual life. We are first going to present these proto-ethical conditions for the sustainability of life as affective and dynamic grounding into the immanent world, second we shall present realistic principles of an ethics of competency and see how far mutual recognition, as the concrete activity of mutually serving each other, has been presented in a convincing way by Spinoza.

Keywords: Competency, Philosophical Ethics, Love, Spinoza, Sustainability, 17th Century Philosophy.

1. Introduction

To introduce a constructive combination between the notions of the identity of the self and mutual recognition, we would like to present Spinoza's careful use of the terms "gratitude", "recognition", "gratefulness", "thankfulness" in his *Ethics.*

There are certainly two good reasons to dig into Spinoza's work on ethics: first we find a presentation of the relation between two cardinal ethical values: competency and sustainability, in a non-anthropomorphic framework of our presence on earth, as englobing whole and godly emanation. Second, Spinoza presents the concept of positive reciprocity and the sentiment of gratefulness as related to the holistic understanding of ethical stewardship, or human being as social beings, keen to being in the service of others. A true service is intimately grounded in a correct perception of the self and its

dependency to the englobing whole. We find in Spinoza's ethics psychophysiological tendencies of the self, and the alienation of passions through a realist constitution of values, based on our capacity to understand our dependency as living being to the wholeness of life. It is not efficient to benefit from someone, as when we receive a gift, if the relation between equals is undermined for some hidden reasons, which are not transparently expressed. If someone may expect a benefit in return from a gift, which would semantically not be a gift anymore, the result would be the creation of a debt, which changes the relationship between equals. Positive reciprocity implies something different from the diminishing of the mutual equilibrium resulting from the possibility of hidden benefices or debts. In order to feel grateful we need to feel that the other has served us with the self, and not by imposing strength or any unexpected unilateral advantage, that we would owe in return. In recognising a service, we connect the experience with the totality of our experiences. Limitations serve, errors and wounds serve, even ignorance can serve, as the wholeness in us serves the wholeness in others and the wholeness in life, what Spinoza calls our intimate foundational relation to the Substance or God.

We find inviting presentations of the value of Spinoza's ethics by important philosophers. We have certainly with Spinoza "the purest philosopher" "and the most effective moral code in the world" if we follow Nietzsche's commentary, who recommends him, on the ground of the apolitical character of what after Spinoza we could call rational moral agents as "free spirits."[7] Nietzsche opposes his ethics of a tragic-comic self-derision and laughter "ten times should you laugh in a day" and the Biblical image of the "laughing lion" to Spinoza's rigorous "vivisection of the affects," a very cautious control of the expression of affects, in an ethics of the "laughing-no-more" and

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[7]Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Human All too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (*Ein Buch für freie Geister*), VIII, No 475, trans. Marion Faber with Stephen Lehmann, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. See also Henning Ottmann, *Nietzsche Handbuch*, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler Verlag, 2000, 102.

"weeping-no-more."[8] With Nietzsche we may add: where vivisection of the affects would make fully sense, there shouldn't be any "harming of the affects."[9]

E. von Hartmann, another Schopenhauerian philosopher as Nietzsche, complements his views on the meaning of affects for Spinoza, praising the precision and coherence of Spinoza's views on ethics, but regretting his extreme parsimony with regard to the phenomenological description of social affects. For Hartmann many of them are reason based principles such as political rights and today we would focus on cultural rights; others legal rights and ethical principles.[10] But a first larger set of ethical principles, corresponding to the affective ground proposed by Spinoza, should be rather seen as subjective ethical principles, as the crucial role of an ethics of compassion, including other social moral sentiments. Social affects or subjective ethical principles are extremely important for applied ethics, because they help grounding the very notion of equality. One needs to add that neither Hartmann, nor Nietzsche refutes Spinoza's formalism of the affects, they only observe the possibility, on the line developed by Leibniz, Kant and later Schopenhauer, to mark the limits of the world of subjective experience. In the 20th Century, Max Scheler and Edmund Husserl will later develop it as the phenomenological reduction of the first person experience. As example, the sentiment of repentance, which is an important moral sentiment related to the

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[8]"N*on ridere, non lugere, neque detestari sed intelligere.*" Translation by Coleridge: "I sedulously disciplined my mind neither to laugh at, or bewail, or detest, the actions of men; but to understand them." *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 4, (Part I), 166, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1969. Spinoza, *Works*, Vol. II, *Spinoza's Political Treatise*, "Introduction," IV, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley, Princeton: University Press, 505.

[9]Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. W. Kaufmann, New York: Random House, No 198, 1966, 108.

[10]Eduard von Hartmann, *Die Gefühlsmoral*, ed., J.C. Wolf, "*Moralprinzip des Geselligkeitstriebe*," Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1879/2006: 53, 59, 83.

experience of an inappropriate choice that could lead to wrongful consequences, is understood differently depending on whether we place the experience of the subject in the centre of the picture or not.

Should repentance be considered as useful after a wrongdoing, considering that an amelioration and reconciliation is plausible based on the suffering related to the impossibility of undoing a wrong? Spinoza doubts the fundamental religious power of repentance, on the ground of his deterministic conception of our natural comprehension, contrary to Hartmann's Christian emphasis on the importance of the process of free decision making, and of the careful distinguishing between natural inclination for repentance on one hand and ethical principle of repentance on the other. Spinoza delivers powerful argument for prevailing against received authority, and yet, the starting proposition of his ethics, regarding the relation of the human being to God is fundamental:

E1P15: Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God. Dem.: Except for God, there neither is, nor can be conceived, any substance (by P14), i.e. (by D3), thing that is in itself and is conceived through itself. But modes (by D5) can neither be nor be conceived [30] without substance. So they can be in the divine nature alone, and can be conceived through it alone.

E2P10: *The being of substance does not pertain to the essence of man, or substance does not constitute the form of man.* [30] Dem.: For the being of substance involves necessary existence (by E1P7). Therefore, if the being of substance pertained to the essence of man, then substance being given, man would necessarily be given (by [II/93] D2), and consequently man would exist necessarily, which (by A1) is absurd, q.e.d. Schol.: This proposition is also demonstrated from E1P5, viz. that [5] there are not two substances of the same nature. Since a number of men can exist, what constitutes the form of man is not the being of substance. Further, this proposition is evident from the other properties of substance, viz. that substance is, by its nature, infinite, immutable, [10]

> indivisible, etc., as anyone can easily see. Cor.: From this it follows that the essence of man is constituted by certain modifications of God's attributes.[11]

For (by E2P10) the being of substance does not belong to the essence of human being. That essence therefore (by E1P15) is something which is in God, and which without God can neither be nor be conceived. Spinoza gives some examples concerning the method of exposition he uses.

In order to start thinking ethics as a system, one needs to bear in mind some basic principles, such as thinking particular essences. The essence of spatiality is the exteriority of its parts, the essence of human being is to be a reasonable animal (or social, etc.) and then philosophers get confused because they then ask whether these essences are related to a first principle or independent to any first principle. Spinoza explains why these [mainly Cartesian] philosophers get puzzled when it comes to initial thinking about ethics:

> [30] The cause of this, I believe, was that they did not observe the [proper] order of Philosophizing. For they believed that the divine nature, which they should have contemplated before all else (because it is prior both in knowledge and in nature) is last in the order of knowledge, and that the things that are called objects of the senses are prior [35] to all. That is why, when they contemplated natural things, they thought of nothing less than they did of the divine nature; and when afterwards [II/94] they directed their minds to contemplating

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[11]Curley's translation from Works vol. 1 *Ethics* is used but abbreviations are adapted as follow: parts of Spinoza's *Ethics* are referred to as: P(roposition), Sc.(holium), D(efinition) and the five parts of the *Ethics* are cited by Arabic numerals: thus E3P1 stands for the first proposition of the third part of the *Ethics*. The Collected Works of Spinoza, Ed. and translated by Edwin Curley, Princeton: UP. 1985/2016, 2nd printing. Spinoza uses the expression of "the Man" in conformity with 17th Century language, but at least in his *Ethics*, the Man stands for the generic term of the human being. Each man and woman should be able to reach the intellectual love of God and nature, or supreme goal, from a path of deepening of their being.

the divine nature, they could think of nothing less than of their first fictions, on which they had built the knowledge of natural things, because these could not assist knowledge of the divine nature. So it is no wonder that they have generally contradicted themselves (E2P10 Cor. Note).

Ethics starts by God or the divine, but it is also a purification of the understanding, meditation on the experience of joy as an experience of the perfect character of love as related to competency, by opposition to weakness, which leads to corruption and evil.[12]

> (E3P11Sc.: We see, then, that the Mind can undergo great changes, and pass now to a greater, now to a lesser perfection. These passions, [II/149] indeed, explain to us the affects of Joy and Sadness. By Joy, therefore, I shall understand in what follows that passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection.

Practically, we do not need to worry about the metaphysical beginnings of ethics in God, to find in the third and fourth books of the *Ethics* most of the passions related to reciprocal recognition. Recognition is partly shared esteem but not necessarily dependent on others, it is "to imagine [oneself] to be praised by others" (E4P53), and passing from lesser to greater perfection, by "imagining" and "encouraging" its "power of acting". In order to stay in this solitary and solipsist circle of generating joy for the self, one consequently needs to prevent the opposite: i.e., any sudden lack of positive identification. Saddening the imagination or limiting the self in such a way as to encourage oneself to imagine being blamed by others is the opposite of self-esteem:

> (E3D26) Exp.: Self-esteem is opposed to humility, insofar as we understand by it a Joy born of the fact that we consider our power of acting. But insofar as we also understand by it a Joy, accompanied by the idea of some deed which we believe

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[12]Gordon Clement Wickersham, *Spinoza's Concept of God's Infinity*, MA Thesis, Boston University, 1951, 97, see also: 77-81, <https://www.globethics.net/gel/6506745> (3 May 2018).

we have done from a free decision of the [5] Mind, it is opposed to Repentance.

Negative self-esteem is related to humility, which "exists when someone knows his own imperfections, without regard to [others'] disdain of him." Humility is similar to "despondency" (E4P57), as far as both are the opposite of "pride: when someone attributes to himself a perfection that is not to be found in him."[13] And they both "are born of humility"(E3D29), but despondency is "Sadness born of a man's false opinion that he is below others." Since the nature of man rooted in his capacity to produce himself completely, "humility and despondency are very rare," "human nature, considered in itself, strains against them, as far as it can" (E3D29):

> So Humility, or the Sadness which arises from the fact that a man reflects on his own lack of power, does not arise from a true reflection, or reason, and is a passion, not a virtue q.e.d. [II/250] E3P54: Repentance is not a virtue, or does not arise from reason, instead, he who repents what he has done is twice wretched or lacking power"(E3P55, S.P.B, n 58).

Humility, like repentance, remorse, etc. are depressing passions, which only tend to annihilate us. Overall, human being's lack of power to moderate and restrain the affects is called "bondage" by Spinoza, who describes in the fourth part of the *Ethics*, "how man who is subject to affects is under the control, not of [10] himself, but of fortune" (E4 Preface).

It is slightly better to be content than sad: "A desire that arises from Joy is stronger, other things equal, than one that arises from Sadness" (E4P18); but "overestimation is thinking more highly of someone than is just, out of Love." It differs from "scorn [which] is thinking less highly of someone than is just, out of Hate" (E3D21-22). But, "it happens that everyone is anxious to tell his own deeds, and show off his powers, both of body [5] and of mind—and that men, for this reason, are troublesome to one another"(E3P55, Sc.). We see that envy is

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[13]Spinoza, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, *Short Treatise on God, Man and His Well-Being*, Ch. VIII, "On Esteem and Disdain."

intoxicating mutual recognition. Human beings are by nature envious or "glad of their equals' weakness and saddened by their equals' virtue" (E3P55, Sc.). Envy shows an important aspect of all passions: they are diversity by excellence of the nature of sentiments and the fluctuation of desires, in narrow and wide forms. The depression of the desire is melancholy its exaltation revives us.[14] Vices such as envy show the affected nature of the man as "mode" for Spinoza, in conformity with the idea that all modes, including the human being, are finite and limited expressions of the substance in the nature, except *the substance* or *causa sui*. A failure or incapacity to realize a competency is failure of the expression of the human being, conceived as a capacity to develop expansive power. In nature, limited modes are stable and express always the same thing; human being, in comparison has a power of development that has much more elasticity, regeneration, elevation and amplification.

For Spinoza our identity is grounded on a universal egoistical anthropological assumption common in XVII century (as with Hobbes), also called a "possessive individualism." By contrast to hedonism, it has not pleasure as an aim but the affirmation and expansion of the individual self: *l'amour propre*, which arises with the planning and calculation of the future will to power. Spinoza focuses on the desire, not to realize a transcendent value, but as sustainability of the individual in the existence and the accumulation of power on the world or conatus. But for Spinoza self-sustainability is not the assimilation with an instinct of conservation (as Hobbes derives it from vital and animal movement), it has to do with living *in suo esse*, in one's being or essence, hence through the objectivation of values in a genealogical process related to passions.[15] Opposed to the

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[14]Louis Millet, *Pour Connaître la pensée de Spinoza*, Paris: Bordas, 1970, 83.

[15]"Objectivation of values" is a proposition used by Matheron to describe a situation where we cannot control objects that we seek to value but only evaluations for Spinoza. On the one side, the self is losing his ipseity, his wholeness of sensible being by being rational but

Hobbesian biological anthropology, which does not lead to an objective representation of values, the genealogical definition of passions of Spinoza leads to a theory of the alienation of passions in an identification process which does. Passions have to do with a simple identification: we are glad to witness the conservation of an object, which we love, and grieve its loss.

Against the Cartesian dogma that the self should be identified with the mind Spinoza (and later Schopenhauerian philosophy) will ground the presupposition that the self is embodied and that its integration into reality at large is thus made possible. By contrast to Spinoza, later propositions as the phenomenological analysis proposed by Hartmann shows that it may not be possible to ask only to the rational faculty to make good choice; Hartmann thinks that moral sentiments and the ethical principle of taste, which are only conceived negatively by Spinoza, have a proactive role to play in helping the man to constitute higher and higher ethical values.[16]

2. Gratitude as Love Based on Shared Competencies *vs* Integrity

In his important study, Matheron gives some additional indications on the logic of mutual recognition in Spinoza's *Ethics* that could be called egoistic. The key argument of Spinoza is that instead of autonomous choice based morals, we should concentrate on the knowledge of the virtues and their causes, and observation of rules, practice them, and direct most actions

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on the other side the objective representation of values for Spinoza offers a firm grip on the sway that external objects and the passions exercise over our existence. Finally the wholeness of the self is experienced in seeking the deepest treasures of the human mind. Spinoza invites us to an *itinerarium mentis in Deo*, a perfectionist knowledge path, which is at the same time an intellectual love of God.

[16]E. v. Hartmann, *Die Gefühlsmoral*, ed., J.C. Wolf, op. cit. 53, 59, 83. Read also further on similarities between Schopenhauer and Spinoza: Jenny Bunker, *Schopenhauer's Spinozism*, Thesis, University of Southampton, 2015, Sections on "Ethics," 99, and "Salvation," 143.

according to the command of reason.[17] What is Spinoza's understanding of mutual recognition or gratitude?

If there is a maxim for Spinoza as a rule of praxis it would be: "Hate is to be conquered by Love, or Nobility, not by repaying it with Hate in return" (E5P6), as presented in the fifth part of the *Ethics* "On the power of the intellect, or the human freedom." Inter-human relations can be assured by a system of obligation to give (E3P36), to take (E4P70), and to give back (E3P42). Gratitude tends to minimize in this process the joy that we first get from the surprise of receiving since the experience of the past service allows us to imagine better the future comportment of our partners and related benefits. From the point of view of Spinoza's definition of love, I necessarily love the merchant that gives me the object of my desire. This purely trade related sentiment of love is an interesting positive ethical optic and shows the valorization of trade.[18] In the economic sector of trade each individual feels the interdependence and convergence of interests, each being in solidarity with all. Individual prosperity is depending on the prosperity of all with whom the trader is in professional relation: retailers, distributors, clients, funding partners, etc. But it is at this stage a pure commercial interaction: "The thankfulness which men are led by blind Desire to [II/264] display toward one another is for the most part a business transaction or an entrapment, rather than thankfulness" (E4P71Sc.).

As we see in the economic understanding of gratitude as interplay of desires to possess and desires to give and sell objects of desires, human trade based interactions tend to develop a strong solidarity of interdependencies and converging interests, but with some limitations regarding gratitude. How does the

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[17]Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*, Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969/1988, 86, 204-5 ; C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962.

[18]Spinoza shows also that the more the predictability of this mutual recognition is given as in trade the more likely it is to find ignorance and the absence of free spirits (See E4P71).

immanent-realist constitution of value arise from this dense tissue of human transactions and expectations? Many gifts should not be accepted. On the contrary, "firmness of mind" is demonstrated by "who does not allow any gifts to corrupt him, to his or to the general ruin" (shared disgrace, lat.: *communem perniciem*). There is often a moment when the desire for glory intercedes on that of love, when Y doesn't feel obliged to X to pay his dues, to refer to a register of duties, to adhere to prevailing collective policies.

Commerce is of wildfowl (Mercatura, seu aucupium), not that corruption belongs to the essence of trading, but all trading without clear policies and sanctions turns quickly to conflicts of interest and abuses. When X acknowledges the ingratitude of Y: "He who has benefited someone—whether moved to do so by Love or by the hope of Esteem—will be saddened if he sees his benefit accepted in an ungrateful spirit" (E3P42). We fall back to negative reciprocity as finely analysed by Matheron,[19] but X and Y do not forget all of a sudden the advantages resulting from their previous interactions, they stay for a while in a mixed feeling between love and hatred. "So from imagining himself to be hated by someone, he will be affected with Sadness, accompanied by the idea of the one who hates him [as a cause of the sadness] or (by the same Scholium) he will hate the [15] other, q.e.d."(E3P40). "Given a just cause for this hatred, he will be affected by Shame (by P30)." "But (by hypothesis), he nevertheless loves him. So he will be tormented by Love and Hate together" (E3P40Sc.).

It is the principal aim of political ethics to stabilize the process in minimizing the fluctuations of affects, to create rules in order to sustain positive reciprocity. Contrary to Kantian future propositions, Spinoza does not use the virtue of integrity, which depends on practical imperatives based on a subjective free choice, in contradiction with his affirmation of absolute determinism. As indicative ethics, stabilization of affects has nothing to do with morals, since good and bad are all necessary

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[19]Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*, 206.

manifestations of God's providence, and wrongdoing should not be considered blameworthy but subject of disdain (*contemptus, versmading*). Contrary to Hobbes: "those things which we neither desire nor hate we said to contemn," Spinoza follows Descartes' usage, as Edwin Curley shows well, "*contemptus* represents *mépris*" as opposed to *estime*, and is defined as an inclination to consider the baseness or smallness of what is *mépris*. So something closer to disesteem seems preferable."[20] Spinoza prefers such virtues as honesty, trust, reliability and faithfulness to describe the positive interplay of shared competencies (lat. *fides, fidelis, fidus*).

Gratitude is a tricky social virtue: how to deal with unexpected and sudden invitations, or with servile attitude such as loyalty in student-teacher interactions, or decisions on voluntary basis between church members and a church minister based on off-record expectations (where the intentions are not explicitly stated), or marks of employee-director deference. In some cases, familial language can treat individuals as social equals, although individuals may have several defined social responsibilities and limited freedom to accept new cooperation. In various situations where conflicts of interest are often a possible issue, socially constructed self-images of the individuals interact in conflicting and potentially contradictory ways. Part of the ambiguity is specifically on the language or the form of communication. We can also feel gratitude for God, as when we pray and thank God for living a good life.

On the one hand, on the subjective side of the moral sentiments, gratitude and mutual recognition have to do with the expression of love, solidarity and brotherhood. But the difficulty with love is that it is not only a subjective attitude, but a moral sentiment based ethical principle. As principle of religious unity of the highest metaphysical harmony and

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[20]Disdain, Glossary-Index, English-Latin-Dutch, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, Ed. and translated by Edwin Curley, Vol. 1, Princeton: UP. 1985/2016, 2nd printing. Hobbes' quotation is from Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan*, Part I, Ch. 6, London: Penguin Classics, 1651, fourth ed. with Introduction by C. B. MacPherson, 1985, 120.

perfection of the creation, love is an objective *telos* of all living beings, directed to an eternal temporality, distinguished from what is sustaining in time, as we find it for example in both Spinoza's subjective and metaphysical *Ethics.*

As Kuno Fisher shows it well, Spinoza's rationalism does not suppose a process of development; it does not focus on the method of knowledge of the world and on the phenomenal conditions of experience of the values. Although Spinoza doesn't contradict such views found after Kant's Copernican redefinition of the early modern *cogito* in particular with Schopenhauer's Neo-Kantian adaptation of the Spinozian immanent world, Spinoza's early modern formalism should be understood as the affirmation that all being is given by God or Nature. The later description of the subjective space and time as an essential structure of the experience, attached to an intersubjective component, will complement the rather minimalistic framework of the constitution of the human world within Spinoza's work.[21]

2.1 Spinoza's High Standard of Personal Values

We know from the biographers that Spinoza was living in La Haye from 1670 to 1677.[22] In a letter of 16th February 1673 from Louis Fabritius, Professor at the Academy of Heidelberg, Spinoza was invited to the post of Ordinary Professor at the Academy of La Haye on the behalf of the Elector of Palatine, where he could carry on his research in philosophy, without any particular constraint other than teaching a few hours to young students in philosophy.[23] Spinoza would receive the salary of any Professor, in similar situation. Surprisingly, Spinoza politely

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[21]Fisher Kuno, *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie, Immanuel Kant und seine Lehre*, Spinozas Monismus, Bd. IV, 1. Theil, Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1898, 25.

