

Other Discourses

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There are ambiguities in the title: Other Discourses. What are these discourses and who speaks them? Discourses of others, of those who are not the same? Discourses by the same about those who are other, and about otherness itself, about an absolute Other, which would also be the other of discourse itself? And then, almost immediately upon these questions, as if folded within them, come other questions. Can we hear the discourses of others, if they really are other? Can we have discourses about others which do not reduce them to the limits of our own discourses? Can there be any discourse about otherness itself, about an absolute Other, if it is indeed the other of discourse, beyond discourse?

Even if it were possible to pursue all these questions in a single essay, this is not that essay. Here I pursue only some of the questions in the direction of the philosophical authorship of Emmanuel Levinas.¹

The Ethics of Ethics

Levinasian ethics is at a distance from what we might normally think of as ethics: the right ordering of our social environment. It is more an ethics of ethics; a reflection upon the primordial ethical experience that comes before all ethical systems, and which remains after their dissolution. The distinction might be given as that between ethics and morals or politics. Which is not to say that Levinas is unconcerned with morals and politics. On the contrary, ethics, for Levinas, gives onto both morals and politics. But first comes that upon which they are founded: the primordial experience of 'ethical responsibility towards the other' (Levinas 1984, 65). I will return to the difference between these ethics—between ethics as right relations for happiness (Aristotelian ethics) and ethics as a fundamental experience of human being which exceeds that being (Levinasian ethics)—but first, what is meant by the ethics of ethics, the primordial ethical experience?

The Same

The central problematic of Levinas's philosophy is the possibility of the absolute Other for the Same. Already, with the idea of the other comes that of the same. The two are bound together, like hill and dale, day and night. Always there is presupposed that which is itself, one-with-itself, the same-as-itself. As an example of this, when I started to write this essay I consulted the library catalogue in Newcastle. Selecting subject search I typed in 'other', and the screen displayed a list of over 200 titles. Most of these were about 'other religions' and the remainder were about 'other planets' and the possibility of extra-terrestrial life. Both these designations of alien life-forms presuppose that which is not other, not alien: namely humanity and Christianity. And here we can begin to see the problematic of the same and the other.

The religions of the world—Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism; always supposing the legitimacy of such conceptualities—appear not as themselves, but in relation to another religion, Christianity, which is the in-itself to which they are the not-itself, the other-than-self, the alien other. This relation of same to other is asymmetric; a power relation of primary to secondary, of dominant to subaltern. Always we must ask: 'Where do we stand when we speak of the other?' (Smith, 29)

Furthermore, the relation between the same and the other is only possible because there is supposed a common ground, a third that constitutes the relation between them. In the case of Christianity and the other religions, it is that they are all exempla of the category 'religion'. The difference between the religions is thus a difference within the Same. To the extent that Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, are religions, they are already known and secondary, betrayed by their conceptualization as 'religion'. Their individuality is reduced to a generality, a mediation which surrenders them to the Same (Levinas 1969, 44).

Here there is a certain logic which repeats itself wherever the other is encountered, immediately converting or reducing the other to the other-within-the-same or the same-but-different. Once the logic of reduction takes hold, the individual is grasped by a conceptuality that mediates his or her relation to the subject: the black to the white, the woman to the man, the homosexual to the heterosexual, the non-Christian to the Christian. By such means we understand the world.

For Levinas the Same is above all the ego in its desire for knowledge and mastery. The ego strives for perfect knowledge, total comprehension, complete control; a precise correspondence of its representations with reality—in short, for truth. In seeking this mastery,

the ego seeks its freedom; it seeks a liberty which is 'simply the assurance that no otherness will hinder or prevent the Same and that each *sortie* into alterity will return to self bearing the prize of comprehension' (Critchley, 6).

Death

If Heidegger taught that the history of Western metaphysics is the history of the forgetting of Being, Levinas teaches that it is the history of the forgetting of the Other. Heidegger also forgets the Other; forgets the alterity that is beyond Being. This can be seen in Heidegger's analysis of death (Barnes, 483–4). For Heidegger we are beings who achieve authenticity in the face of death. In being-toward-death we claim our being as our own. On the contrary, says Levinas, in the face of suffering and death we are divested of ourselves, passing from activity to passivity: the end of vitality.

Where suffering attains its purity, where there is no longer anything between us and it, the supreme responsibility of this extreme assumption turns into supreme irresponsibility, into infancy. Sobbing is this, and precisely through this it announces death. To die is to return to this state of irresponsibility, to be the infantile shaking of sobbing. (Levinas 1989, 41)

Death, which can never be a 'now' for the self, announces itself as an absolute alterity.

