

The Face and Alterity: Conceiving Radical Otherness

That face facing me, in its expression – in its mortality – summons me, demands me, requires me: as if the invisible death faced by the face of the other – pure alterity, separate, somehow, from any whole [e.g. from which I am part] – were ‘my business.’

In the alterity of the face, the for-the-other commands the *I*.

From Alterity and Transcendence, trans. Michael Smith

Otherness and Obligation

What does “as yourself” signify? [as in, “love your neighbor as yourself.”] Buber and Rosenzweig were here very perplexed by the translation. They said to each other, does not “as yourself” mean that one loves oneself most? [Instead] they translated it, love your neighbor, he is like you....it is this love of the neighbor which is yourself....The Bible is the priority of the other in relation to me. It is in another that I always see the widow and the orphan. The other always comes first.

From Of God Who Comes to Mind, translated by Betina Bergo

A going outside oneself that is addressed to the other, the stranger. It is between strangers that the encounter takes place; otherwise, it would be kinship. All thought is subordinated to the ethical relation, to the infinitely other in the other person, and to infinitely other for which I am nostalgic...The transcendental *I* in its nakedness comes from the awakening by and for the other.

From Alterity and Transcendence, trans. Michael Smith

An Ethical Access to Infinity

The trace of the infinite is inscribed in my obligation toward the other, in this moment that corresponds to the call.

A turning on the very basis of the face of the other...*a surplus of significance is signified that could be designated as glory* [emph. added]. It demands me, requires me, summons me. Should we not call this demand or this interpellation or this summons to responsibility the word of God?

Is not the face of one’s fellow man the original locus in which transcendence calls an authority with a silent voice in which God comes to mind?

From Alterity and Transcendence, trans. Michael Smith

Additional Resource:

[My Jewish Learning .com: Sages & Scholars: Emmanuel Levinas](https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/emmanuel-levinas/) by Benjamin A. Wurgaft
(<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/emmanuel-levinas/>)