[22]*Spinoza's Short Treatise on God, Man, His Well-Being*, Transl. and ed. A. Wolf, London: A. C. Black, 1910, lxxxi.

[23]Correspondence, XLVII, Fabritius to Spinoza, 16th February 1673, XLVIII, The answer of Spinoza to Fabritius, the 30th March 1873. Spinoza, *Oeuvres Complètes*, transl. R. Caillois, M. Francès, R. Misrahi, NRF Pléiade, 1954, 1283-84.

refused the offer, arguing that he would have to renounce partly his research in order to teach, also mentioning that he never had any desire to accept the responsibility of a university professor.

As Kuno Fischer shows well, Spinoza was subject of much criticism particularly after his political work on the freedom of thinking and expression, and before the posthumous edition of *Ethics* in 1677. Spinoza's adaptation of the Cartesian methodic sceptical reduction to religious matters, in particular revelation and prophetical insights, has been much commented upon since Popkin's work.[24] The philosophy of personal identity has been building personal identity on the top of the psycho-dynamic and affect oriented natural understanding of the psyche. A key aspect of the question how a philosopher understands social ethics is related to the kind of philosophy of history he/she places in the background of this interrogation. Seventeenth century philosophers are used to grounding human capacities on God or Nature, therefore the question of the nature of God is an important foundational block of how the historical development of ethical values are constructed. With Cartesian philosophy in general there are Stoic, Epicurean and Christian philosophical elements presupposed concerning ethics, philosophy of history and religion. With Spinoza in particular, anthropological aspects of God (theism) are mixed with non-anthropological aspects (deism).

Instead of "standing as judge over us," which can have only "deleterious effects on human freedom and activity, insofar as it

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[24]Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979. Hobbes and to some extend Spinoza are accused of not recognizing the distinction between "moral motives" and "physical efficients", the latter being derived from self-motion, while the former from a motive related to the activity of the understanding. See Samuel Clarke (1738/2005): *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, Prop. X, "Of the Necessity of the Will's being determined by the last Judgment of the Understanding" Elibron Classics Replica, London: John and Paul Knapton, 99. *Short Treatise*, "On the Immortality of the Soul," Ch. XXIII; "On God and the Creation as Nature" Ch. VIII and IX.

fosters a life enslaved to hope and fear and the superstitions to which such emotions give rise," Spinoza is placing all social ethics on the healthy ground of a philosophical faith. Of course this deep tendency of his work, which gave him the reputation of being an early modern sceptic and materialist philosopher, was not without consequences for his life. As early as July 27 1656, Spinoza was issued a harsh ban or excommunication pronounced by the Sephardic community of Amsterdam, for unclear reasons.[25] Leaving a comfortable professional situation in the family business and the security of his religious community, Spinoza's main intention is to come back to the radical principles philosophy.

2.2. Ethics of Sustainability: An Immanent Onto-Metaphysical Foundation

Spinoza shows his deep understanding of sustaining values that are not only related to ethics, but part of a coherent system explaining the metaphysical hierarchy between what exists necessarily, by its proper nature "whereby the essence envelops the existence," and the being for which "essence envelops only a possible existence." This is later divided into "substance" and "mode," as for example, movement is the mode of the body, having a real being without which we cannot conceive a body, but not of the triangle to which movement is only an accident, as Spinoza famously demonstrates. It is from this metaphysical abstract structure that Spinoza derives further relations between what has eternal temporality, distinguished from what is sustaining in time: The existence and the sustaining character of

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[25]Coherent with Spinoza's definition of the nature or God (but not its attributes or modes), divine providence means only the second essential attribute of God, after being *causa sui* (and as perfect being cause of all things): God is the self-sustaining character of all being, as "universal providence" the self-sustaining of all things, as part of the whole nature. The third attribute being the predestination of God, who cannot avoid doing what he is doing, having created all things so perfect that he cannot amend them and do them better. Cf. also: Nadler, Steven (2001): *Spinoza: a Life*, Cambridge: University Press, xi.

objects are only "a distinction of reason," meaning not metaphysically distinct, but distinct as a mode of thinking that serves to recollect, to explain or imagine things that have been understood.[26]

From religious and metaphysical point of view the mind being related not only to the body, which is the "foundation of our love" but also "to God who is inalterable, and thus remains inalterable," it would be more precise to call Spinoza's view panpsychist or pantheist rather than materialist (a kind of early non-reductive materialism), with two attributes of the material world, and the spiritual and metaphysical world. God being the infinite, necessarily existing (that is, uncaused), unique substance of the universe, there is only one substance in the universe; it is God; and everything else that is, is in God. On the one hand *the natura naturata* understood by Spinoza as "movement in the matter" or "the sciences of nature" and on the other hand there is an understanding as thinking reality, but not as two different "substances." There is only one substance, a being that does not need anything other than his sole existence, God, or Spinoza's *natura naturans*. This is the key argument to ground sustainability on a divine love. With the project of his *Ethics*, what Spinoza intends to demonstrate (in the strongest sense of that word) is the truth about God, nature and especially ourselves.

3. Spinoza's Realistic Principle of an Ethics of Competency and Sustainability: Reflecting on the Real Formal Causes

The most central notion of Spinoza's ethics regarding sustainability is the conatus understood not simply as a survival instinct with Hobbes but as the fundamental drive of any being, on a perfectionist path of empowerment. Other regarding attitudes such as love and care are derived from it, but since we focus on the pole of the ego, we need to explain socio-cognitive decentration, social virtues and generally speaking, altruistic

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[26] "Appendices Containing the Metaphysical Thoughts," Part I, Ch. I. "On the Real Being, the Being of Fiction and the Being of Reason." In French: Spinoza, *Oeuvres Complètes*, op. cit. 301.

attitudes. First Spinoza presents dispositions related to love such as gratitude, defined as mutual love, as presupposing a rational attitude grounded on the wholeness of life. Gratitude is appropriately expressed for Spinoza when a person is benefiting a service of someone being in the service of life, by opposition of helping in such a way that the one who helps feels the greatest satisfaction. A person who receives a service should not consider that something has been fixed, as a person should not be perceived as broken, but a person should keep the sense of worth, and gratitude related to the process of heeling has been described by Remen as "integrative medicine". Integrative philosophical medicine is a path first explored by Spinoza's exigent view of gratitude and positive reciprocity. When Spinoza asks for "a just cause for the love" the philosopher has in mind similar situations when a person would falsely believe he/she is loved by another, because no cause for the love has been given. We could imagine that by helping a person "may inadvertently take away" from others more than he/she could ever give them, diminishing their self-esteem, their sense of worth.[27] The objectification of the desire to fix an issue passes by the awareness of being used in the service of something greater than a simple desire of overcoming an obstacle. The objectification of the desire to help into a caring for others implies serving the dimension of the wholeness of life.

Of course, one could imagine loving someone in return without a reflective attitude on the causes of love, as consequence of the fact that human body can move and dispose a great number of external bodies in a multitude of ways (as outlined in E2Post.6, E2P16). But to ground mutual recognition or gratefulness, human beings are looking for good reasons, or a subjective-objective constitutional ground, not only for psychologically agreeable sentiments. One could answer love by loving on the basis of a reflex as the child, but in order to answer gratitude we need an additional causal condition that needs clarification:

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[27]Rachel Naomi Remen, *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, New York: Riverhead Books, 1996. <http://www.rachelremen.com/

[15] P41: If someone imagines that someone loves him, and does not believe he has given any cause for this, he will love [that person] in return. [20] Dem.: This Proposition is demonstrated in the same way as the preceding one. See also its scholium. Schol.: But if he believes that he has given just cause for this Love, he will exult at being esteemed (by P30 and P30S). This, indeed, [25] happens rather frequently (by P25) and is the opposite of what we said happens when someone imagines that someone hates him (see P40S). Next, this reciprocal Love, and consequent (by P39) striving to benefit one who loves us, and strives (by the same P39) to benefit us, is called Thankfulness, [30] or Gratitude (E3P41).

Ethical resistance against unjustified gratitude is one thing: we already gave some examples of conflicting affects occurring in this situation. But could we really think ourselves as free from desires if the goal of removing desire is itself a desire among many appetites which need to be concretely satisfied? We have desires of fulfilment and blessedness, understood as essential components of leaving a good life, just to name some important desires. We can easily think about a point in our existence that lacks a complete development and that generates a degree of suffering and frustration, regarding these important goals, and therefore needing a religious or *philosophical consolation/ purification* of the spirit with Spinoza.

Competency is therefore part of what grounds sustainability: that is a reflection on what is subject of change in the world and the proposed idea of a temporality that could be seen as not transient, not subject of becoming other than what he/she is. In Spinoza's vocabulary mode (*Modus, wijz*) is the unsustainable property of things, as opposed to *attributum*, which designates essential, enduring properties of things. Modus is usually not used in the trivial sense of way or manner.

Spinoza introduces a principle of identity in a Godly being and says we should love others for the sake of God only, in his earliest work, *Short Treatise*:

For whenever we do not love that object which alone is worthy of being loved, i.e. (as we have already said), God,

but love those things which through their own kind and nature are corruptible, there follow necessarily from that hate, sadness, etc., according to the changes in the object loved [30] (because the object is subject to many accidents, indeed to destruction itself). Hate: when someone takes the thing he loves away from him. Sadness: when he loses it. Love of Esteem: when he depends on love of himself. Favor and Gratitude: when he does not love his fellow man for the sake of God.[28]

Spinoza shows in the first part of his *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy Demonstrated in the Geometric Manner* how the notion of "*necessary existence*" is contained "*in the concept of God*" (Axiom VI), which is a sovereignly perfect being, existence being only "*possible, in the concept of a limited thing*"[29]. We discover a discrete sign of the heritage of Cartesian dualism in Spinoza's early reflections on ethics in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (1677), where Spinoza is juggling with two different perspectives at the same time: the notion of a naturally perfect being on his own, and the elimination of ideas that are coming from an external source, considered as contrary to this inner perfection. Spinoza understood by the philosophical aim of "a purification of the intellect" this dualistic early of point of view. But logically, in order to be purified, intellect cannot at the same time be both inherently pure and needing purification[30]. This methodological contradiction will be reassessed and resolved in a complete whole in Spinoza's monumental but posthumous *Ethics*.

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[28]Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being, Part. II, Ch. XIV.

[29]A6, Axioms Taken from Descartes, Descartes' Principles of Philosophy Demonstrated in the Geometric Manner, in: *Spinoza, Collected Works*, vol. 1.

[30]The translation of *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* is disputed for being too literal and close to the Latin: *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*, when Purification of the Intellect is closer to the intention of the author, adopting a proposition closer to the Dutch *Handeling van de Verbetering van't Verstant*. This text is the first of the section Earliest Works of *Spinoza, Collected Works*, vol. 1.

3.1 The Monistic Notion of Identity Related Mutual Recognition *vs* the Transformative Model

The Commentary on the *Short Treatise* shows that Spinoza here opposes the view of Descartes, who (De Pass. An. III. 194) considered gratitude "always virtuous as one of the chief bonds of human society."[31] It is only if we start to think more widely and develop the subjective level of embeddedness of the self, after Descartes with Kant and Schopenhauer, in a transcendental and empirical framework (also called later the phenomenal world), that we find transformative models of ethical values. Instead of the rationalistic realism of Spinoza, we can further think of Hegelian and Schopenhauerian terms the transformative process underlining the cultural, communicational and social ethical level of subjectively constructed interactions, adding metaphysical flesh to the formal bones of Spinoza's ethical system.

E. von Hartmann's key work on the phenomenology of the ethical consciousness (*Phänomenologie des sittlichen Bewusstseins*, 1879) shows an elegant understanding of how ethics could be further adapted as transformative, i.e., based on a historical process in development, without needing to go beyond the very notion of metaphysical identity as Spinoza grounded it.[32] As shown by the Berliner philosopher it would not be necessarily to change the monistic description of a hierarchy of values (called axiology), but only to think more in detail the characteristics of the self-sustaining nature of the being, through a dialectical, evolutional, transformative framework. If Spinoza introduces self-fulfilment within determinism, as Bunker shows well, transcendental metaphysic is necessary to introduce an ethics of

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[31]Commentary, 218-19. René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, transl. S. Voss, section 193 "Gratitude," Indianapolis: Hackett, 1649/1989.

[32]E. v. Hartmann, *Phänomenologie des sittlichen Bewusstseins. Prolegomena zu jeder künftigen Ethik*, Berlin: Carl Duncker's Verlag, 1879, 871pp. Cf. first part of our *Solidarité chez Hegel, von Hartmann, Tocqueville et Mill*, 2012, Paris: L'Harmattan, 11-190, where we apply this sort of monistic ethics to the philosophy of criminal law.

compassion, which is also a pluralistic model of motivation opening to alterity, multiplicity and transformative change.[33] Arbib shows finally that Spinoza could be reconciled with the philosophy of alterity Levinas, both having proposed an ethics: "Spinoza as the fulfilment of the essence by the love of the substance, Levinas as the assignment to our neighbour as the first philosophy."[34]

3.2 Enlargement of Spinoza's Realistic Reciprocal Interactions: the Politeness Theory

In order to develop positive reciprocal interaction, as not only affectively grounded on desire but also on a refined psychological typology of what has been called politeness attitudes, we could take into consideration two symmetrical groups of attitudes, the first based on love as positive politeness, and the second on the mixed emotions, where love and hate are both part of the overall *Stimmung* of a mixed reciprocal interaction, in negative politeness. *Positive Politeness* would entail such attitudes as noticing, attending to the other, exaggerate (interest, approval), use in-group markers, avoid disagreement, assert common good, presuppose knowledge of the other, offer, optimism, reciprocal inclusion, assume reciprocity, and cooperation emphasis through gifts. On the contrary, *Negative Politeness* would entail being conventionally indirect, to question, be pessimistic, minimize the face threatening impositions, give deference, apologize, impersonalize the self and the other, nominalize, and refer to on-record as incurring debt of the other.[35] Spinoza's reference to the debt as part of the

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[33]Bunker, *Schopenhauer's Spinozism*, 17, 114.

[34]Dan Arbib, "*Les deux voies de Spinoza: l'interprétation levinassienne de l'Éthique et du Traité théologico-politique*," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 2 (2012), 275 [our translation].

[35]We borrow the typology to Brown, Penelope and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*: Cambridge: University Press, 1987, 61, 101, 129, 210. This list of negative and positive politeness linguistic markers can be found in a very clear transposition of the politeness theory in Edward J. Bridge, "The 'Slave'

negative reciprocal degradation of trust and love echoes such set of attitudes very well.

4. Conclusion

Spinoza could be seen as outdated as some contemporary critical minds might think, because: "a systematic, comprehensive, even consoling view of the world, and of our place in it, has come to seem either too ambitious or just impossible."[36] It is true that the ultimate attempts for systematic great groundings in philosophy are to be found in 17th Century works (as in v. Hartmann's, Husserl's work). We would nevertheless disagree on the idea that because great systems are implausible, that calm and systematic thinking is not increasing our understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live, and therefore are not at the very centre of the aim of education and research.

Knowledge is based on normative optimism that things around us in the world should be transformed to some extent, and human progress is desirable. Spinoza invites us to operate a qualified pessimistic view according to which, life is worth living, even though it involves overcoming many of our passions. Because we recognise egoism and distrust in the world, even among the wisest philosophers, we have therefore strong motives to build trust, and require assistance from the community. What does overcoming of passions mean? There should be first a "vivisection of the affects", a realistic recognition that we are often "driven about in many ways by external causes", in ways contrary to our ethical values. Reason for that is that we cannot acquire absolute mastery over all our passions. Consequently for Spinoza, the most central principle of education and research which should start by identifying the immanent, bodily incorporated, socially constructed and environmentally contextualized conditions of what Spinoza calls

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Is the 'Master': Jacob's Servile Language to Esau in Genesis 33.1-17," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 38.3(2014), 268-9.

[36]Mason, R, "Why Spinoza?" *Philosophy Now*, Feb/Mar 2017, Issue 118 <https://philosophynow.org/issues/35/Why_Spinoza> (1 March 2018).

"bondage" or the dependency on passions is to enter in social contract, in order to enjoy the benefits of civil society. The claim of this paper was not to present Spinoza's social contract solution, but simply to underline the coherence and internal value of an ethics built on self-esteem, where positive reciprocity or gratitude plays a key role. This role is comparable to ethics education which always impacts larger concept of sharing of benefits and costs of social collaboration, if an educator has succeeded to pass over a model of good life, it is likely that future generations will remember the good example. Spinoza's ethics is a philosophical ethical system which places the trustworthiness of ethics education in the centre of civil life, by focusing not only on what *a philosophy* can give to education but to what *philosophy* is aiming for, and the hope to transform human being through philosophical models. Mutual recognition, gratitude, positive reciprocity are as competence and generosity not only the ethical virtues which allow to share esteem in an inclusive way at school, in a way that nobody is left behind, competence and gratitude are the very condition of any other ethical social values based on reciprocity. Cooperative services and responsibilities in education, as in many other sectors of human activities, are grounded on human beings' capacity to share esteem, which is only understandable on a holistic global level with Spinoza, in a world where global standards are criticised on the ground of localism and petty politics. Spinoza uses the metaphor of God and nature to express a global dimension of ethics. The importance a *globally active nature* of the highest ethical values for the human being is defined as "*natura naturans*", as the presence of a divine model in life. The beauty of Spinoza's divine presence is related to the self-sustaining and immanentist view of the relation of the mind and body, where there is always a door open for a fruitful dialogue between life as a whole and the Englobing Whole. The symbolic entry door for community is not a swinging door model, or an invitation for isolated contemplation of God, but common values lived in positive reciprocity, in search for reciprocal understanding, a precondition for any meaningful notion of social contract.

"WHEN IN THE 'BROTHER' THE STRANGER IS ACKNOWLEDGED"
From Identity to Alterity and Dialogue, According to Emmanuel Levinas

Roger Burggraeve♦

Abstract: A crucial question in a pluralist society is how justice can be done to alterity without endangering thereby one's identity. Levinas' dialogical phenomenology of the same and the other, and of responsibility, sets us on the track of 'fraternity' as human condition. As ethical condition of 'solidarity' this fraternity transcends sex and gender, even if the concept is originally rooted in biology. Inspired by Levinas, it is explained how fraternity attains its full sense when, in the brother, the stranger is acknowledged (and not the opposite: 'when in the stranger the brother is recognized'). This 'ethical fraternity' makes it possible to realize equality in society, and to promote a respectful and authentic inter-religious, or rather 'interconvictional' dialogue. Such an open dialogue appeals to an asymmetric and reciprocal mastership and critical learning from each other.

Keywords: Alterity, Brother, Fraternity, Identity, Interconvictional Dialogue, Mastership, Responsibility.

1. Introduction

In societies wherein diversity increases quantitatively and qualitatively, the experience of alterity becomes a huge

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challenge. A crucial question in society is how one can do justice to alterity without thereby endangering one's own identity. This requires a reflection on identity and alterity and their mutual relationship. In this reflection, the dialogical thought of Emmanuel Levinas (1905-1995)[1] will be our guide.

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[1]For the references to the works of Levinas, the following abbreviations of the original French edition, along with the cited page(s), are used throughout this essay. The cited page(s) from the available English translations is (are) indicated after the forward slash (/): AE: *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, La Haye: Nijhoff, 1974. [English translation (ET): *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. A. Lingis, The Hague/Boston/London: Nijhoff (Kluwer), 1981]; AS: *Autrement que savoir* (Interventions dans les Discussions & Débat général), Paris: Osiris, 1988; AT: *Altérité et transcendance*, Montpellier, Fata Morgana, 1995. [ET: *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans., M. B. Smith, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.]; DL: *Difficile Liberté. Essais sur le Judaïsme*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1976 (2nd ed.). [ET: *Difficult Freedom. Essays on Judaism*, trans., S. Hand, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990.]; DVI: *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, Paris: Vrin, 1982. [ET: *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans., Bergo, Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press, 1998.]; EI: *Éthique et Infini. Dialogues avec Philippe Nemo*, Paris: Fayard & France Culture, 1982. [ET: *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans., R. A. Cohen, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985.]; EN: *Entre nous: Essais sur le penser-a-l'autre*, Paris: Grasset, 1991. [ET: *Entre nous. Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans., M. B. Smith and B. Harshav, London/New York: Continuum, 2006.]; HAH: *Humanisme de l'autre homme*, Montpellier, Fata Morgana, 1972. [ET: *Humanism of the Other*, trans., N. Poller, Urbana & Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2003.]; HS: *Hors sujet*, Montpellier, Fata Morgana, 1987. [ET: *Outside the Subject*, trans., M. B. Smith, London: The Athlone Press, 1993.]; EE: *De l'existence à l'existant*, Paris: Vrin, 1978 (2nd ed.). [ET: *Existence and Existents*, trans., by A. Lingis, The Hague/Boston: Nijhoff, 1978.]; IRB: *Is It Righteous to Be. Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas,* ed., J. Robbins and trans., J. Robbins, M. Coelen, with T. Loebel, Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press, 2001; DMT: *Dieu, la mort et le temps* (Établissement du texte, notes et postface de J. Rolland), Paris: Grasset, 1993. [ET: *God, Death, and Time*, trans., B. Bergo, Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press, 2000.]; NP: *Noms propres* (Essais), Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1976. [ET: *Proper

His phenomenology of the same and the other, of which the self and the other are eminent expressions, sets him on the track of fraternity as a human condition. The realisation of this fraternity acquires different forms depending on whether identity or alterity comes to take a central position. Starting from fraternity where the other is approached and 'recognised' as 'alter ego', we will follow Levinas in his attempt at a surpassing towards an authentic fraternity where the other is given full acknowledgement as other. At the same time, it will become clear how this acknowledgement reaches farther than tolerance and implies, as justice, an exceptional form of mastership that, in turn, makes true, candid dialogue possible. Along the way, a few implications for 'inter-religious' or rather 'interconvictional' dialogue'[2] will be pointed out.