What is important about the approach of death is that at a certain moment we are no longer *able to be able* (*nous ne 'pouvons plus pouvoir'*). It is exactly thus that the subject loses its very mastery as a subject. . . . Death is the impossibility of having a project. This approach of death indicates that we are in relation with something that is absolutely other, . . . something whose very existence is made of alterity. My solitude is thus not confirmed by death but broken by it. (Levinas 1989, 42-3)

Moreover, this alterity announces itself in the death of the other. 'Whereas for Heidegger death is my death, for me it is the other's death.' (Levinas 1984, 62). For Heideggerian ontology the main characteristic of *Dasein* is its possession of Being as mine, on the basis of which it is then able to say 'I'. 'I become I only because I possess my own Being as primary.' (Levinas 1984, 62). For ethical thought, on the contrary, I become I because I am first exposed to the other. For

Levinas, it is my 'inescapable and incontrovertible answerability to the other that makes me an individual "I".' (Levinas 1984, 62-3).

. . . and the Other

Ethics—for Levinas—is concerned with that experience in which the other escapes capture, classification and control, by the Same. It is that experience in which the other remains free and at large, outside the security of the Same. Ethics seeks to locate the point at which the Same is called into question and the other remains other. It is a point of radical alterity or what Levinas calls exteriority, a point at which there is an 'access to exterior being' (Critchley, 5), to that which is outside the Same, outside the self or ego, and which calls the self to account.²

The exteriority of being is not an ontological *category*, but an ethical *attitude*.³ The ethical experience, outside of being, is 'an attitude that cannot be converted into a category, and whose movement unto the other is not recuperated in identification, does not return to its point of departure'. Levinas likens the difference between a movement toward the other that is still within the categorical, and a movement toward the other outside of such a determination, to the difference between the stories of Ulysses and of Abraham, the Greek and Jewish heroes.

To the myth of Ulysses returning to Ithaca, we wish to oppose the story of Abraham who leaves his fatherland for ever for a yet unknown land, and forbids his servant to even bring his son to the point of departure. (Levinas 1986)

The movement outside of being is the undertaking of a journey toward the unknown.

The Face in Conversation

The essence of the ethical experience is a relation between the Same and the Other, which is not a relation within the Same, but a relation that goes outside the Same to the Other. Levinas calls this outward-going relation, the experience of the 'face'. It is the way in which the other presents herself to me, 'exceeding the *idea of the other in me*' (Levinas 1969, 50). When I am presented with the other as she is in herself, as other, then I am in the relation of the face. I am in 'relation with a reality infinitely distant from my own reality, yet without this distance destroying this relation and without this relation destroying this distance' (Levinas 1969, 41).

This relation to the face is only possible if I approach the Other with generosity, going toward the Other, not with a preconception of who she

is, but with a willingness to enter into conversation with her, and to receive from her the expression of herself. The ethical relation of the face is a relation of conversation in which I am taught. For it is a relation in which there is that which comes to me 'from the exterior and brings me more than I contain' (Levinas 1969, 51).

It is in a discourse between interlocuters that the face-to-face relation is made possible: the epiphany of the absolute Other to the Same. This is because in conversation, the Other can contest the possessive, comprehending grasp of the discourse I address to her. 'In discourse the divergence that inevitably opens between the Other as my theme and the Other as my interlocuter, emancipated from the theme that seemed a moment to hold him, forthwith contests the meaning I ascribe to my interlocuter' (Levinas 1969, 195).

In the face-to-face encounter there is again an asymmetry of relation. But it is the reverse of the asymmetry between the self and the other within the Same—the power relation of a dominant to a subaltern term. In the face-to-face relation, the movement is not from self to other, but from other to self, as the Other summons the self to respond in responsibility for the Other. It is a relation of obligation to the Other.

I become a responsible or ethical 'I' to the extent that I agree to depose or dethrone myself—to abdicate my position of centrality—in favour of the vulnerable other. As the Bible says: 'He who loses his soul gains it'. The ethical I is a being who asks if he has a right to be!, who excuses himself to the other for his own existence. (Levinas 1984, 63)

Levinas opposes an ontological subjectivity which 'reduces everything to itself', in favour of an ethical subjectivity which 'kneels before the other, sacrificing its own liberty to the more primordial call of the other.' The autonomous freedom of the subject is preceded by its obligation to and responsibility for the other. Levinas's ethics redefine subjectivity as 'heteronymous responsibility in contrast to autonomous freedom.' Even if the self denies its primordial responsibility, it cannot escape the fact that the other has demanded a response before it affirms its freedom not to respond. Levinas goes on to describe the other as the richest and poorest of beings: 'the richest, at an ethical level, in that it always comes before me, its right-to-be preceding mine; the poorest, at an ontological or political level, in that without me it can do nothing, it is utterly vulnerable and exposed. The other haunts our ontological existence and keeps the psyche awake, in a state of vigilant insomnia.' (Levinas 1984, 63)