Names, Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press, 1996.]; NLT: *Nouvelles lectures talmudiques*, Paris: Minuit, 1996. [ET: *New Talmudic Readings*, trans., R. A. Cohen, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1999.]; NTR: *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans., A. Aronowicz, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1990; PM: "The Paradox of Morality" (interview with T. Wright, P. Hughes, A. Ainly), trans., A. Benjamin & T. Wright, in: R. Bernasconi and D. Woos eds., *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*, London: Routledge, 1988, 168-180; QLT: *Quatre Lectures talmudiques*, Paris: Minuit, 1968. [ET: "Four Talmudic Readings," NTR, 1-88.]; SaS: *Du sacré au saint: Cinq nouvelles lectures talmudiques*, Paris: Minuit, 1977. [ET: "From the Sacred to the Holy. Five New Talmudic Readings," NTR, 89-197.]; TA: *Le temps et l'autre*, Montpellier, Fata Morgana, 1979 (2nd ed.). [ET: *Time and the Other*, trans., R. A. Cohen, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987.]; TI: T*otalité et Infini: Essai sur l'extériorité*, La Haye, Nijhoff, 1961. [ET: *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans., A. Lingis, The Hague/Boston/London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979.]; VA: "La vocation de l'autre" (interview by Emmanuel Hirsch), in: E. HIRSCH, *Racismes: L'autre et son visage*, Paris: Cerf, 1988, 89-102. [ET: "The Vocation of the Other," trans., J. Robbins, in IRB, 105-113.].

    [2]We opt for the term 'interconvictional' because it can be understood inclusively, namely both for 'inter-religious dialogue' between organised religions as well as for the dialogue between

2. 'Fraternity'[3] as Human Condition

Modern, enlightened thought – and in its wake, not only modern but also late- and so-called postmodern Western culture – has succeeded rather well (although much work still remains to be done!) to give shape to the first two elements of the triptych of the French Revolution: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* – Freedom, Equality, Fraternity. Striving for autonomy and emancipation are not only core concepts but also value labels that pervade contemporary enlightened humanism strongly. However, they run the risk of lapsing into one-sidedness if they are not intimately linked with the idea of 'fraternity'. Hence our proposal, out of Levinas, to re-arrange the triptych from now on to: "fraternity, equality, freedom", with the understanding that fraternity does not come at the cost of equality and freedom but rather inspires and orientates them (HS 187/125).

In this in general human 'fraternity' that transcends sex and gender, Levinas sees a form of responsibility of people for each other whereby the starting-point does not lie in the 'I' but in the face of the other that arouses me and calls me to responsibility. The starting-point for this responsibility is not found in the 'I'-myself but in the other, or rather in the epiphany of the other (for it is not the other that takes the initiative for that responsibility, but it is through its 'being' and 'appearing' – epiphany – itself that I am made responsible). Think for

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ideologies, worldviews and philosophical convictions that can also be non-religious. Take for instance 'secular-humanist' forms of spirituality and the creation of meaning.

[3]Since Levinas himself uses explicitly and consistently the term '*fraterinité*' (fraternity) to present his view on human relationships, we shall not replace his language-use with a 'gender-neutral' formulation (although Levinas also makes use of gender-neutral words). After all, the surpassing of the 'gender-specific' meaning of 'fraternity' – as will be made apparent throughout this essay – forms an essential part of his view on the human condition. To make clear that throughout our essay we understand fraternity, and likewise brother in a gender-transcending manner, we place both words between quotation marks: 'fraternity' – 'brother'.

instance of the responsibility of begetters for the child they beget out of their active, free choice and how they at the same time become responsible for the child they receive as 'other'. By means of its 'appearing' (epiphany) the other directs itself to me as an appeal for responsibility. This heteronomous responsibility begins with the prohibition 'do not kill' the other (walk on by indifferently, abandon, exclude, deny, hate, tyrannise, exterminate … – violence knows innumerably many forms). It unfolds itself in the commandment to acknowledge and promote the other, and thus promote its well-being: the work of goodness in its many forms (TI 172/198, 200/225, 281/304).

This responsibility-by-and-for-the-other reveals itself as a paradoxical proximity, in the sense that through the appeal of its face, the other comes tangibly near me, *and* at the same time remains infinitely separate from me. The difference between me and the other – expressed in the irreducible otherness of the other – is, ethically speaking, the appeal to the highest 'non-indifference': proximity without absorption nor fusion. The ethical proximity is the most original form of approach and contact whereby the other becomes a 'you' – or rather a 'Thou' – *and* the 'I' becomes a chosen 'I', which can be expressed as '*me voici*' – 'Here I am': reciprocity that does not eliminate the asymmetry (AE 104/82).

The ethical proximity of the one-for-the-other reveals our human condition as 'fraternity' or "the original fact of fraternity" (TI 189/215), namely a 'fraternity' that precedes our freedom. It is about a bondedness that precedes every active choice to bond oneself with the other. We are already bonded with each other, even before we can bind ourselves with each other. We are (passively) bonded in destiny even before we can (actively) enter into the destiny of the other. When Cain, according to the well-known 'origins narrative' in the Bible, poses the question after the murder of his brother "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4,9), we must understand this literally as: we are already bonded with each other, so much so that we owe it to each other – actively and creatively – to bind

ourselves to the other. That is our 'createdness' ('*créaturalité*' or '*créature*' as Levinas likewise says) (AE 117/192, 140/195). We are not first neutral beings, who then turn to each other on the basis of a free choice. We are, from the very beginning, assigned to each other 'face-to-face'. And on the basis of this bondedness that precedes our commitment (AE 174/136), we are called to choose freely for each other. In spite of myself, the well-being of the other concerns me: "I am bound to the other, before any liaison contracted" (AE 109/87).

And immediately Levinas qualifies this ethical 'fraternity' as "a relation of kinship, outside all biology" (AE 109/87). 'Fraternity' as the heteronomous condition of existence surpasses, in other words, every sex- and gender-specific particularity of 'brothers and sisters who are born from the same parents'.[4] Despite this surpassing, Levinas remains,

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[4]This surpassing of sex- and gender-difference does not mean that Levinas would not pay any attention to this difference. On the contrary, from the beginning, namely in 'Le temps et l'autre – Time and the Other' (1947), up to 'Totalité et Infini – Totality and Infinity' (1961) and 'Difficile Liberté – Difficult Freedom' (1962), he pays attention explicitly and extensively to sexual difference and its meaning (and his views on 'woman' has provoked much controversy and critique). But at the same time, from the beginning of his independent reflection (beyond Husserl, his teacher in phenomenology), there appears a sex- and gender-transcending interpretation of 'maleness' and 'femaleness', that both qualify every human being (TA 34/54; EI /68/66). And as will be made apparent further, he developed in his second major work '*Autrement qu'être* – Otherwise than Being' (1974) the sex- and gender-transcending significance of the human condition as 'motherhood' with which he qualifies 'brotherhood' as a modality of human-being. This shows how the concept of 'fraternity' should not be isolated from other concepts like bondedness, solidarity…, in the sense that all these concepts clarify each other in an interactive cluster. Last but not least, he developed in his Talmud commentary 'Et Dieu créa la femme - And God created woman' (1972) the idea that the 'human' surpasses sexual difference (and its meanings) by preceding it. It is only within the context of the human that the division into masculine and feminine

besides the sex- and gender-neutral terms 'bondedness' and 'solidarity', using the term 'fraternity' whereby one inadvertently also begins to think of its biological meaning. Levinas does so intentionally, for between human and biological 'fraternity' he discovers – in spite of their radical difference – an undeniable analogy, in the sense that the biological announces the ethical 'fraternity' and 'prefigures' it. Just as brothers and sisters do not choose each other, but despite themselves – through birth – are embroiled in a common destiny, thus are people also embroiled in an ethical destiny: interconnectedness in spite of themselves, without preceding agreements. In other words, biology is less contingent and accidental than it seems at first sight. It delivers a prototype of our human relationships, even though these relationships also reach further than and free themselves from biology (TI 256-257/279).

Hence Levinas has no difficulties qualifying human 'fraternity' also as 'motherhood' and 'pregnancy', in the sense

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takes place (SaS 126/164, 132/167, 133/168). The human governs sex and gender (SaS 135/169), which means that maleness and femaleness are secondary with regard to human-being: "Man and women, when authentically human, work together as responsible beings. The sexual [and gender] are only the accessory of the human" (SaS 131/170). "Fundamental are the tasks that human beings accomplish as human beings and that [man and] women accomplish as human beings. They have other things to do besides cooing, and, moreover, something else to do and more, than to limit themselves to the relations that are established because of the differences in sex [and gender]. Sexual liberation, by itself, would not be a revolution adequate to the human species" (SaS 135/169). In other words, relationships based on sexual and gender differences are subordinated to – and have to be inspired ethically by – the interhuman relation of responsibility-by-and-for-the-other – irreducible to the drives and the complexes of the libido – to which woman rises as well as man (SaS 148/177). The transcendence of the human with regard to sex and gender likewise justifies the use of gender-neutral terms, as Levinas himself does when he qualifies 'human fraternity' as responsibility, alliance-before-contract, proximity, solidarity, etc.

that – beyond all sex-related meanings – these metaphors express how our inter-human bondedness takes place as an 'ethical motherhood': "gestation of the other in the same" ('*gestation de l'autre dans le même*') (AE 95/75). Responsibility for the other as ethical pregnancy, not as a wish and free choice, but as a calling – as an already being called – preceding all conscious and free self-determination. Levinas does not see this as a kind of spiritual metaphor but as the indication of the real and necessary incarnation of the ethical subject. The soul, as 'ensoulment of the same by the other', is only possible as embodied animation. That we in our deepest being, deeper than our consciousness, are marked by the 'being for the other', is just as radically and pre-originally inscribed in our bodies. In this regard, Levinas can state that our body is our soul: "The psyche is the maternal body" ('*psychsime comme un corps maternel*') (AE 85/67). I am in and through my exposed and vulnerable body already connected with the other, even before I can link and identify myself with my body as 'my' body (AE 96/76). Being an ensouled body here means "having the other in one's skin" ('*avoir-l'autre-dans-sa-peau*') (AE 146/115): we are able to be 'occupied' with the other because the other already 'occupies' or 'sits inside' us, in the sense that the directedness towards the other marks and ensouls our bodiliness and precisely in so doing makes it 'sensible' for the other. And this sensibility is not only corporeal but also 'passive': the bearing of the other is a bearing even of the passion and suffering of the other: "the bearing par excellence" ('*le porter par excellence*') (AE 95/75, 132/104), 'uterinity' of the human subject as "trembling of the womb" (*le frémissement des entrailles utérines*) (SaS 158/183) or "moaning of the entrails" (*gémissement des entrailles*) (HAH 94/64): "perhaps maternity is sensibility itself, of which so much ill is said among the Nietzscheans" (SaS 158/183). Ethical brotherhood as ethical pregnancy and maternity, condition of every human being, male or female, prior to freedom (AE 148-149/116).

This condition of existence of 'fraternity prior to freedom', however, does not exclude but rather includes freedom (AE

211/166). It does make freedom into an inspired freedom, i.e. a freedom that is ensouled by the 'for-the-other' of responsibility. It does not concern a formal freedom, namely the free will (*'liberum arbitrium'*) that can choose between two equally neutral possibilities, but rather an 'orientated' freedom that is raised above itself towards the other than itself. But this pre-conscious and pre-consensual 'orientation' of freedom is not a doom, coercion or unavoidable fatality. Human 'fraternity' is "prior to the free and the non-free" (AE 14/12). The passive 'ensoulment' by and for the other is not about an 'irresistible inclination' (AE 157/197) or a kind of 'natural instinct' (AE 175/138), and still less a 'divine predestination' to which I would – as a 'merciless mercy' – be inexorably surrendered (AE 160/124). Rather, it concerns a 'being-appealed-to' or an 'appealability' to which I can respond positively or negatively. My freedom thus no longer has the first word, but it neither is eliminated. On the contrary, it is summoned in order to effectively concur with and substantiate the fraternity within which I in spite of myself am 'situated'. Freedom is called to a response, and is likewise the possibility to respond. I must say yes, but I can say no. The covenant of fraternity, in which I find myself, is no ontological or natural 'necessity', just as an object that is released must necessarily fall, surrendered as it is to the laws of gravity. It concerns an appeal, a task and a mission, which stands in sharp contrast to all (external or internal) coercion and inevitability. Fraternity presents itself as an 'authority' that cannot impose anything, but can only appeal and oblige. The Good of the 'by-and-for-the-other' in which I am 'created' is a 'disarming authority' that can only make a claim on me by appealing to my free, good will (AS 69). With this, it is useful to distinguish between two forms of 'must', namely an 'incontrovertible' and an 'irresistible' must (AE 154/120). The duty to take upon oneself the fate of the other – a duty that is directed toward me immediately and incontrovertibly from the face – can indeed be very much resisted. We can simply ignore the appeal that proceeds from the other: much is not even necessary, a slight distraction

would suffice… After all, an irresistible 'must' would not be an ethical 'must' but a not-being-able-to-do-otherwise. We can choose to do or not to do that which we must, and that is precisely our ethical freedom – the freedom of response. Confronted with the incontrovertible appeal of the vulnerable other, we can pretend that we have not noticed that appeal. The appeal can be pushed away or muffled away amidst other summons and obligations. It can be overrun by the drive for self-preservation, which can manifest itself imposingly or subtly, or it can hide itself in boredom, absent-mindedness or diversion, fatigue or laziness (as anticipated fatigue). That, however, does not change anything of the incontrovertible character of the appeal that ensues from the face. We can escape from it by turning away our gaze or by pretending not to have noticed the appeal of its epiphany, but this 'pretending' already demonstrates that we have 'heard' the appeal, namely that an urgent 'must' has ensued from the vulnerable other, my brother. Heteronomy is, in other words, the basis for autonomy, which the so-called modern, 'revolutionary' concept of freedom has turned entirely inside out. Thanks to the heteronomy of ethical 'fraternity' wherein we in spite of ourselves are situated, we can autonomously acknowledge or reject, fulfil or neglect, this 'fraternity'. On the basis of a fundamental ethical option, whereby we establish good or evil, we confirm 'fraternity' as our 'human being' or rather as our 'humanity' itself (TI 189/204; AE 10/8, 17/14).

In other words, negotiation, agreement and contract do not fall outside the responsibility of people for each other. It is not because the 'dialogical' precedes the 'dialogue' that the concrete conversation would be unimportant (DVI 224/146). On the contrary, the concrete dialogue is, as still will be made apparent below, called to give expression to the original, or rather pre-original condition of 'fraternity' wherein we are 'placed' and 'anchored'. It is precisely the goal of our essay to investigate how and which conversation can give shape in an authentic manner to 'fraternity' as an expression of the humanum, that implies in the spirit of the French Revolution the

'equality' or rather the 'common dignity' of all people. Our human condition of 'fraternity' shows, in other words, from the beginning a universal, inclusive dimension: every human person is responsible for every other human person. The responsibility of the one-for-the-other refers to a general, shared humanity as the basis of our irreducible equality, for which we all and together are actively and creatively responsible (TI 189/214).

3. When in the Stranger I Recognize My 'Brother'

The experience and the realisation of this universal 'fraternity' is thus not self-explanatory, and even less a romantic dream that falls like a gift from the sky. The human person after all is an 'ambiguous' being in the literal sense of the word. As we stated above, the human person is not determined to be for-the-other ('otherwise than being'). He can also look the other way. The possibility of this choice is neither neutral nor formal, but is marked by the 'being' of the human person, just as it is observed by us at first sight, namely his spontaneous egocentrism of the 'attempt at being' (*conatus essendi*) (Spinoza) (NP 104/71). In de 'struggle for life' (Darwin) or the '*élan vital*' (vital impulse) of the human person (Bergson) (EE 29/23; TI 253/276), something strange is revealed: there is something more important than 'my own life', namely the life of the other (PM 172), as was made clear above in our phenomenology of 'fraternity'. This does not preclude that in or in spite of that 'being-for-the-other', the 'being for oneself' remains operative, driven as every human person is to cope with the problems that are caused by one's own finitude and fragility (AE 4/4; AS 63-64).

This primary 'dynamism of being' in the human person implies the inclination to organise 'fraternity' on the basis of self-interest, or rather of mutual self-interest, i.e., of reciprocally well-understood egoism. In other words, 'fraternity' realises itself in a first movement through all sorts of 'fraternities' or 'brotherhoods' that come about amongst like-minded individuals, meaning to say amongst people who recognise

themselves in the other on the basis of all kinds of 'affinities', similar characteristics, interests or concerns, activities, convictions and ideas. Such fraternities rest on the reciprocity of sympathy, according to Levinas (TA 86/91). We start with this phenomenology, in order to reflect further on 'identitary fraternity'.

In our spontaneous longing, we strive for reciprocity on the basis of recognition. Thanks to the other, I would like to arrive home in myself: the one is for the other what the other is for the one. Thanks to sympathy, the other is known as another 'myself', i.e., as an 'alter ego' (TA 75/83). I find myself again in the other, in her or his characteristics, and I am thereby attracted to the other. It is the dream of a common existence which we all share commonly and mutually. Sympathy appears here as the relationship of direct exchange because we are accessible to each other and understand each other, at times with but half a word or a glance. In and through its sympathy, the other puts oneself in my place, sees and treats me as 'similar' (*semblable*) – which is not the same as 'equal'. Thanks to our mutual 'resemblances' (DMT 51/40) we become one with each other, we form a 'brotherhood' of mutual 'intropathy' and understanding (HS 169/113). Today, this reciprocity is often called 'empathy', based on the ability to allow oneself to live 'within' the other, with the expectation that the other also allows oneself to live 'within' our existence and our experiences.

This 'brotherly' reciprocity is not only aimed for in inter-personal relations but also in the formation of all kinds of groups and communities. Humans are not solitary but social beings (Aristotle). Humans, after all, do not fall out of the sky but are born. By means of their ancestry, people belong to a group, with its own characteristics and customs. The first environment where people belong to is the family. Via the family, one belongs to other groups, namely those of ethnicity and nationality (and in this word lies the concept '*nasci*' – to be born). The factual circumstances of the birth determine to a large part to which group we belong. Via ethnicity or

nationality we are likewise embedded, among others, in a network of relationships with quite specific economic, political, cultural and historical characteristics. This uniqueness, which distinguishes one group of people from other groups, is usually experienced as 'natural', on the basis of the pre-given objective character and on the basis of the fact that that objective identity usually also has a well-established past.

Upon closer inspection, however, it turns out that that uniqueness is always the result of construction and development. But however this history is at work, the uniqueness is always experienced as participating in characteristics, features, customs and traditions that – often separately, but certainly in their specific coherence as well – differ from other particularities with their own characteristics, value patterns and behaviours. It is precisely in and through this belonging to groups and communities that people develop, at the same time, their social identity. It would seem that this social identity is external in nature, but what is unique to human persons is that they identify themselves with them so much so that they transform these communitarian forms of identity and experience them as internal forms of identity: an experience of reciprocity that offers the satisfaction of security: we arrive at home with each other.

The differences between groups of people, in other words, can be traced back to attributes, features and characteristics whereby they can be assigned a specific particularity: family, people, race, gender, culture … Mostly, these specific characteristics are united and 'arranged' into a cluster, with its own internal – whether or not historically or artificially construed – cohesion, whereby people can be distinguished from each other not only individually but also socially. We can call this particularity the 'natural' identity of groups, and in this regard also label it as valuable and worthwhile: "It is not that the tribal is proscribed; it comprises many virtues" (VA 96/109). The cognateness, whatever type it may be, is in no way evil and should thus not be suppressed or forbidden. It ushers in numerous possibilities and expresses itself moreover in

many praiseworthy qualities and virtues, like internal, warm solidarity within this 'shared destiny'. Various 'fraternities' are an eminent expression of this.

Last but not least, the ideological communities (religions and others) to which one belongs usually by birth – unless if by conversion – likewise give shape to this social identity. They express a unique 'internal world' with its own language-use, symbols, rituals, narratives and convictions. It is no coincidence that they come to the fore in this context of 'brotherhood' and 'fraternities', wherein the so-called 'symbolic order' of signs and rituals, 'sacred' places with their particular arrangement, language and forms of expression (like ways of greeting, garments, headwear, etc.), calendars and feasts, all play a 'foundational' and 'inspirational' role. Furthermore, the community life of such identitary 'fraternities' is objectified in forms of organisation and structures, statutes and regulations (including the criteria of surveillance and sanctioning). That is the tangible, objective incarnation of the ideological fraternity – and of every identitary fraternity – as a social dynamism.

Reversing a paradoxical statement of Levinas (cf. infra), we can summarise these considerations on the 'identitary fraternity' as follows: "When I recognize my 'brother' in the stranger". And Levinas does not hesitate linking this idea with the way in which Israel has evolved from being nomads to being the 'chosen people'. As the 'chosen people' Israel experiences its 'being set apart' from other peoples as a source of value and dignity, upon which its individuality precisely rests. Even when this election may not lead to the haughty pretence of being 'better' than others, it still gives a special significance to the existence of the people of Israel, out of which ensues an ineradicable feeling of self-worth. Levinas points out expressly how the Bible is also the book of a people (VA 97/109) and how the children of Israel, according to that Biblical tradition, are presented as the descendants of the patriarchs. They receive the vocation and mission to substantiate being the chosen people by keeping the covenant, by maintaining and studying the Mitzvoth of the Torah (cf. the

Talmud as a 'unique' form of Jewish thought). Hence Levinas affirms: "The children of Israel are introduced as the descendants of the patriarchs. Consequently, the virtues of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the glory of their relations to other men, are presented as very elevated" (VA 96/109). At the end of this essay, it will become clear how this is not an end-point, in the sense that for Israel (and for the Bible) a 'beyond-the-tribal' is necessary, just as this likewise applies to all 'fraternities'.