The Other and the Holy Other

For philosophy these are amazing claims. If Levinasian ethics were only Kantianism—the idea of an unconditional categorical imperative (as is perhaps Derridian ethics—Critchley, 31-2, 40-1, 193)—they would be of passing note. But Levinas's ethical philosophy is not Kantian. In Levinas, the primordial ethical relation is not a law given by and to myself, a dictate of universal reason; but a command that falls upon me, as does God's word upon the people of Israel. How can philosophy support such a discourse? Jacques Derrida has concluded that Levinas's ethical analysis 'proceeds in the form of a negative theology' (Derrida, 108).

When, in a dialogue of 1981, Richard Kearney asked Levinas how he reconciled the phenomenological and religious dimensions of his thinking, Levinas replied that he made a clear distinction between the two 'as distinct methods of exegesis, as separate languages', but that both 'may ultimately have a common source of inspiration'. (Levinas 1984, 54) Levinas went on to describe philosophy as a subtextual language that 'employs a series of terms and concepts—such as *morphe* (form), *ousia* (substance), *nous* (reason), *logos* (thought), or *telos* (goal), etc.—which constitute a specifically Greek lexicon of intelligibility'. (Levinas 1984, 55) Since, for Levinas, the language of ethics is different and prior to the language of philosophy, the question is whether we have two languages—philosophy and theology—or three: philosophy, theology and ethics. It would seem that for Levinas, theology and ethics are really the same language.

In dialogue with Kearney, Levinas speaks of an 'ethical or biblical perspective which transcends the Greek language of intelligibility'. This is the perspective in which the interhuman is seen as the face-to-face relation in which love and desire 'carries us beyond the finite Being of the world as presence'. (Levinas 1984, 56) From this perspective the interhuman is an interface 'where what is "of the world" qua *phenomenological intelligibility* is juxtaposed with what is "not of the world" qua *ethical responsibility*.' (Levinas 1984, 56)

It is in this ethical perspective that God must be thought and not in the ontological perspective of our being-there or of Supreme Being and Creator correlative to the world, as traditional metaphysics often held. God, as the God of alterity and transcendence, can only be understood in terms of that interhuman dimension which, to be sure, emerges in the phenomenological-ontological perspective of the intelligible world, but which cuts through and perforates the totality of presence and points towards the absolutely Other. (Levinas 1984, 56-7)

Levinas goes on to acknowledge the influence of 'biblical thought' upon his ethical philosophy, albeit expressed in Greek language (Levinas 1984, 57). This shows that philosophy can be ethical as well as ontological. But does it not also show that it can be theological: or that, in philosophy the theological always returns? At least it shows why Levinas's thought can be understood as a philosophy of 'revelation' (Ward).

In the face-to-face relation there is revealed to me the absolutely Other—the word of God speaks through the glory of the face' (Levinas 1984, 60)—and I can go toward the Other only by going toward the other person. To the question: 'How can one be for God or go towards God as the absolutely Other? Is it by going towards the human other?' Levinas answers with a simple 'Yes'. 'I can only go towards God by being ethically concerned by and for the other person'. (Levinas 1984, 59) This does not mean that ethics presupposes belief.

On the contrary, belief presupposes ethics as that disruption of our being-in-the-world which opens us to the other. The ethical exigency to be responsible for the other undermines the ontological primacy of the meaning of Being; it unsettles the natural and political positions we have taken up in the world and predisposes us to a meaning that is other than Being, that is otherwise than Being. (Levinas 1984, 59)

Belief may presuppose ethics; but ethics presupposes that which theology seeks to think.

The moral priority of the other over myself could not come to be if it were not motivated by something beyond nature. The ethical situation is a human situation, beyond human nature, in which the idea of God comes to mind (*Gott fällt mir ein*). In this respect we could say that God is the other who turns our nature inside out, who calls our ontological will-to-be into question. . . . God does indeed go against nature for He is not of this world. God is other than Being. (Levinas 1984, 61)

As Graham Ward has indicated, we could say that Levinas's thought is a theology of incarnation. 'The pre-existing logos is, . . . according to Levinas, also an event within our history. . . . one occurring now in the actuality of the neighbour's proximity' (Ward, 170). But in Levinas, incarnation is plural not singular. 'It is the particularity of Jesus Christ as the revelation of the triune God which distinguishes theologian from philosopher.' (Ward, 169)