4. When in My 'Brother' I Acknowledge the Stranger

However valuable it may be, the 'tribal' fraternity can never be an endpoint. It is not the sufficient precondition for humanity in the full sense of the word. Upon closer inspection, it remains after all based on 'recognition' (EN 40/24). This means that the 'intropathy' of sympathy and empathy, beyond deductive knowledge, is positive (EI 58-59/58), but at the same time it does not go far enough. Even though as 'vibration' it is an 'experience-beyond-knowing', it remains a form of reciprocity (DVI 63/64), or rather a form of "mutual knowledge" (HS 151/101). One starts with the observation of the other who appears just like I do, in order to be involved with the other as an other-who-is-related-to-me. It is and remains a form of knowledge that makes finding oneself in the other possible. The question consequently is, how can we reach beyond the reductive reciprocity, into the other as other, into a relationship that is more – or better, different, radically different – than observing and empathising knowledge (EN 254/194).

For that purpose, the tribal and the identitary 'fraternity' must be surpassed, a "scandalous exigency" (VA 96/109), but – along the road to humanisation – a necessary exigency! We can concretise this demand by reversing the above-mentioned expression regarding the "recognition of the 'brother' in the strange other", namely into the ethical appeal "to acknowledge, in the 'brother' himself, the stranger: the moment in which fraternity attains its full sense" (VA 96/109).

To make this clear, we base ourselves on the distinction that we, in line with Levinas, can make between 'countenance' and 'face'. This distinction – yes even contradistinction – is important for all too often are both confused with each other. In that confusion, the face is then understood as the face of the other, meaning to say as her or his physiognomy, the facial features, the plastic or graphic form, in short the 'visibility' of the other. It is that which can be brought forth in an image, and thus in extension also the personality and the character, the psycho-social, ethnic, cultural, religious or ideological… characteristics of the other (VA 97/110). On that basis, the other can be catalogued and 'diagnosed', likewise on the basis of its belongingness to groups, communities, or 'fraternities'. What Levinas means, however, with the face of the other is not its countenance or its appearance, but the remarkable given that the other – not only factually, but also principally – never coincides with its appearance, image, photograph, presentation or belongingness to a group. Hence he states that the other is invisible and unknowable: a mystery that never surrenders itself (TI 4/34). That is why, according to Levinas, we cannot actually speak about a 'phenomenology' of the face, since phenomenology describes that which appears. The face is that which in the face of the other escapes from our glance. The other is 'different', irreducible to its appearance, literally a 'stranger', and precisely as such the other reveals itself as face. Naturally, the other is also visible; naturally, the other appears and thus evokes all sorts of impressions, images and representations whereby the other can be described and characterised personally and in terms of its group. Naturally, we can come to know quite a lot about the other on the basis of what the other lets us 'see'. But the other is more than its photograph, or rather he is not only factually more – in the sense that I can discover even more about the other – but it can never be adequately represented and contained in one or the other image. And because it is not 'understandable', it is neither 'graspable'. It is essentially, and not only factually or temporarily, a 'withdrawing' and 'transcending movement'. I

can never capture the other into nor identify it with its plastic form, its historiography or its psychological, sociological, ethnic, cultural or ideological *Gestalt*. The other is never simply the expression or the 'sacrament' of its 'fraternity', i.e., community, social group or ideological 'church'. Its 'epiphany' takes place paradoxically as a withdrawal, literally a 'retreat'. Its epiphany is always a breaking through and a confounding of this epiphany whereby the other always remains 'enigmatic', and precisely because of that it imposes itself as the 'irreducible' and the 'strange', in short as 'the radical other' that is and remains 'infinitely' other. The other is unconquerably 'different' because it escapes once and for all from every attempt at a final representation and diagnosis. In its face, the other is the infinite that 'infinitises' itself (AE 113-116/89-91). The epiphany of the face makes all curiosity ridiculous. Hence the challenge to distrust our own seeing and interpreting, even though we are not directly inclined to do so due to our self-interest (NP 153/102).

It is precisely this infinite, or rather the 'self-infinitising', alterity that obscures and even questions the tribal 'fraternity' and familiarity. Hence the inclination to rid ourselves of the foreignness of the other, by means of reducing the other to our own identity and tribal 'fraternity'. Levinas calls this "reduction of the other to the same" (TI 16/46) the unavoidable temptation of the tribal and even 'brotherly' violence – however contradictory 'brotherly violence' may even sound. Hence that the 'fraternity-beyond-the-tribal' rests on the prohibition against reduction and violence: "Thou shalt not kill" (EI 93/89), with which the awareness is given at the same time that a cross-border, universal 'fraternity' is never easy nor self-evident, and thus never simply falls down from heaven for free – not even as one or the other form of 'divine grace'! It always costs time and effort, commitment and responsibility. It does not rest on the spontaneous inclination to sympathy or empathy, for that reciprocity accords insufficient acknowledgement to the otherness – the foreignness – of the other who stands before me 'face-to-face'. The other penetrates

unasked into my personal and communitarian identity as the stranger, as a foreigner in whom I do not 'find myself'. Perhaps the other – as 'similar' or 'like-minded' – seems familiar to me at first, but slowly but surely this familiarity gives way to a painful feeling of alienation, namely that the other never coincides with that familiarity and similarity. Unavoidably and unrelentingly, the other appears as the one who throws upside down my personal and our tribal ('brotherly') identity. The nearby and at the same time 'foreign brother', who in his familiarity becomes even more strange, introduces a remarkable 'difference' that sows uncertainty and confusion. The foreigner that we thus discover in the 'brother' literally means a 'disruption of order' or 'dis-order' that seems to undermine our tribal 'fraternity'. Hence that our tribal 'fraternity' comes under pressure, in the sense that it is tempted by the tendency to violence, be it in direct and brutal, or in indirect and more subtle or sly forms, at times making use of organisational 'arrangements' and rules and sanctions. On the ideological (religious, convictional…) level, we distinguish on the one hand inclusivism, whereby the truth of the other is reduced to our own truth or whereby our own truth is imprinted onto the other – via all sorts of 'techniques of persuasion.' On the other hand, there is exclusivism that not only excludes and rejects, but also diabolises and persecutes the other as 'foreign'. And this is expressed in all kinds of terror and racism: "In the expression of racism, one experiences human identity uniquely on the basis of its persistence in being, while turning qualitative differences and attributes into a value, as in the apperception of things that one would possess or reject" (VA 98/110-111). The subtlest form of inter-convictional violence is the indifference towards the foreign other, in the sense that one – out of a feeling of superiority or of self-defence – finds the dialogue with the other irrelevant and superfluous.

This means that the surpassing of the tribal 'fraternity' is only feasible by means of the confrontation with the permanent and recurrent possibility of violence towards the foreign other, i.e., mainly the attempt to transform the other into a 'similar' or

'like-minded' 'brother'. Then one can be 'in agreement' amongst each other, beyond all differences which one relativises. This enforces indeed the warmth of immanent solidarity, but at the same time it goes at the cost of the real dialogue with the 'brother' wherein the foreign other reveals oneself.

Hence, the cross-border 'open fraternity' is in need of the ethical 'restraint' (NLT 94-96/123-126). This is a form of scrupulousness, which refers back to the Latin *scrupulus*, 'a pebble in the shoe'. The surpassing of the tribal 'fraternity' into an open 'fraternity' does not begin as a great, spontaneous magnanimity that is directed at the other 'with pleasure'. The dialogue between 'stranger brothers' begins with a form of unease and 'embarrassment' precisely because one is brought to shyness through the epiphany of the strange other. The most original ethical moment of the conversation with a real 'other' does not consist in doing something, namely in confiscating the other's time and being. The ethical encounter with the foreign 'other' begins with withholding the spontaneous inclination of 'sympathy' that seeks 'recognition' in the other in order to avoid all diligence with regard to the other. The ethical *fait primitif* of dialogue is no altruism, neither sympathy nor empathy, but a dynamics of 'shivering' (AE 110/120). This is namely an utmost circumspection and carefulness, apprehensive as we are to do injustice to the other in all our forward-marching self-certainty (AE 86/68). The moment that 'brotherly' dialogue 'founds' and installs itself ethically, i.e., becomes fully humane, consists in 'something from nothing', namely in the 'scruple' that nestles itself in the spontaneous movement of establishing, defending and developing one's own (personal and communitarian) identity, distinct from other identities or 'brotherhoods'. An ethically qualitative dialogue begins with the suspension of all self-evidence with which we approach the other, foreign conversation-partner in 'self-complacency' and self-certainty. An authentic dialogue that encourages connection does not begin with a self-aggrandising enthusiasm but with a remarkable form of 'hesitation', whereby

one controls and restrains oneself in the fear that in the dialogue one would do violence to the other.

We can likewise qualify this as 'tolerance', a first step in the relationship with the foreign other. The literal meaning of *'tolerare'* is to put up with, to endure, to 'accept' the alterity of the other. This is rather a negative attitude that does not coincide with the positive attitude of respect, justice, confirmation and acknowledgment, of which more will be discussed below. The choice for tolerance towards the other implies that one refrains from 'killing' the other, i.e. manipulating or abusing, or reducing the other in a subtle or brutal manner to oneself. Tolerance as reluctance (DL 225/172). This is not yet dialogue but rather the absolute, minimum condition for dialogue (we shall take this up again later).

4. Mutual and Asymmetric Mastership

The initially negative 'restraint' and tolerance, upon closer inspection, create space for an utterly positive approach to the other, in the sense that it makes possible the acknowledgment of and the respect for the other as a foreign other. In this regard, the open, cross-border 'fraternity' is based on the fundamental attitude of justice, namely on doing justice to the irreducible otherness of the other. Respect "is a relationship between freedoms who neither limit nor deny one another, but reciprocally affirm one another. Respect is adequate here, provided we emphasize that the reciprocity of respect is not an indifferent relationship, such as a serene contemplation, and that it is not the result, but the condition of ethics. It is language, that is, responsibility of the one for the other" (EN 48/30). This reciprocity, however, should not be understood wrongly, in the sense that it is not a condition for respect. The acknowledgment by the other should not be a condition for my acknowledgment of the other. If such were the case, acknowledgment would get bogged down into utilitarianism. It then remains an expression of my self-interest: *'do ut des'* (AT 110/199). "All the shackening of the world filters through 'sympathetic' faces as soon as the [asymmetric] relation of

mutual responsibility is suspended" (EN 49/31). In other words, respect is a way that people do justice to each other not as people who are the same but as people of equal dignity, regardless of what the other does for me or gives back to me (NP 46-47/32-33).

The way to do justice fully to the strange otherness of the other is by accepting the mastership of the other, or better still by acknowledging and confirming it (TI 73-75/100-101), beyond the pretension of our own mastership toward the other that perhaps again runs the risk of falling in the trap of the reduction of the other to our own 'conviction and view'. With this, we arrive at what we can call, inspired by Levinas, the reversal of the 'natural', egocentric mastership. We assume spontaneously that we ourselves can teach everything to the other, while ethical mastership turns the roles around by stating radically that the other is my master, whereby the natural asymmetry of I-to-the-other based on self-interest is reversed. The epiphany of the face reveals itself as instruction, as teaching. By means of speaking to me, the other awakes in me something new. I do not discover something that has already beforehand been slumbering within me, but I am – despite myself – confronted with the heteronomous fact of the otherness of the other that speaks to me by looking at me or that addresses me without words, stutteringly or explicitly. I cannot predict nor foresee the speaking – the revelation – of the other; I do not have the other 'at hand' and it is precisely its otherness that 'makes me wise'. In the conversation that begins with the epiphany of the other, I am no longer the first and original, the alpha and omega of meaning, the '*archè*' or 'principle' to which all meaning and value return. I am no longer the designer, but the one addressed, the one receiving, the one listening, or rather the one who is awakened and called to listen, and who thus needs to learn everything still. Only by withdrawing myself from my self-complacent 'knowing' do I create space in order to learn truly from the other. To paraphrase Levinas, it sounds as follows: 'The face breaks through its plastic form [– its physiognomy, psychology,

sociology, ethnicity, fraternity, culture, religion …, in short its countenance or appearance] – and speaks to me. The other 'expresses itself' by means of addressing me. And thus is the face infinitely more than all that I can see and describe of it. The face 'instructs me' and calls me to dedication and attention. The word – the glance or the wordless word – of the other is *magisterial*: it instructs me about the other without my finding it within myself. Thus the other is the source of revelation. Listening precedes knowing *and* speaking. I am a response-being, literally 'response-able', answerable' (cf. TI 22/51, 41/69, 45-46/73). Here, the idea of Plato that the soul is in conversation with itself, is radically transcended. In contrast with what Plato calls "the dialogue of immanence" (DVI 214/139) Levinas talks of "the dialogue of transcendence" (DVI 225/147). The learning that the face-to-face realises is not a solipsistic self-knowledge (*'gnothi seauton'*) but a dialogical learning (DVI 216/140, 221/144). I do not descend into myself in order to find wisdom, but I step outside of myself in order to learn thanks to the other and become 'wise'. This does not mean that I merely accept everything from the other slavishly and meekly. On the contrary, it does mean that I enter into discussion, give comments, think critically or contradict. Only thus do I learn new things, which can likewise bring the other to new insights and standpoints. This speaking and 'counter-speaking' not only expresses the humane, universal 'fraternity' with which we began this essay, but it also develops it into a community event of fellowship that – beyond every 'special-arrangement-between-us' that allows for coalescence – discovers, acknowledges and confirms in the 'brother' the other as other, whereby even I am done justice as the 'strange brother'.

This mastership of the other seems to be a beautiful and tempting idea, but upon closer inspection it is about an unruly idea that is anything but easy to realise. Even in the direct face-to-face, the temptation of rhetoric is never far away. One searches for 'beautiful language' that creates the impression that one encounters the other and 'walks along' with him or

her. Rhetoric as "the art that is supposed to enable us to master language" (HS 203/135), or literally as eloquence or 'beautiful saying' (*bellettrie*) (HS 207/138-139), can pervert unnoticed the dialogue between the strange other and myself. Not every discourse is a relation with exteriority, the otherness of the other. We often approach our conversation partner not as our 'master' and 'teacher', but "as an object or an infant, or a man of the multitude" (TI 40/70). Our discourse is then rhetoric and represents the position of someone who tries to outsmart his neighbour. Rhetoric, which is not at all absent in any conversation, approaches the other not frontally (*face-to-face*) but sideways, via a detour. To be sure, not as an object in the sense that the rhetorical discourse directs itself to the other through all its artful trickery – but indeed trying to obtain the 'yes' of the other in a devious manner. As propaganda, flattery, diplomacy, etc. is a way to spoil the freedom of the other. In this regard, rhetoric is a particular form of violence: "not violence exercised on an inertia (which would not be a violence), but on a freedom, which precisely as freedom, should be incorruptible" (TI 42/70). The deception of rhetoric consists precisely in that one attempts to get the other to one's side by arousing trust, namely the trustworthiness of the partial truth, so that the other is then prepared to take along the beautifully embellished lie in the guise of truth (QLT 138/64). In this way, rhetoric degenerates into a form of deception that hides under the 'fine appearance' of 'convincing truth' and thus promotes a form of 'disguised violence'!

It is precisely this possible and factual, recurrent appearance of misleading rhetoric in the direct *face-à-face* that makes the permanent vigilance of the shivering and restraint sketched above never superfluous. It likewise implies the necessary suspicion towards a cold-blooded dialogue whereby friendliness and diplomacy are used as 'non-violent means'. That is a dialogue that is more concerned about the dialogue in the dialogue. Then it is all about a form of 'circumspect tolerance', which upon closer inspection appears to be a 'too careful tolerance'. One wants to be 'friendly' towards each

other and as a consequence we run the risk that no real dialogue at all takes place, in the sense that we become too indulgent of each other or that we remain stuck in general declarations of goodwill. In such a dialogue without debate there is indeed politeness – a form of 'decent' and nicely packaged tolerance – but no real acknowledgement of each other's irreducible alterity and uniqueness.

Even in interconvictional dialogue, too much tolerance and caution can stand in the way of an authentic encounter on the basis of a discussion with an 'open visor'. The seemingly 'important' and 'polite' dialogue then becomes, upon closer inspection, a cruel and hefty debate. Wars on religion – and other ideological wars – arise not so much because the debates would be too sharp, but because they are lacking. Hence the importance of direct exchange whereby one draws up the courage not only to pose questions but also to question the other, and to allow oneself to be questioned as well by the other, however embarrassing and perhaps even painful that confrontation may be. When one discusses about certain themes, it is thus not sufficient that the participants in the interconvictional dialogue present their own views, but also that the other questions critically those views. For that purpose, it can be useful that the one asks the other how that other understands the view of the former, what questions and resistances does it evoke, which resonances does it uncover, but also where do deeper oppositions lie. By doing so, a dialogical 'back-and-forth' arises that reflects what Levinas unravels in Rabbinic discourse, namely an 'unending commentary' of a commentary on a commentary, that again unleashes new commentary (SaS 154/181). It is an honest and persevered confrontation between convictions, beyond mild forms of tolerance and friendliness, which upon closer inspection betray forms of indifference. "Attention and vigilance: not to sleep until the end of time, perhaps. The presence of persons who do not fade away into words, get lost in technical questions, freeze up into institutions or structures. The presence of persons in the full force of their irreplaceable identity, in the full force of their

inevitable responsibility. To acknowledge and name the insoluble substances and keep them from exploding in violence, guile or politics, to keep watch where conflicts tend to break out, a new religiosity and solidarity – is loving one's neighbour anything other than this? Not the facile, spontaneous *élan*, but the difficult working on oneself: to go toward the other where he is truly other, in the radical contradiction of his alterity, that place from which, for an insufficiently mature soul, hatred flows naturally or is deduced with infallible logic" (AT 101/87-88).

5. Conclusion

Thus we arrive at the humane 'fraternity-beyond-the-tribal' with which we have begun. It introduces the connection with the strange other, without absorbing the other in its own identity, but likewise without locking up the self in its own world: "a surplus of fraternity" (DVI 224/147). This new ethics and spirituality is, according to Levinas, also essential for a correct understanding of Judaism as an 'open identity', meaning to say as an identity that needs transcendence. In Israel's history, the children of Israel are presented as descendants of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This origin and history likewise determine their identity. But according to Levinas, it is a crucial moment in the development of ethical and religious consciousness when the Bible links the awareness of human dignity with the understanding of being a 'child of God', and no longer with the notion of being a 'child of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'. Levinas calls this the "filiality of transcendence", "a superior form of piety, above any tribal link" (VA 96/109). Levinas also evokes how in the texts of Isaiah the Israelites call themselves 'children of God' and how in their liturgy the expression 'our Father' appears time and again. To be sure, the Bible is a book of a people (level of identity) but also a book of a people for whom this 'unity as a people' does not suffice (level of transcendence). It is not enough to only qualify oneself as 'descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob', for the absolutizing interpretation of such a

qualification leads to exclusivism and racism. Therefore, Levinas finds it necessary that the people of Israel receive the Torah: "It does not suffice for this people merely to be descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob: it must be led to Sinai. The departure from Egypt is accomplished at Sinai" (VA 96/109). There, their election evolves into their mission, namely the task to uphold the Law. In other words: there, the particularity of their election becomes the universality of their responsibility, not only for their own people but also for all peoples. Here resounds the promise God made at the very beginning of Israel, namely at the calling and sending of the patriarch Abram: "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12,2-3). And that Abram becomes the "father of the whole humanity" (NLT 84/114) is even linked to his new name Abraham: "No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations" (Gen 17,5). His 'being-for-all-the-others', his 'being "for all the humanity of humankind" reveals "a new humanity: the biblical humanism" (NLT 86/117) of 'universal fraternity' as a gift of 'createdness' and an ethical task (DVI 249-250/165-166).

THE SELF AND THE OTHER IN LEVINAS AND SPINOZA

Don Adams♦

Abstract: Emmanuel Levinas in his ethics elucidates his key concept of the other-directed self by opposing it to the wholly self-interested self, as he interprets it, in the ethics of Baruch Spinoza. However, when we consider the Spinozan self within the context of his own ethical system, we find that it also ultimately is other-directed, but in a manner quite distinct from that of the Levinasian self. The contrasting ethical selves of Levinas and Spinoza provide alternative models of existing ethically in the world, both of which are in insistent opposition to the modern humanist valorization of the autonomous egoistic individual as a valid ontological concept and worthwhile ethical ideal.

Keywords: *Conatus Essendi*, Ego, Holiness, Individual, Other, Self, Substitution, Virtue.

Emmanuel Levinas in his philosophy is noted for his focus upon the relationship of the self to the other, a relationship that he contended is innate in and to the very identity of the individual self. At key points in his elucidation of the other-directed self that is the basis of his ethical system, he contrasted it with what he purported to be the wholly self-interested individualism underlying Baruch Spinoza's ethical system. Levinas's interpretation of the Spinozan individual self is a strategic misreading that allowed him to highlight the profound differences between his conception of the self and that of Spinoza. However, when we consider the Spinozan self within the context of his own ethical system, we find that it also ultimately is other-directed, but in a manner quite distinct from

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that of the Levinasian self. Considered together, the contrasting ethical selves of Levinas and Spinoza provide alternative models of existing ethically in the world, each of which appeals to a particular type of contemporary existential situation and need. Moreover, although the Levinasian concept of the self functions as a strategic critique of the Spinozan self, both are vitally opposed to the modern humanist conception of the intrinsically separate egoistic individual, with its proprietary rights and satisfactions, as a valid ontological model and worthwhile ethical ideal.

Levinas highlighted his fundamental disagreement with the Spinozan concept of the self, as he interpreted it, in his explication of his own ethical system in a late-life interview in which he referred to the key Spinozan concept of *conatus essendi* (the effort to persist in one's being) as being that against which he had developed his entire philosophy:

> In the *conatus essendi*, which is the effort to exist, existence is the supreme law…. A being is something that is attached to being, to its own being. That is Darwin's idea. The being of animals is a struggle for life. A struggle for life without ethics…. However, with the appearance of the human - and this is my entire philosophy - there is something more important than my life, and that is the life of the other.[1]

Levinas contended that being human means that we can choose *not* to choose ourselves first, but to give the other priority over ourselves, which he characterized as "the valorization of holiness"[2] over self-interestedness:

> As opposed to the interestedness of being, to its primordial essence which is *conatus essendi*, a perseverance in the face of everything and everyone, a persistence of being there – the human (love of the other, responsibility for one's fellowman,

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[1]Emmanuel Levinas, "The Paradox of Morality: An Interview with Emmanuel Levinas," trans., Andrew Benjamin and Tamra Wright, in *The Provocation of Levinas*, ed., David Wood and Robert Bernasconi, New York, NY: Routledge, 2014, 168-179, 175, 172.

[2]Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous*, trans., Michael B. Smith, New York, NY: Columbia UP, 2000, 229.

an eventual dying-for-the-other, sacrifice even as far as the mad thought in which dying for the other can concern me well before, and more than, my own death) – the human signifies the beginning of a new rationality beyond being. A rationality of the Good higher than all essence.[3]

There are two key points to be noted in this passage in making the contrast between the Levinasian and Spinozan self. One is the concept of sacrificial dying-for-the-other, which Levinas elsewhere characterizes more generally as "substitution,"[4] and the other is the emphasis placed on the supreme rationality of the transcendent Good beyond being, a concept that Levinas borrowed from Plato. In emphasizing both, Levinas was making an implicit contrast with the Spinozan model of the ethical self, which Levinas took to be both wholly self-interested and implicitly opposed to any notion of transcendence.

In his illuminating introduction to his translation of Levinas's *Otherwise than Being*, Alphonso Lingis elucidated the crucial role that the concept of substitution plays in Levinas's ethical system:

> For Levinas substitution is the ethical itself; responsibility is putting oneself in place of another. Through becoming interchangeable with anyone, I take on the weight and consistency of one that bears the burden of being, of alien being and of the world. I become substantial and a subject, subjected to the world and to the others. And because in this putting myself in the place of another I am imperiously summoned, singled out, through it I accede to singularity.[5]

For Levinas, the self in its singular subjectivity comes into being only by dint of its sacrificial relation to the other, a relation that Levinas considers is implicit in the very nature of language, which is fundamentally and primarily a beseeching and responsive communication with the other, and only secondarily and incidentally an expression of one's egoistic individuality.[6] A

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[3]Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 229.

[4]Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans., Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh, Pa: Duquesne UP, 1998, 124.

[5]Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, xxix.

[6]Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 143.

wholly autonomous expressive self, according to Levinas, is a fictive fantasy of humanist egoists and idealists. As existential beings, we can choose to acknowledge or to deny the obligation to the other that is innate in the self's very identity as a self, and in this choice we are in effect choosing either to be human, by acceding to a higher rationality that attests through self-sacrifice to the Good beyond being, or to be subhuman and animalistic in our wholly self-interested drive toward individual thriving in our essential being.

In making his argument for the other-directed self, Levinas was attempting to address the nihilism he felt to be the greatest temptation and threat to being ethically human in the contemporary world. When we take as an existential goal and model the egoistic individual in its self-interested thriving, we come face to face with the absurdity of death, to which every individual – no matter how successful in its existence – ultimately is delivered. When we consider, however, that the self is by its very nature obliged to the other in an infinite responsibility that is the singling out that the Good has conferred upon each of us in our being brought into the mortal world, we are given an existential task and purpose – that of sacrificially *substituting* ourselves for the other in pursuit of an ultimate justice for one and all in testimony to the Good beyond being – that supersedes our thriving as essential individual egos:

> Substitution frees the subject from ennui, that is, from the enchainment to itself, where the ego suffocates in itself due to the tautological way of identity, and ceaselessly seeks after the distraction of games and sleep in a movement that never wears out…. No one is so hypocritical as to claim that he has taken from death its sting, not even the promises of religions. But we can have the responsibilities and attachments through which death takes on a meaning. That is because, from the start, the other affects us despite ourselves.[7]

For Levinas, the encounter with the "face" of the other, in its absolute alterity, is a kind of divine grace that we are granted

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[7]Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 124, 129.

which frees us from the entrapment of a wholly self-interested egoistic individualism and the absurdity of its death, an egoistic existence which he identifies with Spinoza's metaphysical system and its intrinsically unethical (for Levinas) acceptance and endorsement of the necessity and truth of being: "Being is play or détente, without responsibility, where everything possible is permitted."[8] Levinas's entire philosophy is marshalled against acceding to the necessity of such a system. As Richard Cohen recently commented in contrasting Spinoza's valorisation of the truth of being with Levinas's valorisation of the Good beyond being: "Spinoza exalts indeed idolizes the true, the true without the good, science as a substitute for ethics; Levinas exalts the good, the good above truth but requiring truth, truth serving justice; and I, I am with Levinas, for this is a debate without neutral spectators as it is a debate without exit or escape."[9] Put in these terms, Cohen's preference for Levinas seems inevitable and just.

But is the Spinozan self as depicted and critiqued by Levinas and denigrated by Cohen, a self wholly enmeshed and expressed in amoral being, the authentic self of Spinoza's ethical system? I would argue that it is not. To understand why it is not, let us return to the key concept of *conatus essendi* in Spinoza's original usage of it: "Everything, in so far as it is in itself, endeavors to persist in its own being…. The endeavor, wherewith everything endeavors to persist in its own being, is nothing else but the actual essence of the thing in question."[10] In Levinas's reading of Spinoza, the self selfishly *chooses* to persist in its own being in lieu of substituting itself sacrificially for the other in testament to the Good beyond being. But Spinoza's system is predicated on the assumption that we have no choice when it comes to the endeavour to persist in our "actual essence," which is a particular and necessary expression of the ultimate reality that is

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[8]Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 6.

[9]Richard Cohen, *Out of Control: Confrontations between Spinoza and Levinas*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2016, xviii.

[10]Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans., G. H. R. Parkinson, Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 2000, 136.

God, who alone is "self-determining, active, and free."[11] We are not free to choose whether or not to persist in our own individual nature or essence, but only to choose whether or not to express positively and well that nature. As Stuart Hampshire commented in his clarifying study, for the Spinozan individual self, "In the last analysis, and speaking philosophically, there is no such choice of an ideal or end. Philosophically speaking, the choice is of the right means to an end that is already determined for him by his nature and appetites as an individual thinking and physical thing."[12] For Spinoza, to assume that we can choose whether or not to persist in our own individual nature, in our "natural essence," is as absurd as assuming that a lion could choose to be a lamb if it wanted to, and it is the persistent belief in and illusion of such a choice that contributes to making human beings miserable in the world. Rather, the wisdom of life in Spinoza's system is to focus all of our powers on understanding and actively fulfilling positively and well our necessary and given individual natures. If we choose to deny our essential nature, we do not alter it in the least, as it is necessary, but we sacrifice our power actively to express and understand that nature.

This task of endeavouring to understand and actively express our nature may seem to be a wholly self-interested and even solipsistic behaviour, but according to Spinoza, it is the very basis of ethical human sociality, as "the man who is ignorant of himself is ignorant of the basis of all virtues, and consequently is ignorant of all virtues."[13] Moreover, "The highest good of those who follow virtue is common to all, and all can enjoy it equally."[14] Virtue is a key term for Spinoza that refers to the power of successful expression of one's individual and essential nature. "Virtue is human power itself, which is defined by the essence of man alone… which is defined solely by the endeavor

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[11]Stuart Hampshire, *Spinoza and Spinozism*, Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2005, 184.

[12]Hampshire, *Spinoza and Spinozism*, 184.

[13]Spinoza, *Ethics*, 266.

[14]Spinoza, *Ethics*, 251.

by which a man endeavors to persevere in his being."[15] So, in Spinoza's system, virtue and the effort to persist in our individual nature, *conatus essendi*, are in effect one and the same. This layered and complex understanding of *conatus essendi* is in distinct contrast with Levinas's strategic interpretation of the concept as being a Darwinian struggle for the self at the expense of others. Indeed, Spinoza's emphasis on the positive nature of power as properly understood and expressed may well seem naïve in a world full of manipulative users and abusers, but it is his faith in the positive powers that are potential in human nature that is his particular gift to a sceptical and cynical contemporary world, as Gilles Deleuze commented, "In a world consumed by the negative, [Spinoza] has enough confidence in life, in the power of life, to challenge death, the murderous appetite of men, the rules of good and evil, of the just and the unjust. Enough confidence in life to denounce all the phantoms of the negative."[16]

Once we have achieved individual virtue by coming to understand the implicit reason of our own nature, which is always by necessity a relative achievement, as only God has full power of understanding and expression of his nature, we can use our hard-won understanding to enlighten others, "Since we know of no particular thing that is more excellent than a man who is led by reason, each person can give no greater display of the power of his skill and ingenuity than in educating men in such a way that they finally live in accordance with their own rule of reason."[17] In contrast with Levinas, for whom the essential existential task of the self is to substitute itself sacrificially for the other in the manner of a holy saint, Spinoza posits the enlightened self as a sagacious role model, teacher, and guide to the unenlightened. Indeed the self that has achieved a degree of freedom by dint of its self-understanding is obliged by the shared social instinct of human nature to help

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[15]Spinoza, *Ethics*, 241.

[16]Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans., Robert Hurley, San Francisco, Ca: City Lights Books, 2001, 13.

[17]Spinoza, *Ethics*, 282.

others to the achievement of their own liberation, for "Freedom does not remove the necessity of action, but imposes it."[18] Thus Spinoza's model of the ethical self ultimately is other-directed, like that of Levinas, but in a strikingly different manner, in which we each are obliged according to the degree of our own self-liberation to assist our neighbours out of their own bondage to hatred of self and other. Steven Nadler recently noted the earnest effort at liberation that is the passionate argument implicit in Spinoza's thought system: "If there is one theme that runs throughout all of Spinoza's writings, it is the liberation from bondage, whether psychological, political, or religious."[19] Antonio Negri likewise commented upon the revolutionary social potential of the Spinozan system of individual liberation through self-acceptance and understanding that ultimately and inevitably produces an other-directed "love" that "rips us free of solitude and permits us to construct the world together."[20]

Although it seems to me necessary to press back against Levinas's strategic misreading of Spinoza in order to appreciate the nature of Spinoza's ethical self in its relation to the other on its own terms, unlike Cohen, I am not interested in choosing between the ethical systems of the two philosophers or in using one to denigrate the other, for both are of great value and use in the contemporary world. The model of Levinas's other-directed self with its existential task of sacrificial substitution speaks to those who are exhausted by and disgusted with an existence the only purpose of which is self-satisfaction and the ultimate end of which is the absurdity of one's wholly individual death, whereas Spinoza's model of the liberated self speaks to those who feel oppressed by a world that does not accept their nature and to those who have allowed the lesser gods of their nature to put their reason in bondage to their emotions. When I briefly

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[18]Spinoza, *Complete Works*, trans., Samuel Shirley, ed. Michael Morgan, Indianapolis, In: Hackett, 2002, 686.

[19]Steven Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2011, 32.

[20]Antonio Negri, *Spinoza for our Time: Politics and Postmodernity*," New York, NY: Columbia UP, 2013, 17.

summarized the two ethical systems for a friend recently, he responded, "I see, Levinas is good for the depressed and Spinoza for the oppressed," which is well put. Moreover, both systems offer crucially alternative models to the dominant humanist understanding and valorisation of the individual as a self-sustaining autonomous ego with proprietary rights and satisfactions. In their critique of the idolatry of the thriving, satisfied egoistic self as an ethical model and existential ideal, Levinas and Spinoza each offer a postmodern and posthumanist way forward into a future in which the self's egoistic individuality is diminished in favour of a meaningful purpose within and connectedness to a greater and ultimate reality that Levinas refers to as the Good beyond being and Spinoza famously described as, "*sub specie aeternitatis*,"[21] the perspective of the eternal.

In making their arguments against the modern idol of the freely independent individual actor, the valorisation of which Spinoza's early-modern philosophy prophetically anticipated,[22] both philosophers questioned the value of individual freedom, egoistically understood, as an end in itself. As Levinas noted in his comments on the story of the biblical character of Job:

> We have been accustomed to reason in the name of the freedom of the ego – as though I had witnessed the creation of the world, and as though I could only have been in charge of a world that would have issued out of my free will…. To be responsible over and beyond one's freedom is certainly not to remain a pure result of the world. To support the universe is a crushing charge, but a divine discomfort. It is better than the merits and faults and sanctions proportionate to the freedom of one's choices.[23]

Levinas continued by arguing that modern humanism, which considers the freedom and satisfaction of the individual to be an end in itself, without reference, connection, or obligation to the other, "has to be denounced only because it is not sufficiently

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[21]Spinoza, *Ethics*, 306.
[22]Negri, *Spinoza for our Time*, 18.
[23]Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 122.

human."[24] Spinoza's determinist system likewise critiques the presumptions of a wholly free and independent individual actor, "There is in the mind no absolute, i.e., no free, will, but the mind is determined to will this or that by a cause, which is again determined by another, and that again by another, and so on to infinity."[25] The individual's freedom lies in his choice to assent to, endorse, and understand his nature or not, and to realize it as a small but unique part of a greater whole, which is to conceive things "under a species of eternity."[26] As Hampshire commented: "To Spinoza it seemed that men can attain happiness and dignity only by identifying themselves, through their knowledge and understanding, with the whole order of nature, and by submerging their individual interests in this understanding."[27] Although Spinoza's understanding assent, in its "Stoic… wisdom of resignation and sublimation,"[28] and Levinas's sacrificial substitution, in its saintly ideal of holiness, are ethical ideals that are temperamentally distinct and perhaps in natural and necessary systemic opposition, they are similar in their conception of life as an existential task in the service of a greater reality that gives dignity and purpose to each individual mortal being. Despite his career-long phenomenologist's opposition to Spinoza's Stoic, determinist metaphysics, Levinas recognized that both systems, in their supreme instances, are in service to the same ultimate, unencapsulable Good: "Philosophy has, at its highest, exceptional hours stated the beyond of being and the one distinct from being…. Here we have the boldness to think that even the Stoic nobility of resignation to the logos already owes its energy to the openness to the beyond essence."[29]

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[24]Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 128.

[25]Spinoza, *Ethics*, 155.

[26]Spinoza, *Ethics*, 307.

[27]Hampshire, *Spinoza and Spinozism*, 123.

[28]Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 176.

[29]Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 178.

KNOWING SELF, IDENTITY, AND OTHERNESS: An Epistemological Account after Aquinas and Wittgenstein

Vinoy Thomas Paikkattu♦

Abstract: In a closer scrutiny, discussions on the self, identity, and the other take an epistemological turn in Aquinas and Wittgenstein. Both of them leave ample space for it notwithstanding their ontological and linguistic philosophies, respectively. The epistemology that can be drawn from them does not limit itself to the 'process of knowledge', rather moves beyond the synthesis of knowledge to the integration of life and actions. The dichotomy between 'self' and the 'other' and the 'inner' and the 'outer' are overcome with the relational epistemology. Systemic epistemology is transformed to relational epistemology where relationality of knowing, acting, and being constitute a linguistic community. Human persons as the members of this community play distinct roles in the human world where other beings also exist.

Keywords: Identity, Individual, Inner and Outer, Intellect, Inter-reflection, Knowledge, Language-games, Other, Relationality, Seeing as, Self, Soul/Mind.

1. Introduction

Aquinas discusses 'identity' and 'otherness' from epistemological and ontological points of view. Wittgenstein addresses the issue from a linguistic point of view, whose discussions on 'inner' and 'outer' are compatible to the discussions on 'identity' and the 'other'. Despite the similarities and differences in their accounts because of the particular contextual standpoints from which they address the issue, the

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questions of 'identity' and 'otherness' are moving towards a horizon where Aquinas and Wittgenstein meet each other. Aquinas' treatment of human knowledge and Wittgenstein's taste for language games constitute the horizon; the relationality becomes the horizon of identity and otherness. Given the mode of the understanding of 'identity' and 'otherness' from a contemporary analysis of person as an individual with freedom, and the 'other' as the 'outer' which also has an 'inner', it is proposed that the concepts of 'identity' and 'other' are compatible with the analysis of Aquinas and Wittgenstein on 'person', and that can even go beyond their understanding of these concepts. The flexibility in interpreting the concepts, against common rigid considerations (those of rationalism, empiricism, or scepticism), allows an expansion of horizons based on particular interpretation that I undertake here.

We begin with Aquinas' understanding of self, identity, and otherness, and interpret that these are not compartmentalised but are mutually enriching concepts. Secondly, an investigation into Wittgenstein's concepts of self and other is undertaken, and it can be proposed that these concepts cannot escape the labyrinth of language-games but are rooted in them. Finally, it is proposed that while Aquinas and Wittgenstein follow different methodologies with a similar purpose of addressing the philosophical problems concerning human life, they can find ways of interacting, and the encounter with their ideas in the present can be an antidote to unidirectional methods in epistemology, especially with regard to the knowledge of self and the other, that isolate individual and the other. The solution to the problems of 'identity' and 'otherness' are relational since 'self', 'identity', and 'otherness' are relational concepts of a human person in a human world. The questions are primarily approached from an epistemological point of view though they can also be discussed from ontological perspective. The epistemological project is undertaken here due to the methodological realisation that unless the logic of being (identity and otherness) is clarified, the ontology of being is incomprehensible. Epistemology and ontology are two sides of

one coin, but epistemology takes precedence in the order of knowledge, and ontology takes precedence in the order of being. Being is most fundamental notion which also includes knowledge, but knowing 'being' comes prior to the ontology of being.[1] The ontology of 'identity' and 'other' is to be analysed separately in another project. There are many related epistemological, ontological, and anthropological questions that are mentioned but not engaged with, in order to confine the scope of this article to the epistemological perspective of self, identity, and otherness.

2. Aquinas' Way of Gauging the Certainty of "I" through "Identity"

An epistemological question that comes alive while discussing on 'identity' and 'otherness' is how does one know that something exists and continue to exist the way something is? 'Something' is a generic term which includes both material and personal existence. The concepts of 'identity' and 'otherness' primarily refer to the personal existence and secondarily to material existence of things; since the 'other' also includes material things. Another related question is whether there is any relation between one's existence and that of the other. In this section we shall address the question by placing it in the mediaeval context and then moving onto a Thomistic response. One could find intense analysis of personal identity in the writings of Aquinas in discussing about the principle of individuation, the doctrine of resurrection, and the Divine nature and the Divine Persons. The scope of this article excludes the latter questions because it needs a separate treatment of the kind of 'personal identity and the otherness' of the Divine Persons, and considers only the principle of individuation. The personal identity of the Divine persons refer to the hypostasis

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[1]It is not endorsing Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*, which can be translated both as 'I think therefore I exist' or 'I exist therefore I think', instead, it is proposed that ontologically 'being' (that a thing is) comes first and 'logically' knowledge of 'what a thing' (nature of a being) comes first, than 'that a thing' (existence of a being).

(the way each Divine Person possessing the Divine nature) of each Person to the Divine nature. The principle of individuation is primarily attributed to matter in material things, and in human persons (i.e., composed of material and immaterial), personality.

For Medieval philosophers, in general, the question of the certainty of 'I' is through the question of personal identity and individuation. William of Ockham rejected any universal notion of the person and proposed 'numerical' individuation.[2] Duns Scotus proposed *haecceitas* or 'thisness' as the principle of individuation[3] as opposed to what Aquinas suggested, matter as the principle of individuation. In fact, Aquinas suggested matter as that which individuates a form, distinguishing it from another form, and both matter and form together individuates a being.[4] To say something as 'this person' one needs to affirm the reality of the whole person. When we look at a human being, it can be considered (a popular perception) that human person is the combination of 'human body' which is the material appearance of a human being, and 'human soul', which is considered as that

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[2]Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* vol. III, New York: Newman Press, 1993, 49. See also, Peter King, "Duns Scotus on the Common Nature and the Individual Differentia", *Philosophical Topics*, no. 20 (Fall 1992), 50-76. In this article, Peter King analyses the criticism of Duns Scotus on William of Ockham's numerical identity.

[3]John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, II. d. 3; qq, 5-6, n.177, Vatican: Studio Et Cura Commissionis Scotisticae, 2005.

[4]See, Christopher Hughes, "Matter and Actuality", in *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, ed., Brian Davies, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 61-72. The controversy whether the matter alone is the principle of individuation or whether it is matter and form together (which seems to be the position held by Bonaventure) is never sorted out among Thomistic scholars. Given the possibility of ontological recognition of a 'being' where 'form' is dominant, one might hold for the 'matter-form togetherness' view of individuation, than the 'matter alone' view. In the case of human persons, the identity is referred to the quantified matter as other material beings and substantial form (human soul) as other immaterial beings.

principle which makes the material composition alive and makes it act like a human person. The identity of a human being lies precisely in the way it acts with an appearance which is accepted. The relevance of the concept of the individuation lies in situating the human person as a unique entity in the world. Personal identity does not cease with the question of the principle of individuation rather it persists in the question of the continuity of the 'thisness' or individual person over time. Therefore, the scope of the puzzle is to understand the dynamism of identity and otherness; what makes a thing what it is, what makes a thing the kind of thing that it is, what makes a thing similar to other things of the kind, what makes a thing different from the similar things of the kind, and what makes the thing different from all other things of different kinds. The scope of the question of 'identity' and 'otherness' is diverged and merged in these questions.[5]

The concept 'identity' has various nuances in philosophy. It could be the result of 'identifying' something with something else, or 'comparison' of something to another, or more broadly attributing sameness to something over a period of time though it undergoes some accidental changes, either internal or external. In the case of human person the question can be narrowed down to the 'sameness of self' that endures through the passage of time. In the case of material beings, the sameness of 'thingness' is the principle of identity. The identification of one's self itself is an interesting scheme in Aquinas' account. There are philosophical positions that attempt to see the knowledge of the self as immediate or direct (as in the case of Cartesian self) and the self in turn opens itself to the external world through the concept of friendship.[6] This way of looking at the self reflects

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[5]These questions are analysed by Peter King, "The Problem of Individuation in the Middle Ages", *Theoria* 66, no. 2 (August 2000): 159–184.

[6]For a detailed account of this position see, Mark K. Spencer, "Aristotelian Substance and Personalistic Subjectivity", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (June 2015):145-164. Various positions on 'subjectivity' is examined in this article, and the author takes a

'interactionism' - the Cartesian solution to the problem of radical dualism of mind/self and body (soul and body/world and spirit, material and immaterial). An alternative view can be accorded to this position that the self cannot be known immediately but mediately. To ask, whether the question of 'I' is theoretically explained in the writings of Aquinas is to ask whether the obvious is put in words. Being a realist, Aquinas would never have any doubt about one's own existence. Commenting on a passage from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book VII, no. 17, he indicates the position: "And by the same reasoning, when one asks 'What is man?' it must be evident that man exists. But this could not happen if one were to ask why a thing is itself, for example, 'Why is man man?' or 'Why is the musical musical?' for in knowing that a man is a man it is known why he is a man."[7] Aquinas takes the knowledge of a human being as something self-evident, as commented by Robert Pasnau, "Three-dimensional bodies are similarly manifest in our everyday experiences; there is nothing mysterious there."[8] Human beings are also three-dimensional bodies but with specific difference of rationality. We focus on the knowledge of the self primarily though the 'other' includes all beings both material and immaterial. To ask whether 'oneself exists' or not, was a nonsensical question since the knowledge was self-evident or of a realist kind. He further indicates that only a human person has the particular certainty in this particular way. To understand the logic of this position, one needs to have a holistic view of the process of self-knowledge in Aquinas. The knowledge of the 'self' is a result of cognition with its upward (inductive) and downward (deductive) movements. We grasp the universal through induction and the particular is grasped in

stand that the subjectivity is both irreducible and personal but opens itself to the outer world.

[7]Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Metaphysics*, trans. John P. Rowan, ed. Joseph Kenny, Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961, no. 1651.

[8]Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 28.

relation to the universal. These are not separate movements but one movement with two processes. "We can grasp things only in as much as they exist in such and such ways…"[9] The process of knowledge is aimed at 'what is the case' than 'what ought to be the case' or 'what was the case'. The dynamism that asserts the certainty of oneself is the cogitative power which can be considered as the 'boundary' between the 'sensory' and 'intellectual powers'. I consider cogitative power as a boundary between intellect and senses, after the analogy of Aquinas who considers human soul exists "… on the confines of spiritual and corporeal" (*ST*, I, 77, 2). The cogitative power can have access to both the sensation and the abilities of intellect, just like human soul can know both material and immaterial reality. Contrary to the scepticism of David Hume who validates only 'impressions' (pure sensations) as source of knowledge, it is to be affirmed that for a human person, the scope of pure sensation is not possible, but a sensation as a human person is possible. To illustrate this, a contrast of human pain and dog's pain can be used. The pain of a dog and the pain of a human being after hitting with a stone are ontologically different. The pain in the latter case is also sensation but not a pure sensation, since every experience of a human person is sensitive-intellectual/rational. The role of the senses in a human being is to be qualified to complement his/her rational capacities. While the intellect is able to apprehend an individual as existing under a common nature, the senses always grasp the particular qualities. Intellect abstracts human nature from many human beings and conceptualises it (upward movement), and what is conceptualised is attributed to the individual instances (downward movement). The sensitive knowledge permeates through the intellectual knowledge and the intellectual knowledge influences the sensitive knowledge. That is why 'pure' idea and 'pure' sensation is impossible. The movement of sensible species to the intellect, and the intellectual

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[9]Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica Part I*, *Question 15 Article 3*, [Henceforth *ST, I, Q., a.,*] trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, ed. Sandra K. Perry and Joseph Kenny, Oxford: Benziger Bros. Edition, 1947.

powers to sensation is facilitated by cogitative power that enables the recognition of this human being as 'this human being' and not another. To conceive the dynamism of cogitative power other analogies can be used: Consider the first two human beings in the primitive world. How did they recognise that they are similar to each other as 'human beings' (though names did not matter then), but distinct from all other things in their experience? This simple and unqualified understanding is due to what is called 'cogitative' power. Universal notion of 'man' comes with inductive reasoning where many human beings are involved. The case here is of only the first two primitive human beings. Secondly, the principle of non-contradiction and identity also indicate that the first moment of knowing 'A is A', and 'A is not B' come with the cogitative power. The knowledge begins here and moves with great intensity to the higher specification with the work of the intellect. This knowledge stands midway between conceptualisation and imagination. While senses recognise the sensible species and the intellect perceives the intelligible species; cogitative power does not reason or sense, it simply understands the things as they are.[10] The sort of self-knowledge is advanced thus: one's existence and nature is not to be proved by reasoning but by recognition of one's capacities as corresponding to one's activities in the world. No one has to ostensively teach me that 'I' am a human being. Sensing, thinking, acting, and living are various capacities manifested by things that have senses, intellect, faculties or powers, and the principle of life or soul, and these capacities and faculties are expressed in the person's life and actions. Various operations of a human person point out that the self exists in such and such ways.[11] It is self-evident, and need not be proved at all. An

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[10]It is to be noted that the cogitative power does not act independently of intellect and senses which is impossible, but cogitative power is a unique power of human person, which is akin to estimative power in animals.

[11]For a detailed description of the operations of senses, intellect, cogitative, and estimative powers, see, Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary*

animal too may have consciousness, that it exists such and such ways and fulfils its wants, though it may not be aware of the details of its operations. It has the estimative power which is the highest form of knowledge of its kind, and human person has it as cogitative power that is influenced by the intellectual and sensitive powers (*ST*, Q.74,4).

Given the kind of realism proposed here, can someone ask, how do I know 'I' am the same person who lived and acted as human being a few years ago, and yet existing and acting even now? It is a question on 'self-identity' need not to be proved at all.[12] The relevant question is whether 'I exist' and not whether 'I was existing' or 'I will exist'. Another question is whether 'I' who exists is identical with other human beings. The answer along the thought of Aquinas is that there is no immediate apprehension of self by itself rather in understanding the things around, it understands itself – mediately. All that has been said about the self-knowledge and self-identity, with the analogy of cogitative power, is in fact a mediate knowledge, but a certain knowledge since it is self that knows knows itself mediately. Thus the argument that self can only be known through external world is endorsed by the Thomistic line of thought. This is in sharp contrast to what Descartes proposed as Archimedean point in certainty: *'cogito ergo sum'*;[13] I think therefore I am.

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on Aristotle's De Anima, trans. Kevin White, ed. Joseph Kenny, Washington, DC: Catholic University Press of America, 2005, Lectio 12 and 13: nos. 373-396. See also, Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 275 and 337.

[12]The study, so far, has not been aimed at proving the existence of self, but explaining the facts of one's existence as an existing self.

[13]For discussions on *cogito*, see, Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 2nd Meditation no.7, trans. John Cottingham, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. The question, "what is a human being?" is framed from a deductive regression after Cartesian model of *cogito*. The *cogito* is an answer to all possible agnosticism around the world, human being, and God, and the certainty of one's self is the paradigm for all other certainties. This deductive conclusion on human

Consequently, for Descartes, by knowing oneself, mind knows all things which undermines the knowledge of others from the point of view of themselves, but depends completely on the knowledge of the self. The Cartesian *cogito* thinks itself and at its leisure knows other things, and as a result the world may or may not exist if it does not think about them.

3. Dynamic Turn: From "I" and "Identity" to the "Other"

Progressing on from the previous section, in order to understand the identity of oneself better, the existence and identity of others are also proposed. A simple analysis of the text from Aquinas *on Truth* would do the same. "Hence, our mind cannot so understand itself that it immediately apprehends itself. Rather, it comes to the knowledge of itself through apprehension of other things …"[14] On the one hand, the mind grasps the universal nature of all things, and the individual nature of a particular thing through the universal nature. On the other hand, 'cogitation' occurs before intellect grasps the universal nature. The cogitative certainty is that enables the intellect to grasp it as a human being under universal and particular nature. Thus, cogitative certainty is a certainty of a particular kind unlike intellection, imagination and sensation. These processes, are finally 'one' act, under different aspects. Positively speaking, the self is able to know all things by grasping their natures through 'awareness'. It is a journey of the self 'inside out' and 'outside in': a kind of 'inter-reflection'; the self, by reflecting on the objects arrive at self-knowledge. In knowing, mind has no internal dynamism (i.e., innate ideas) to know the things around. It knows all things through the intelligible species presented to itself. The intelligible species are abstracted from the particular sensible species or phantasm, which in turn owe their existence to the real things existing around. It is clear on this account that

being as a 'thinking self' fails to answer at the same token the presence of the other in the world.

[14]Thomas Aquinas, *On Truth*, trans. Robert W. Mulligan, James W. McGlynn and Robert W. Schmidt, 3 vols, ed. Joseph Kenny, Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, Question 10, Article 8.

the powers of the mind or soul (i.e., memory, intellect, and will) are active only on account of the external things. In other words, the conformity of the mind to the external things increases the scope of the mind to know itself.

From what has been said, we arrive at a seemingly conflicting account of self-knowledge. The 'self' knows itself through identifying its own acts through cogitative power; what could be the rationale of stating that the mind or self knows itself by knowing the other things? At this juncture, there is no conflict except in the variants of understanding. When it is said that the mind knows itself through the cogitative power, it implies that the cogitative power has no individual and unrelated mode of knowing the self, it knows by the help of both sensible and intelligible species (as seen above). The cogitative power of knowing the self, though not conditioned by intellection, is not direct but indirect by means of intelligible species and sensible species. Through reasoning self is to know all things: the fruits of intellection, i.e., universal concepts, and in knowing these, mind increases its scope of knowing its modes of operation. The direct apprehension of the self or what we call Cartesian 'I' is to know itself without the help of anything. This way of self-knowledge is untenable from a realist point of view. The self-knowledge is a combination of all three or in more direct way, these are three ways of understanding one knowledge of the self. Going further, it can be proposed that, through 'reasoning' human persons not only know things but also the self and the other better. The term 'reasoning' needs to be qualified as a fitting term in this process than the term 'intellection'. The word 'intellection' somehow indicates the primacy of intellect in knowing. The word 'reasoning' is a broader term, which indicates the proper assignation of various faculties in knowing, including that of the 'intellect'. It is to be emphasised that self does not know itself from a universal category (as it is the scope of intellection), but knows itself as self-evident and existing, experiencing, and knowing here and now with the knowledge of other things. There is, then, no one solution to the problem of identity since the problem includes both 'sameness' ('I') and the 'otherness'.

Since the knowledge of the self is related to sensible species, intelligible species, cognition, cogitation, and sensation, the knowledge itself is relational. The knowledge of the self is indirect or relational, and the relational is always 'other-oriented'.

Another distinct question that is related to the question of identity and otherness is the knowledge of others as immaterial beings or beings with minds. Aquinas in his discussion *on Truth* gives a remote argument for the knowledge of a being as an immaterial being.[15] This is a question related to the knowledge of angels and God. We have seen that the self-knowledge depends on the relational way. This in fact is the 'first person' knowledge about one's own self through reflecting on the external things. This type of knowledge never gives a clue to the understanding of other people's thoughts and minds. For Aquinas, the knowledge of other people's minds was not a problem as he would envisage any human person with normal thinking and rational ability would be able to think the kind of thoughts any human person would have. This position is to be examined in the light of language use and the actions of human persons.

Given the dynamism of language where speaker (subject), receiver (term), and the spoken word (foundation) are related, we could propose that use of language itself is an indication of how others think. It could be demonstrated that the use of language by other beings would eventually prove the movement from premises to conclusion which can be recognised by others. For, e.g., when one says, "It is quite cold here, therefore I need

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[15]Aquinas, *On Truth*, Question 10, Article 11: " … by means of the natural knowledge, which we experience in this life, our mind cannot see either God or angels through their essence. Nevertheless, angels can be seen through their essence by means of intelligible species different from their essence, but the divine essence cannot, for it transcends every genus and is outside every genus." The scope of the knowledge of immaterial beings is to be treated specially, and therefore, we shall restrict the article to the knowledge of human beings as intellectual/rational beings.

warm cloths" it would communicate to others who are acquainted with English language what the first person has been thinking. Coming to the broader side of language, one could even argue that thoughts are revealed in the linguistic practice of the human beings where 'identity' and 'otherness' are interrelated; 'I' recognise others' minds through language and activities proper to the human persons. Just like knowledge of self, escapes 'solipsism' through the relational process of sensation, imagination, cogitation, and intellection (all this can be summarised into 'reasoning' in a broad sense), the knowledge of the other minds/thoughts escapes 'private language' through expressions like behaviour, language, communication, and thought-acts. Seen the whole process of knowledge of the self and the other in this way, we can further propose that Wittgenstein's language-games and linguistic practices complement the Aquinas' process of knowing the self and the other.

4. 'Identity' and 'Otherness' through 'Language-Games'

In any of his available writings, we have no evidence of Wittgenstein being sceptical about the existence of the self. Nor is it found that he gives argument for the existence of oneself. To those who ask for the evidence of the self, Wittgenstein might reply that it is open to the view. In one of the passages in *Philosophical Investigations*, we have this realistic turn, "…It can't be said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I know I am in pain. What is it supposed to mean—except perhaps that I am in pain…?"[16] Further, he suggests that, "This dispute is so like the one between realism and idealism in that it will soon have become obsolete, for example, and in that both parties make unjust assertions at variance with their day-to-day practice." (*RFM* 293).[17] According to him, "Not empiricism and yet realism

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[16]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, no. 246; Henceforth *PI*.

[17]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, eds. G. H. Von Wright, R. Rhees and G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978; henceforth *RFM*.

in philosophy, that is the hardest thing" (*RFM* 325) Without complicating the argument, it can be said that to add 'knowing' to one's own experience and to express it in words, 'I *know* I am in pain' are nonsensical in themselves, since it might suggest that the 'knowing self' and the 'paining self' are two entities. To my mind, Wittgenstein does not want to prove/know something more certain than something self-evident. From a similar argument it can be asserted that to say, "I know I exist" is a nonsensical proposition. Knowing and existing are two modes of 'one existing' being but one act which does not need a proof. The existence of 'I' is beyond knowledge and beyond arguments: 'I' is simply there with all its knowledge and experiences. Thus, first person narratives (of knowledge) about oneself, one's experiences, and scepticism and arguments on the contents of the mind are unnecessary and illogical.[18] One does not have to introspect, device a criterion, or constitute a methodology to know oneself. There is no need to take a long journey into the self but the self is simply open to the view. The derivative question on the identity of 'I' is also to be dealt in a similar way. There is nothing that makes me to be sceptical about my past 'existence' as 'I' than my certainty of the present 'I'. The present 'I' is more than enough to affirm my identity: a living human being is more than a witness to itself.

The certainty of the existence of others is also not to be inducted or deducted from anything else, though it needs a special treatment. The arguments against the private 'I' itself would provide the grounds for the certainty of others. For Wittgenstein, the existence of others are also as certain and self-evident like the certainty of 'I', because of a creative attitude. "My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the opinion that he has a soul" (*PI* 178).[19] I use the phrase

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[18]It does not mean that all first person narratives are illogical but those referring to the knowledge of oneself or knowledge of one's experiences.

[19]The term soul used by Wittgenstein may not have the ontological character as Aquinas taught; however, Wittgenstein too uses this concept to indicate the principle of operation in human life.

'creative attitude' to distinguish between the knowledge of 'others' as human beings, and the knowledge of other things. The attitude is creative that unlike the knowledge of other things which is self-evident (like the knowledge of a 'stone' as stone' and nothing beyond itself), the knowledge of others as human beings requires the knowledge of human being with soul. The attitude towards 'soul' and the attitude towards a human being are similar or equal as opposed to, if I say, 'my attitude towards a human being is an attitude towards a stone'. The attitude towards a human being and a stone are categorically distinct since a stone and a soul do not complement each other but a human being and a soul can. This way of looking at human being and soul is thus creative.

The knowledge of 'who' and 'what' human being is never complete as the knowledge unfolds as the human beings engage with the world. On the other hand, one can predict the acts or status of other external things. This statement is in connection with how Wittgenstein is looking at the whole question of a human being. The human being is recognised not as an automaton but as one that has a soul. Having a soul as the defining feature of a human being is a religious view, but whether the term is soul or anything else, what is implied is that the object in concern behaves like a human being. Moreover, "[t]he human body is the best picture of the human soul" (*PI* 178). What one considers as soul, the principle of life, empirically non-provable, is not a mysterious entity, rather it is that faculty with which a human person operates in the world, or its actions are expressed in the world through human actions. It could be simply argued from this point of view that the 'identity' and 'otherness' are complementary concepts along with the concept of 'I'.

There have been discussions to find out the criteria by which Wittgenstein recognises the other and others' minds or how we know that the other human beings too have similar thoughts

that we have. His earlier solipsistic position (*TLP* 5.6-5.641)[20] argued for an 'I' which is elusive, and has an inner which does not need an outer. In his later works, he seems to have qualified the position, and some might argue that he abandons completely the mental process. Wittgenstein does not deny mental processes or inner processes but makes a distinction between 'pain' and 'pain behaviour'. "And now it looks as if we had denied mental processes. And naturally we don't want to deny them" (*PI* 308). His arguments on 'inner process' and 'outer criteria' have given rise to multiple positions of behaviourism, relativism, and using the tools of analysis, analogy, and criterion to drive home the problem of other minds. These various interpretive positions are praiseworthy in explaining the philosophy of Wittgenstein.[21] However, without engaging with them for their merits and demerits, it could be stated that all these are the efforts of the interpreters to find out various criteria to determine the self and the other. Such criteria would never have been the concern of later Wittgenstein since the human form of life was as real as a flowing stream.

The problem of other minds is relevant only from the point of view of the uniqueness of human being; the common perception of human being as different from an automaton or an animal. The statements like "[t]he human body is the best picture of the human soul", "My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul", (*PI* 178) and "an inner process stands in need of outward criteria" (*PI* 580) indicate that Wittgenstein might fall into behaviourism. From these considerations, it can be proposed that a kind of behaviour is emphasised, like in the case of 'pain behaviour' or 'thought-behaviour'- when a person expresses one's thoughts through actions, like the 'pain behaviour –though

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[20]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden, London: Routledge, 1922.

[21]For various viewpoints on the problem of other minds, see, Jonathan Ellis and Daniel Guevara, ed., *Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Mind*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. This edited book contains relevant articles that deal with these various interpretive positions.

both these 'behaviours' belong to different language-games. But 'behaviour' in question is not like the 'particular adaptive-end behaviour' of an animal or mechanised system of an automaton. Human behaviour is 'human act' since it is 'intentionally oriented' to an end; the 'inner' and the 'outer' concurrently work to the end. Wittgenstein denies every inner process independent of life. The behaviour, if considered as only an action, independent of inner process that too cannot become a human action. Any activity of a human being, on this account, is subject to a thought-process, or any activity is simultaneously a well thought inner process; activity and inner process weave the human form of life, in which a living human being exists.

The concept 'living human being' is critical in the thought of Wittgenstein in considering the existence of other human beings. "It comes to this: only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious" (*PI* 281). Wittgenstein pinpoints the identity of a human being as a living human being. According to Jose Nandhikkara, "A living human being is an embodied subject with active and passive bodily and spiritual (rational, emotional, volitional, etc.) powers and is substantially and creatively present in the world. We live, move and have our being in the world."[22] Given the ontological constitution of the living human being and the possibility the resemblance of such beings in the world, the identity of others can also be inferred like-wise. The other human beings are not existent because of some criteria that 'I' provide but because they are open to the view with all their behaviour, emotions, thought-behaviour, and the like. Others are their own criteria; their outer shows the inner. When a human person 'lives' in the world as 'I' live, there is no point in arguing

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[22]Jose Nandhikkara, "The Person: Project of Nature, Nurture and Grace: Philosophical Investigations after Wittgenstein", *Journal of Dharma* 37, 1 (January-March 2012), 97-116, 106. Also see Jose Nandhikkara, *Being Human after Wittgenstein: A Philosophical Anthropology*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2011.

that his/her existence is to be proved. His/her inner which is manifested in the outer itself provides the witness – the living human being is the witness itself. Someone might argue that a human being can pretend to such and such or there are no concrete expressions that reveal the inner. This is a valid objection as far as a human being can feign their experiences (*PI* nos. 156-160 and 250). People might pretend their activities like reading, loving or having pain, etc. However these are activities in themselves that cannot be distinguished between the real and the simulated. Even in pretending, there is an 'inner' which is expressed in the 'outer'. The pretending itself is a language-game among the varieties of language-games.[23] The distinction of the real and the simulated can be differentiated only in the stream of life. To recognise the pretention one needs to have signs of pretence recognised: signs too are the 'outer' of the 'inner'. These are the linguistic signals that accord to the rule-following of a language-game of pretence, just like the rule-following of any other human activity. Thus, activities or behaviour of a living human being is open to the view, and is recognised as such in the public linguistic practice and language-games. All these indicate that a human being is easily identified as such and the other is likewise identified as a human being – living human being. There is no scepticism or crisis in the knowledge of the other human beings nor is there any incompatibility of human behaviour as the expressions of the human 'inner'.

5. 'Seeing As': Identity and Otherness

While understanding the process of recognising the existence of the self and others, identity and otherness, we have accorded Aquinas' position of 'indirect seeing' via sensation, cogitation, and cognition. Aquinas seems to be systematising the whole process of thought and the mode of arriving at the knowledge of others. Wittgenstein could be restless to see something is being

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[23]M. R. M. Ter Hark, "The Development of Wittgenstein's Views about the Other Minds Problem," *Synthese* 87, no. 2, (May 1991):227-253.

known through any process, which is fragmented and divided (*PI* 196-197); he conceives the 'knowledge of something' not as a process but as a continuum. From Aquinas' account, sensation and intellection are the two processes which seem to have their own proper activities; the scope of intellection is different from the scope of sensation. This way of looking at the whole process might cause confusion and may advance unilateral roles of senses and intellect, as it has occurred in the history of philosophy; theses of rationalism and empiricism. It is very unlikely that a realist like Aquinas might advocate a divisive or compartmentalised process of knowledge, whether it be of oneself or of the others. It could be that, for the sake of understanding the process better, a systematic and analytical approach of scrutinising each stages of the human being in the process of knowing is emphasised. The analysis helps in understanding the scope of sensation and intellection, and their mutual enrichment. Given the details of the process as continually related to sensation, cogitation, and intellection, and the incompleteness of each stage without the other, indicate that he also has proposed 'knowing process' as 'seeing as' the way Wittgenstein considers. In no way this undermines the reality of the one act of 'seeing as'. Even when Wittgenstein presents 'seeing as' he admits that there is no stereotype and monotonous 'seeing as' but 'seeing as' as always unpredictable and flexible. His allusion to the 'elasticity' of 'what is seen' (*PI* 198)[24] reveals that the seeing is not constrained to 'one act' alone but a combination of multiple aspects that converge and diverge. Even an 'aspect seeing' in 'seeing as' is not just a single act, but it is also connected with various other interconnected aspects. While looking at the face of a person for some time, one can recognise the multiple expressions of emotions; yet they are the 'outer' of an 'inner'. While Aquinas seems to have divided the process of knowledge, in reality, he sees that as one act with multiple

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[24]This is a way of saying that something can be known without complicated process of sensation and thought process, but it is an act which occurs spontaneously.

'aspects'. These aspects are neither construed in the sanctuary of the soul nor are simulations, nor are inducted from the external affairs, but it is a movement from the 'inner' and 'outer' and *vice versa*.

In this way, in a broader analysis, the questions of 'identity' and 'otherness' are relational concepts, interwoven language-games within the human engagements in the human form of life. Human activities can hardly be analysed in isolation: earning livelihood, entertainment, forming groups, marriage, family, responding to societal needs, academic pursuits, survival projects, influencing others, etc., are not done with a unilateral 'adaptive end', but with intention, freedom, goodness, dignity, purpose, corrective measures, trial and error, sense of justice, etc. The former ones are open to the view since they can be identified easily as 'activities proper' in a general sense. Usually the latter ones are not considered as activities proper but as 'attitudes' or 'qualities' that may accompany the former ones. However, the latter ones are also equally 'activities proper to human persons' expressed through the former ones. There is no dichotomy between the two, rather correspondence or relationality where 'the activities proper' (outer) are entrenched with the 'qualities' (inner). Paradoxically, the inner is to be deemed by people as those ones proper to human beings (only the human beings have the profound inner), but they are often put under sceptical scanner since they are not 'open to the view'. Just like the 'outer' is considered as the witness of the 'inner', the 'other' can be the certainty of my 'identity', since I do not have to consider my identity as a human being if there are no other human beings to ascertain it indirectly through their presence. Their presence is an active presence where dialogue, communication, sharing, and relationality are at work. The 'other' becomes intelligible through its 'presence' and engagements.

Ontologically, the 'identity' has precedence over the 'other', since if there is no 'I' there is no possibility of knowledge in its strict sense. Epistemologically, the 'other' takes the importance, since the knowledge of the self is through the other or the 'knowledge' itself is for the sake of the other. Given that, there

are no *a-priori* language-games or rule-following, and language-games evolve as the human life progresses, and consequently, the rule-following also progresses as such. The 'identity' and 'otherness', then, are dynamic concepts that resist unidirectional definition or explanation. As the human world develops from one century to another or one epoch to another, the evolution of these concepts occur progressively since the 'inner' and the 'outer' vary according to the human engagements with the world.

6. Conclusion

The investigation so far was an attempt to understand the relevance of Aquinas and Wittgenstein on the concepts of 'identity' and 'otherness', and how their perspectives contribute to the present day understanding of self and the other. Aquinas' notion of indirect knowledge of the self endorses the existence of the other. This mediate knowledge of the self and the other point out to the whole network of relations at work in the 'seeing as' of human knowledge. Wittgenstein's tool of language-games and rule-following places the 'subjectivist turn' and 'objectivist turn' on the plateau of variability and stability, which I consider, as the hinge points of knowing the self, identity, and otherness. Another attempt was to address the extremes of extensionless Cartesian privacy and the 'mindless' objectivity. I have argued that the concepts of self, identity, and otherness from Thomistic and Wittgensteinian perspectives neutralise the extremes. These extreme positions are recurrent in the human life in the forms of 'individualism' and 'consumerism/utilitarianism'. Paradoxically individualism and consumerism in the present day human context are interrelated unlike private 'I' and pure objectivity. The boundary between the two is relationality which is proposed as the paradigm of 'identity' and 'otherness'. However, relationality as a paradigm of knowing the self and the other needs to address further the ontological, anthropological, and existential dimension of being a human person. The scope of this article confines itself to the epistemological interpretation. Again, it is to be admitted that

the epistemological project is not all embracing since the project takes a mediate route that diminishes the lustre of individuality of a human person. Individuality is an ontological status of a person since an individual is primarily an 'existent' and then related to other individuals, where as, 'identity' and 'otherness', because of the indirect knowing process, are intrinsically related to each other epistemologically. Thus, a further investigation can be undertaken to understand the complexity of the ontological status of 'identity' and 'other', and the epistemological position of an 'individual'.

A further argument is concerned with the linguistic practices and the evolving language-games within a human community that widen the horizon of 'identity' and 'otherness' and encounter new epistemic challenges but can be solved according to the kind of language-games and rule-following of the new situations. Again, bringing everything under the dynamism of language-games has two important consequences. The first is a possibility of relativistic interpretation of rather stable concepts like 'identity' and 'other', and as a corollary to this view, philosophical scepticism; whether there is a person existing at all as a result of understanding the 'self' through the other, or whether the self is existing through linguistic practices. The danger is that the concept of 'self' can be constructed epistemologically without the support of ontology. Secondly, there is a possibility of interpreting the concepts of 'identity' and 'otherness' from a strict modern/enlightenment idea of self (as a private 'I' or bundle of perceptions) to the wider interpretation of 'identity' and 'otherness' forming a horizon: the horizon of language-games, individuality, identity, otherness, self, etc. The concepts are not sacrosanct in order that they can be untouched, but they are embedded in the language-games and human engagements, and therefore viable for progressive and alternative views. The interaction of these concepts synchronise with the contemporary existential and phenomenological projects on human person. A further research on this perspective would bring closer Aquinas and Wittgenstein to the contemporary reader.

THE SELF: Metaphysical Reality *vs* Communicative Device

Anil Kumar Tewari♦

Abstract: The objective of this article is to juxtapose the non-Buddhist and the Buddhist viewpoints of Indian philosophy on the notion of the self in order to see the rationality behind their conceptions. To pursue this objective, the paper is divided into four sections. The introductory section points to various usages of the expression 'self' in common parlance, which tends to encompass everything that matters to an individual. The second section describes various approaches adopted by the major systems of Indian philosophy towards the self. It is shown that the conception of the self as a metaphysical substance is more amenable to those Indian philosophical systems that believe in the plurality of individual selves. The third section is mainly concerned with the Buddhist counter-narrative to the notion of substantive metaphysical self. Since the parsimony of the Buddhist proposal lies in its metaphysical non-proliferation, the linguistic entities such as the self (*jīva*) or soul (*ātman*) purportedly referring to a substantive entity are declared metaphysically vacuous, but the convention of language enables us to pick out the intended referent which is nothing but individual person. Thus the above metaphysical concepts of the non-Buddhist systems of Indian philosophy turn out to be a 'communicative device' in Buddhism, without any metaphysical bearing.

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1. Introduction

It is more than a truism to say that the understanding of the self has a bearing on the understanding of the other. The other is nothing but the self and therefore the perception of a division between the two is erroneous, the other is numerically distinct but qualitatively same as the self, the other is the 'possibilities' of the self, are some illustrative examples each indicating a specific notion of the self. The self is, thus, understood in various ways ranging from the notion of a robust metaphysical reality to an ontologically vacuous linguistic entity. In a poetic language, William James (1842-1910) describes the variegated usages of the notion Self:

> … a man's *Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his*, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his cloths and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down … The constituents of the Self … make up respectively: (a) the material Self; (b) the social Self; (c) the spiritual Self; and (d) the pure ego.[1]

Some would say that it is a simple active substance, the soul, of which they are thus conscious; others claim that it is nothing but a fiction, the imaginary being denoted by the pronoun I; and between these extremes of opinion all sorts of intermediaries would be found.[2]

The range of the meanings of the 'self' in the above quote is enough to baffle one's mind as to what could be the truth of the

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[1]William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983, 279-80. The term "Self" with capital letter "S" is intended to refer to its wider applicability, that is, meaning differently in different contexts. CAN is conspicuous in the italic part. "Self" means *me* as much as *mine*.

[2]James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 286.

self. A definite answer to this question is essential in as much as it is the understanding of the self which enables one to adopt a perspective towards the other—a *sine qua non* to all behavioural transactions with the other. What follows is a survey of the insights available in major Indian philosophical systems with respect to the self. An attempt is made to bring these insights into two broad categories, namely, metaphysical reality and communicative device.

2. Perspectives towards the Self in the Philosophies of India

In Indian philosophy, the metaphysical exploration with regard to the self generally proceeds with three considerations:

(1) What is it that gives life to a human body?

(2) What is it that makes a human being a cognitive agent?

(3) What unifies different experiences of a human being so that he or she identifies himself or herself as the same person undergoing different experiences at different times?

These three considerations, stated differently, relate to the principle of life or animation, the principle of cognition, and the principle of unity and continuity of experience respectively.[3] The self (aka *ātman*, *jīvātman*, *puruṣa*, etc.) is regarded as a fundamental metaphysical reality by all systems of Indian philosophy except the Cārvāka and Buddhism, and it is believed to perform the above three functions of animation, cognition and unification. It gives life to the physical body of an organism.[4] When the self departs from the (*sthūla*—i. e., gross) body, the body loses its regenerative force and disintegrates into its constituting elements.

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[3]A philosophical analysis of this observation can be seen in Anthony Quinton's article "The Soul," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 59, no. 15, (July 1962): 393-409.

[4]Matthew Kapstein discusses 'personalistic vitalism' in this sense of the self. According to this theory "there is a particular substance which is at once the self-conscious subject, the ground for personal identity through time, and which, when appropriately associated with a functional animal body, causes that body to be alive." Matthew T. Kapstein, "Śāntarakṣita on the Fallacies of Personalistic Vitalism," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 17, 1989, 44.

The self carries all along with it the life force (*prāṇa*), senses (*indriyas*), mind (*manas*) and the residual impressions (*saṁskāras*) brought forth from the previous and present states of existence. These accompanying factors are cumulatively called subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*). The cumulative effect of impressions appropriates a gross body to which the *prāṇa* enlivens and in which the senses live for the self. Thus, the self is believed to be the actual cognitive agent that requires a physical body for its cognitive (and other) operations. With the help of sense-organs, the self acquires knowledge about the world. Also, it functions as the unifying substance between discrete experiences and thereby gives rise to the sense of 'I', which becomes the locus of all thoughts, experiences, hopes and desires. This metaphysical self is regarded the essence of a human being.

In the Ṛg Veda, the term '*ātman*' is often used to refer to the essence of beings in general. For instance, at one place the term '*ātmā*' is used to denote the essence of gods as well as the world[5] and the broader application includes the essence of everything—natural forces, medicinal plants, and the essence of the addressee. The diversity of the usages of the term '*ātman*' in the Vedic literature enables one to retroject into it the multiple senses of the self developed by systemic philosophies in India later. The later appellations such as *ātman*, *jīvātman*, *puruṣa*, etc. are aptly used to refer to the essence of living beings.

One may however contend that the above metaphysical entities cannot be consistently maintained to be the bearer of the identity of an individual. For, when we use the term 'self', we often mean a person's 'personality' or 'character' in virtue of which one person differs from the others. Being the essence of all beings, the '*ātman*' cannot be appropriately rendered as the 'self' (or 'soul'). Since the essence of all beings is qualitatively (one may say substantially also) the same, and the self cannot *suo motu* confer any individuating determinations on any organism, let alone be the identifying feature of a human person. No wonder if

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[5]*Ātmā devānāṁ bhuvanasya garbho*, Sri Ram Sharma Acarya, ed. & trans., *Ṛg Veda*, Shantinikunja: Brahmavarcasa, Vol. 4, Maṇḍala 9-10, 1996, 10.168.4.

one doubts whether a person is an embodied-*ātman* at all in this broad or universalistic sense of the term. Contrasted with this, there is also a narrow or individualistic notion of *ātman*, which does not find its explicit expression owing to the preponderantly cosmogonical approach of the early Vedic thinkers. However, subsequently, this sense becomes pronounced in the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads not only talk about individual essence and the essence of the universe, but also eventually declare identity between the two. However, this equation does not enlighten us in regard to the emergence of individuality any more than the permutations of universal elements beget the sense of individuality. *Ātman* is the beginningless underlying reality of everything existing. In contradistinction to '*ātman*', the term '*jīva*' or '*jīvātman*' is used to refer to an individual. According to the Advaitic reading of the Upaniṣads, *jīva* has a beginning and an end—it begins its journey with the sense of individuality and submerges its individuality in the supreme reality in the end. Therefore, it is not taken to be immortal in its individual form.[6]

The *jīva* or the individual self is not mortal either; it is essentially the *ātman* coupled with the mind, senses and body. Contrary to the Advaitic conception, the term '*jīva*' is used to refer to an immortal 'individual being' prominently by those philosophical systems which accept the plurality of individual selves in their fundamental ontology. Jainism and the theistic Vedānta traditions (namely, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita Vedāntins) use the term precisely in this sense. The combined system of Sāṅkhya-Yoga uses the term '*puruṣa*' for the same purpose. The Naiyāyikas use the term '*jīvātman*' in the same sense. Despite

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[6]In the *Vedānta Paribhāṣā* of Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra (trans. Sw. Madhvananda, Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 12th reprint 2011), four kinds of dissolutions are discussed. They are *nitya* (the dissolution of all manifest activities during profound sleep state), *prākṛta* (the dissolution of all effects), *naimittika* (the withdrawal of all worlds into the Creator) and *ātyantika* (the dissolution of all individualities consequent on the realization of Brahman). It is the last kind of dissolution where the individualities end due to an absolute dispelling of nescience (172-3).

notable internal differences on the nature of the self, these non-Advaita systems concur on the individualistic notion of *ātman* and accept this individual unchanging metaphysical entity as the ultimate (metaphysical) base of individuality. One may consider the Sāṁkhya arguments for the plurality of selves as representative of this view.

The Buddhists however are quite insistent on denying the existence of such an unchanging entity. Their major argument rests on the doctrine of impermanence (*anitya*), rather momentariness (*kṣaṇikatva*), which advocates for an incessant change in the reality (*sat*) which is a necessary condition for any reality to be causally efficacious (*arthakriyākārī*). For any object to produce an effect, it must undergo change, according to the Buddhists. The 10th-11th century CE Nyāya thinker Udayanācārya fights tooth and nail against this argument of the Buddhists in the very first part of his *Ātmatattvaviveka*.[7] He says, *inter alia*, that a necessary relation between the reality and momentariness is unfounded (*asiddha*), therefore we cannot consistently derive the nature of reality proposed by the Buddhists.

2.1 Consideration of Multiple Approaches

Considering the diversity of opinions on the notion of individuality, one can sort out three fundamental approaches in the later systemic development of classical Indian philosophy. These different approaches are based on the variations in the metaphysical commitments of different philosophical systems. They are: (1) the multiplicity of selves approach, (2) the monistic or absolutistic approach, and (3) the false grammar approach.

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[7]Udayanācārya, "*Kṣaṇabhaṅgavāda*," *Ātmatattvaviveka*, Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1986. Both, impermanence and momentariness show the changing character of the reality. However, whereas the former grants the durational presence of an object, the latter proposes an incessant change. Udayana argues against the latter position which, in some sense, logical corollary of the former because unless we accept a persistent change in the object, an account of its impermanence seems impossible.

According to the first viewpoint, there is a plurality of individual selves, one such self resides in each person's body. A person is thus an embodied self. This approach is adopted by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Jainism, the Sāṅkhya-Yoga, the Mīmāṁsā and the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta systems of philosophy. The Advaita Vedānta also espouses the multiplicity of selves view at the phenomenal (*vyavahāra*) level. The self, as these systems believe, is located[8] in the heart (*hṛdaya*) of a person. If the self is the essence of an individual, and all the individual selves are qualitatively indistinguishable one from another, then all persons are essentially the same. However, persons are recognized as distinct individuals in virtue of their having some adventitious properties. Should one then suggest that the principle of individuation is determined by some accidental (material) properties? The Naiyāyikas rule out such a possibility. For them, though the selves are qualitatively indistinguishable, yet they are numerically distinct in virtue of having certain distinctive features. According to their metaphysical belief, all indivisible and eternal substances, including the selves, involve a uniqueness called 'particularity' or 'individuality' (*viśeṣa*). These substances are distinct from other

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[8]Conspicuously, every Indian philosophical system considers heart, the most vital organ in our body, to be the residing place of consciousness. We may call it the cardiovascular interpretation of consciousness as opposed to the neurophysiological interpretation of the Western philosophical systems, particularly cognitive sciences. In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, the *ātman* is described as residing in the lotus of heart and is smaller than a grain of paddy, than a barely corn, than a mustard seed, than a grain of millet or the kernel of a grain of millet. After that, it is paradoxically asserted that this *ātman* is greater than the earth, than the sky, than the heaven and than all these worlds (*eṣa ma ātmā antaḥ hṛdaye aṇīyānvrīhervā yavādvā sarṣapādvā śyāmākādvā śyāmāktaṇḍulādvaiṣa ma ātmāntarahṛdaye jyāyānpṛthivyā jyāyāntarik-ṣajjyāyāndivo jyāyānebhyo lokebhyaḥ, Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.14.3, Swahananda Swami, trans., Madras: Sri Rama Krishna Matha, 1980). The paradoxical expressions seem indicating the ineffable character of *ātman*.

members of their own class due to *viśeṣa*, which is the basis of absolute differentiation and specification.[9]

But, the positing of this unique feature should be seen as an effort to maintain the particularity of indistinguishable entities which are non-composite and eternal. Ramakrishna Puligandla interprets *viśeṣa* "as the peculiarity by virtue of which something is an ultimate entity."[10] This is how the Naiyāyikas seek to provide metaphysical support to the commonplace belief in the multiplicity of individuals. The rest of the systems also accept the multiplicity of selves to account for individual difference in terms of different subjects.

The second approach is monistic or absolutistic in outlook. The diversity of the phenomenal reality springs from a fundamental reality, which is not diverse. The diversity, from this perspective, is only apparent. The Advaitins are the main proponent of this viewpoint. For them, the Self (Brahman or *ātman*) is the only reality, which is non-dual, undifferentiated, immutable, transcendental consciousness (this theory may be called Spiritualistic Monism). The individual consciousnesses (*jīvas*) are mere false appearances of universal consciousness or Brahman. We identify ourselves as distinct individuals only for worldly purposes. Moreover, this false identification is originally ingrained in metaphysical ignorance of the true nature of reality. Hence, ignorance (*avidyā*) is the determining principle of individuation. Such ignorance induces a false perception which, in turn, is binding on the individual, it is also called causal body (*kāraṇa śarīra*).[11] In the process of the formation of human personality, the causal body occasions an appropriate subtle-body

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[9]*Anyatra-antyebhyo viṣeśebhyaḥ* (1.2.6), meaning that which exists as the differentiator (*atyanta-vyāvṛttibuddhi-hetuḥ*) of the end-substances is called *viśeṣa*, from *The Sacred Books of the Hindus*, Vol. VI - *The Vaiśeṣikasūtra of Kaṇāda* ed., B. D. Basu, trans., Nandalal Sinha, Allahabad: Bhuvaneśwarī Āśrama, 1923.

[10]Ramakrishna Puligandla, *Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy*, New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 2005, 170.

[11]Vidyāraṇyamuni, *Pañcadaśī*, Krishnanada Sagar, trans., Uttar Kashi: Shri Totakacharya Ashrama, 1984, 1.17.

(*sūkṣma śarīra*). The subtle body is said to be the combination of five sensory modalities (*jñānendriyas*), five motor organs (*karmendriyas*), five vital forces (*prāṇas*), mind (*manas*), and intellect (*buddhi*).[12] This body is also called the mark body (*liṅga śarīra*). The mark body appropriates a gross body (*sthūla śarīra*), which is constitutive of the five gross elements (*mahābhūtas*).

What is significant here is the distinction between the causal body, the subtle body and the gross body. Actually, these are not three numerically distinct bodies (relating to an individual); rather they all house one personality and in this process the former causes the latter. What is sensually available is only the gross body; other bodies are conditions of the gross body. But the formation of a particular gross body depends on the programming of the subtle body, which is the receptacle of the residual impressions of previous deeds performed by the individual under the spell of ignorance. It is the subtle body, which transmigrates and thus continues the cycle of death and birth.

According to another analysis of human personality,[13] the gross body, which is the composition of amalgamated five elements of materiality (*pañcīkṛta-mahabhutas*), is called *annamayakosa* and is sustained by food. The five vital forces (five *prāṇas*) along with the five motor-organs form *prāṇamayakosa*. As it is believed, they draw their forces from individual consciousness (*dehī* or *jīvātmā*).[14] The *prāṇas* are subtler than the gross elements and thus they are regarded as superior to the physical elements. The next thing of greater subtlety is our mental make-up, which is called *manomayakosa*. It consists of mind and the five sense-organs which are responsible for all our experiences. It is the mind which generates the sense of 'I-' or 'Ego-consciousness' in us. Subtler still than the ego-consciousness is the intellect or ideational consciousness (*vijñānamayakosa*), which receives glimpses of pure

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[12]Vidyāraṇyamuni, *Pañcadaśī*, 1.22-23.

[13]*Īśādi-nau-Upaniṣad: Iśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Aitareya, Taittirīya and Śvetāśvatara*, Hrikrishna Das Goyandaka, trans., Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 13th edition 1993. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.2-5.

[14]*Īśādi-nau-Upaniṣad*, *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, 2.2.3-5.

and blissful consciousness (*ānandamayakosa*). The *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya* and *vijñānamaya kosas* constitute the subtle body. The *ānandamayakosa* is the innermost and subtlest substratum of all other *kosas*. It is also called the causal body or *kāraṇa śarīra*. What is called *ātman* pervades all the five grades of human personality and is progressively identified with everything from the grossest level to the subtlest one in the journey of spiritual development. Since these realizations are believed to be liberating, they cannot be called the result of *māyā* and ignorance.

Given many frames of reference of the term *ātman*, any attempt to reduce it to only one of them would create problem. However, amidst all the variegated senses, the prominent sense is the 'essence' or the crucial aspect of a being. For instance, the most intimate bodily process on which the life of an organism is dependent is breathing. In view of this anatomical fact, the Vedic seers identify *ātman* with the life force (*prāṇa*), the force that makes breathing possible. And, with the same fervent, they equate *ātman* with the mind, senses etc.—the factors which are crucial for the life of an individual. But when the question as to the true nature of atman comes, all such equations are gradually denied retaining one: the essence of life or the underlying reality of everything. In this sense, we can understand the Upaniṣadic proclamation of identity between individual essence and cosmic essence.

Individual essence is incarnated in the substantial form of *ātman*, *jīva* or *puruṣa* in the later systemic philosophies. This metaphysical essence is believed to underlie all experiences of an individual in virtue of being the hub of the body (cause, subtle and gross). But it seems a folly to hold this (universal) principle responsible for the formation of individual life births after birth. The problem becomes more intractable when this principle is said to be present in the body even when all other associates depart from the body to render it dead.[15] This discussion shows that the principle of individuality can be anything but the (universal) *ātman*. One may conjecture that the principle of individuation can only be matter. It is the material or physical aspect of human

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[15]*Īśādi-nau-Upaniṣad*, *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, 2.2.4.

personality that provides ground for distinguishing one person from another. The principle of individuation is nothing but the function of material composition (Materialistic Monism). Classical Indian philosophical systems talk of individuating criteria in the framework of bodily categories, namely, causal body (*kārmaṇa śarīra*), subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*) and gross body (*sthūla śarīra*). Karel Werner[16] also develops his thesis on the Vedic notion of '*tanu*', which is purportedly a quasi-physical-essence of a person and can be kept alive in a heavenly realm through prescribed ritualistic performances. In common Hindi parlance, the term '*tanu*' is used to denote 'body', which is an evident marker of an individual person. In the Ṛg Veda, this term is often used to refer to the physical aspect of beings.[17] But, as Radhakrishnan remarks, there is no such thing as the individual centre of life at the biological level.[18] All organisms are equal in terms of their physiology except, of course, some graduated functional differences. But, taking cue from one's own feeling, one always wonders whether this is all that there is to individuate human personality, or there is a further fact beyond the merely physical. The *śarīras* (i.e., mere physical) are not capable of existing independently; they lean on an independent principle, namely, the self (*ātman*). There are different positions though regarding whether there is just one *ātman* or many.

The self (*ātman*), as described in the *Kaṭhopaniṣad*,[19] is free from the fetters of birth and death (*aja*) and is not subject to cause and effect (*na ayaṁ kutscinna babhūva kascit*). It is eternal (*nitya* or *śāśvata*) and essentially conscious (*vipaścit*). The self is often described in contradictory terms[20] indicating the inadequacy of the language to capture it in entirety. The nature of the self is felt to be beyond the reach of the categories of understanding.

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[16]Karel Werner, "Indian Concepts of Human Personality in Relation to the Doctrine of the Soul," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 1 (1988): 73-97.

[17]Ṛg Veda, 10.116.5, 10.157.3, 10.183.2 etc.

[18]S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, New Delhi: Indus, 1994, 271.

[19]*Īśādi-nau-Upaniṣad*, *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, 1.2.18.

[20]*Īśādi-nau-Upaniṣad*, *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, 1.2.21.

However, in its individuated form, the self is said to be 'the owner of the body' (*rathinaṁ*).[21] In the Advaitic interpretation, the individuated forms of the self are mere appearances or distorted reflections of the non-dual universal self. But, this Upaniṣadic insight is developed into the full-blooded individualistic conception of *ātman* by the pluralist systems of Indian philosophy such as the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the Saṅkhya-Yoga, and the Mīmāṁsā. The intuitive plausibility of the acceptance of the existence of a distinct non-physical self in every individual is traceable in the psychological necessity to account for the differences in the unity and ownership of experiences.

But, the same intuitive suggestion may also be counter-intuitive from the Buddhists' perspective. For, they question the idea of a non-physical eternal substance and explain the unity of a mental life without resorting to any such queer entity. Also, they analyze human personality without using any such metaphysical principle as the self. Since our experiential knowledge reveals everything in the world as transient, the acceptance of the existence of the self as an unchanging entity is unwarranted. It has further repercussions in the understanding the meanings of personal pronouns. This leads us to the third viewpoint, which may be called the 'false grammar approach'.

3. The False Grammar Approach

The tendency to look for a fixed referent of the term 'I' or other personal pronouns is connected with the unitary feeling in our experiences. Radhakrishnan says that we have such a feeling in virtue of being a self-conscious being: "Self-consciousness is like a chord which is able to bind and keep together all the discrete experiences of an individual."[22] Self-consciousness is generally understood as the consciousness of an individual who considers himself or herself as the subject of manifold experiences. The linguistic correlates of the subjects of experiences are the personal pronouns. The 'referential demand' of these pronominal indexicals is such that one is gullibly inclined to believe in the

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[21]*Īśādi-nau-Upaniṣad*, *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, 1.3.3.
[22]Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View*, 278.

ontology of queer or mysterious individual entities or subjects.[23] Thus, what seems to be an innocuous fact of grammar may turn out to be an unwarranted metaphysical hypostatization. According to the Buddhist logicians, being mental constructions, the linguistic symbols fail to refer to the actual reality because they are afflicted with our tendency to associate the experiences with name, genus etc. (*kalpanā*). The Buddhist tradition, therefore, invests much of its energy to make sense of the self as subject or person (Pāli, *puggala*; Sanskrit, *pudgala*) as such not as a referent of language.[24]

3.1 The Self as Subject or Person

The individualistic conception of the self presumes an irreducible uniqueness in every human individual in virtue of which he or she is an individual as opposed to a collective or a group. The search for the metaphysical underpinning of such uniqueness often results in accepting the existence of a queer immaterial substance, an enduring substratum of changing experiences, which is often conceived on the analogy of a physical thing. Thus the self-same substance is said to be a subject of all experiences. Ordinarily, a subject is defined as a being which has experiences, either of something in existence or purely imaginary or of

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[23]Jose Nandhikkara, "Human Subjectivity: A Philosophical Investigation after Wittgenstein," *Journal of Dharma*, 33.1 (January-March 2008), 19-32. By referring to Wittgenstein, Nandhikkara observes that the expressions such as "'soul', 'spirit', 'mind', 'reason', 'will', etc., are not used to refer to something in the way 'body' refers to a body…we need to look and see the actual uses of these words in relation to human being" (20). They are meaningful in relation to human subjectivity and any further assumption would take us beyond the purport of these terms. Also see Jose Nandhikkara, *Being HUman after Wittgenstein: A Philosophical Anthropology*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2011.

[24]For instance, in the *Puggalapaññattipāli*, the fourth work of the Buddhist cannon *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, human personality is analyzed without any reference to eternal self. See for details *Abhidhammapiṭake Puggalapaññattipāli*, trans. Om Prakash Pathak with Veena Gaur, Delhi: New Bharatiya Book Corporation, 2000.

something entirely abstract. The concept of subject is basically tied up with the epistemological sense of a person. The subject is generally understood as 'the subject of different experiences'. One considers oneself as the same subject of various experiences. And this consideration is based on one's ability to identify oneself as a continuing person.

A subject or person is thus regarded as the persistent substratum of all thoughts and therefore the enabling condition of knowledge, recognition and retention. However, it has been a matter of dispute whether there actually is such a unique metaphysical substance. Buddhism explains our natural belief in the existence of such an entity as a fictional construct of the imagination. However, even if there is an ineffable metaphysical substance, how can it be turned to itself to know it objectively? The paradox of understanding the subject in objective terms is quite pronounced in Yājñavalkya's wondering about how the subject can be made part of an objective knowledge.[25] A subject cannot make itself an object of its own knowledge in the way things other than itself (the subject) can be objects of its knowledge. For, the subject is the very source of knowledge. Hence the subject pole stands diametrically opposed to the object pole, and both the poles are flanked by experience.

The existence of the subject is accepted as a self-evidencing fact, since everyone has an unmistakable belief in one's own existence. Everyone has an inner access to one's subjectivity. And because of this direct access, knowledge of the subject, or self-knowledge, involves a higher certitude than knowledge of an object. The knowledge of anything other than one's own existence is a mediated knowledge, and therefore the reliability of the medium becomes a significant factor for the veracity of such mediated knowledge. On the other hand, due to the immediate and self-evidencing nature of self-knowledge, its certainty is evident. The unerring awareness of one's subjectivity is emphasized by K. C. Bhattacharyya with reference to the notion

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[25] *Yenedam sarvam vijānāti tam kena vijānīyāt*, meaning everything is known by the knower, but who is to know the knower? *Īśādi-nau-Upaniṣad, Bṛhdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 285.

of meaning. In his view, while the object of knowledge is what is meant by the knowing subject, the subject is other than the object and is therefore not a meant entity. The subject, being the 'meaner', can of course not be the 'meant'.[26]

What exactly is the reason for saying that self-knowledge is not a matter of knowing anything with a meant content? We may try to examine this question in a manner that involves our extrapolation on the unique nature of the subject as self. Objective knowledge is that of a meant entity inasmuch as it is knowledge of what it means to be this or that object. And understanding what it means to be a certain object depends on our knowledge of what predicates are true of the object. Objective knowledge is therefore a matter of our having predicative access to the object in question. Self-knowledge is subjective, and knowledge of subjectivity must have a peculiarity in virtue of which self-knowledge amounts to knowledge of something without any meant content. Bhattacharyya conceives of self-knowledge as a non-predicative or non-attributive mode of knowing the subject. In distinguishing self-knowledge from knowledge of objects, he remarks: "The object is known as distinct from the subject but the subject is known in itself and felt to be free from the object."[27] While this sounds like an innocuous remark on the distinctness of the subject from the object, there is something significant in it in so far as reference is made to the subject's feeling of freedom from the object.

Since self-knowledge is said to be knowledge of the subject in itself, it implies that this knowledge is acquired by the subject by being independent of its usual objective association with other things. This independence from objective association of the subject with the world of objects is to be understood as a condition for the possibility of true self-knowledge. It is a condition of recognizing the self from the non-predicative standpoint. Once the subject is able to dissociate itself from the objective order, the non-predicative attitude of self-perception

[26]K. C. Bhattacharyya, *Studies in Philosophy*, Gopinatha Bhattacharyya, ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983, 367.

[27]Bhattacharyya, *Studies*, 385. Emphasis added.

becomes naturally available to the subject. For, all predicative self-recognition is due to the association of the self with the world of objects. To be the subject in itself is, therefore, to be free from the predicative way of viewing oneself, and so to be free from objective association.

Moreover, any process of the predicative mode of self-identification results in the objectification of the subject. Once the self is so objectified, the question of its ontological status becomes prominent. It then opens up the floodgate of metaphysical controversy.[28] While this is the way K. C. Bhattacharyya's reflections on the nature of the subject indicates the possibility of an avoidable metaphysical controversy over the nature of the self, it also has relevance to the same controversy that occurs between the Buddhists and the non-Buddhists. What makes the former case relevant to the latter is the common point of the predicative mode of determining the reality of the self. This commonality is most prominent in the case of the Nyāya arguments for the existence of the self as the locus of immaterial properties. In identifying the self as the substratum of properties like cognition, desire, pleasure, pain, etc., the self is already objectified inasmuch as its existence is characterized in terms of these psychological predicates. Even though the individual self is said to be substratum of these psychological states, it is still an object (*padārtha*) whose reality is defined in terms of these properties.

The Buddhist contention of such a view of the self is in terms of replacing the self-talk by talk about psychophysical properties alone, or at best the five aggregates (*pañcaskandhas*). The alleged eternal substance is dropped out of the picture. What we call a person is actually seen to be a unified individual consisting of the psychophysical aggregates, which are in perpetual change. Since the psychophysical aggregates are perceived to be a mutually supportive function of the psychological and equally subtle physical states, which is beyond the level of ordinary awareness, it is natural for us to superimpose a unified personality upon the

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[28]Bhattacharyya's remark in this regard is worth quoting: "The metaphysical controversy about the reality of the subject is only about the subject viewed in some sense as object" (*Studies*, 386).

aggregates. However, this reification remains at the level of language, which, according to Buddhism, pragmatically useful though, always tells a lie about the reality. One may however wonder how a deceptive device enables us to pick out the referents from the plural reality.

It may be useful to retrieve what a person recalls, according to Buddhism, of his or her past existences when he or she achieves a certain level of spirituality. The following excerpt is noteworthy:

> In the past existence I was known by such a name. I was born into such a family. I was of such an appearance. I was thus nourished. I enjoyed pleasure thus. I suffered pain thus. My life-span was such. I died in that existence. I was born in other existence. In that (new) existence I was known by such a name. I was born into such a family. I was of such an appearance. I was thus nourished. I enjoyed pleasure thus. I suffered pain thus. My life-span was such. I died in that existence. Then I was born in this existence.[29]

Obviously, the indexical 'I' is performing the role of appropriation in this retrospection. However, one may still wonder what could be the supporting metaphysical ground for the relation between the 'I' of the person who is remembering and his or her past lives, which is accepted by every system of Indian philosophy except Cārvāka. It may be conjectured that the usage of 'I', according to the Buddhists, finds support from the concept of *bhavaṅga-citta*, the undisturbed subterranean stream of consciousness in one's life. This underlying state of consciousness is in a state of passivity precisely because it is undisturbed by any impression, inner or outer. When this consciousness is affected by any stimuli, the resulting state of consciousness is called *vīthi-citta*.[30] It is

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[29]Samdhong Rinpoche, ed., *Ten Suttas from Dīgha Nikāya*, Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series No. XII, Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, reprint of Burma Piṭaka Association Publication, 1984, 19.

[30]One may see related discussion in Anil K. Tewari, "The Problem of Personal Identity in Buddhism," *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar. 2007), 93-118.

pertinent to mention here three more relevant and typical Buddhist concepts: *cuti-citta*, i.e., the consciousness of the last moment of one life; *gandhabba-citta*, i.e., the stream consciousness of the deceased person that enters into the zygote; and *paṭisandhi-citta*, i.e., the consciousness of the first moment of the next life. Thus, the stream of consciousness flows from life to life in a cycle of *patisandhi-citta, bhavaṅga-citta, vīthi-citta* and *cuti-citta*.[31] In the *Paṭṭhāna*, the relation between the preceding consciousness and the succeeding consciousness is called *anantara-paccaya*. In the flow of the conscious stream, every moment of the preceding consciousness, which has just ceased, is related to every succeeding consciousness, which has immediately arisen. This relation prevails throughout the recurrent states of an individual life, unless it is eventually stopped by the *khandha-parinibbāna*, that is, the extinction of the five aggregates.[32] For all soteriological purposes this stream may be called the subtle essence of a person that appropriates the gross bodies in different lives.

4. Conclusion

The above discussion clearly indicates two broad categories in which the perspectives of the non-Buddhist and the Buddhist systems of Indian philosophy towards the self can be accommodated. The former may be called an essentialist perspective and the latter a non-essentialist. Cārvāka is always an exception; however it can be accommodated in the non-essentialist category when it comes to reject the notion of an unchanging metaphysical self. But, the metaphysical disagreements never take an unwelcome or inhumane turn in regard to the interrelationship between the self and the other. It can be seen as a point of convergence for common morality in Indian philosophy and this ethos seems to be foundational to the continuation of Indian society and culture. Both the perspectives support the cordiality of relationship between the self and the other in their own ways.

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[31]Bhikkhu J. Kashyapa, *The Abhidhamma Philosophy*, Vol. 1, Delhi: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, reprint 1982, 165-166.

[32]Kashyapa, *The Abhidhamma Philosophy*, x-xii.

Both believe that freedom from bondage and misery is the highest goal of human life and their philosophical quest for self-understanding and self-realization is therefore continuous with the quest for self-liberation. The non-Buddhists are of the belief that complete self-liberation consists in the realization of the eternal self-substance that lies concealed under the phenomenal existence. For them, what actually happens in the phenomenal concealment of the true self is the formation of the ego, the uncompromisingly individualized I-sense. On this the Buddhist position is both similar and dissimilar to them. The similarity is there in respect of the uncompromising nature of the individualized I-sense being responsible for attachment and misery and therefore selective inclusion or exclusion of the other. However, it is dissimilar in respect of the metaphysical description of the process of self-liberation. There is no eternal self-substance, contend the Buddhists, for us ultimately to realize through the process of dissolution of the ego. On the contrary, the quest for such a metaphysical substance as the definitive condition of liberation is destined to end in metaphysical delusion. Indeed, a necessary condition for attaining liberation is that we understand the futility and misguided search for something that is entirely mythical. For the Buddhists, reality has no place for anything that is unconditioned and permanent in nature.

Everyone has an intimate and strong feeling of the 'ego- or I-sense' and around this one spins one's world of hopes, desires and aspirations. This I-sense is a fact of our conscious existence that is collateral with self-consciousness. The 'self-feeling' is intimately bound up with our immediate experience of self-existence. The very feeling of being oneself as eternal substance, according to the Buddhists, is the root of ego-formation. Owing to this 'I-sense', we conceive of ourselves as the centre of the world, through which the world is 'objectively represented' in terms of distinguishable names and forms. We can talk about the diversity of the world only by presupposing that there are many similar selves perceiving and signifying it. Our relation to the world is thus ego-centric, and the world is uniquely centred in each of us.

Hence, our view of the world from our respective individual ego-specific points of view appears to us to be an inexorable fact about ourselves that becomes a hurdle for the inculcation of the qualities such as tolerance, benevolence, altruism, etc. The metaphysical aspiration of transcending human finitude by transforming oneself into an 'eternal and immutable' self is the proposal of the non-Buddhists to overcome this challenge.

Buddhism is emphatic on the self-defeating nature of the metaphysical aspiration for self-perpetuation in the attainment of an eternal self. Rather than dissolving the ego, the cultivation of this aspiration serves the ego or I-sense in a heightened way. It thus becomes a seemingly ego-overcoming process that actually is ego-perpetuating in disguise. Indeed, it is the delusion of a permanent and immutable self-substance that provides the metaphysical base for uncompromising ego-centricity to be underpinned. Hence the Buddhist recommendation is that we understand our true existential condition as the condition of perpetual change and dependence on the causal complex of reality. Once this understanding is acquired, the delusory quest for the realization of an eternal and substantive self would naturally disappear. Thus both the proposals share a common goal of ego-transcendence, though the two projects differ in respect of the process. What is common to both the metaphysical and the pragmatic programs of ego-transcendence is the ambition of becoming what is described as a 'selfless' person. It is this person who could be in harmony with the other.

Towards Knowledge Societies

In tune with the mission of UNESCO "Towards Knowledge Societies" <http://unesdoc.unesco. org/images/0014/001418/ 141843e.pdf>**Journal of Dharma**(Vol. 44) proposes to investigate critically and creatively the content, scope, management and politics of the knowledge both at the local and global levels with special reference to Ethics and Values Education in Higher Education. As we move to the fourth industrial revolution, charged by the exponential growth of innovations and inventions in the fields of mobile technology, nano-physics, internet of things, genetics, robotics, etc., blurring and merging the distinction between real and virtual, physical and mental, biological and technical, intellectual and AI, etc. fundamental questions are raised in the aesthetic, moral, political and spiritual dimension of human life. The ever increasing economic, educational, digital, information and knowledge divides and the problems involved in the knowledge management in the local, national and global communities also challenge the noble goals of living together in harmony and well being of all. Increasingly we are aware of the fact that industrial revolutions do not bring in sustainable growth, development and happiness for all. Science and technology are to be complemented by arts, humanities, social sciences, and indigenous know-how and wisdom. *Journal Dharma* invites scholars to present and share the fruits of their research examining and showcasing the scale, scope, and complexity in different branches of knowledge, contributing to humanity's journey "Towards Knowledge Societies".

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