Body Ethics and Erotic Ontology

We have already seen how it is possible to enter the face-to-face relation through the discourse of conversation, when the Other replies to my address, solicits my response. The ethical relation takes place in discourse, but discourse is not only verbal for Levinas. In *Otherwise than Being* (1974) we find the idea that ethical discourse already begins before anything is said; it begins in the 'non-verbal manifestation of "skin and human face"'. As Simon Critchley writes, the 'ethical essence of language, from which the experience of obligation derives, originates in the sensibility of the skin of the Other's face. The meaningful relation to the Other is maintained by a nonverbal language of skin.' (Critchley, 179)

The ethical subject is first and foremost a being of flesh and blood, who eats and is capable of hunger. As Levinas writes, only a 'being that eats can be for the Other' (Levinas 1981, 74). For only such a being can know what it is to hunger and be fed, what it is to feed the Other, and feed it with its own food. This is unlike *Dasein* in Heidegger, which is never hungry (Levinas 1969, 134).

Ethics, for the later Levinas, is concrete, corporeal. It is not a matter of categorical imperatives or maxims, but of a sensible, physical obligation to the Other. Ethics is 'enacted at the level of the skin' (Critchley, 180). Thus ethical experience occurs in discourses not only of words, but of touch and bodily contact. Levinasian ethics is an ethics of the body.

But even in *Totality and Infinity* (1961), Levinas turns to the body and its relations in order to explain the possibility of the ethical relation. It is in the biology and erotics of the body that Levinas finds the terms he needs for expressing the possibility of self-transcendence toward the Other. Self-transcendence is not possible within classical phenomenology, for there the idea is contradictory. If the self transcends itself it is no more and has not transcended itself. 'The subject that transcends is swept away in its transcendence; it does not transcend itself'. (Levinas 1969, 274) The problem is to find a way of maintaining the 'I' in the very act of going beyond the 'I'. For a 'notion of being founding transcendence', Levinas turns to the body, to what he calls the 'erotic relation' (Levinas 1969, 274).

In sexual union Levinas finds a model for thinking Being not as One, but as plural: a plural Being. For Levinas—who contests the platonic/romantic idea of sexual union as a becoming one—the sexual relation is a union which yet remains a duality. For it is union with an absolute Other—with what Levinas calls the 'feminine': an other which

remains other, which 'withdraws into its mystery'. Sexual union is relation with that which withdraws; a relation with an 'absence on the plane of knowledge', but of presence, on what Levinas calls the plane of 'voluptuousness' (Levinas 1969, 276–77).

In sexuality the subject enters into relation with what is absolutely other, with an alterity of a type unforeseeable in formal logic, with what remains other in the relation and is never converted into 'mine', and that nonetheless this relation has nothing ecstatic about it, for the pathos of voluptuousness is made of duality. (Levinas 1969, 276)

More importantly for the thinking of self-transcendence is the idea of sexual propagation or 'fecundity'. This is the idea of a 'vital impulse' which 'propagates itself across the separation of individuals', a trajectory that is discontinuous, that 'presupposes the intervals of sexuality and a specific dualism in its articulation' (Levinas 1969, 276). Here Levinas turns to the relation of parent and child, or as he names it in *Totality and Infinity*, the relation of father and son. For it is in the paternal relation that there is discovered an identity of the subject which is not that of the 'I' with itself, but of the 'I' with an other. In this identity of the subject, the 'I' goes beyond itself while remaining itself.

Levinas writes that in 'paternity the relation of the I to the self, which is set forth in the monist concept of the identical subject, is found to be completely modified'.

The son is not my work, like a poem or an object, nor is he my property. Neither the categories of power nor those of Knowledge describe my relation with the child. The fecundity of the I is neither a cause nor a domination. I do not have my child; I am my child. Paternity is relation with a stranger who while being Other . . . is me, a relation of the I with a self which is yet not me. . . . In this transcendence the I is not swept away, since the son is not me; and yet I *am* my son. The fecundity of the I is my very transcendence. (Levinas 1969, 277)

At this point perhaps one should pursue those critiques of Levinas, starting with Simone de Beauvoir and on to Derrida, which interrogate Levinas's seeming blindness to the alterity of woman in his work. However, Levinas insists that in turning to the body and its erotics, he is finding metaphors for the ethical possibilities of human being. At the end of the passage I have just quoted, Levinas writes that the 'biological origin of this concept nowise neutralizes the paradox of its meaning, and delineates a structure that goes beyond the biologically empirical.'

(Levinas 1969, 277; see also Levinas 1985, 68-71) So perhaps Levinas's use of 'feminine', 'father' and 'son'—even of 'parent' and 'child'—is not determinate of the analysis.

In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas uses a concept of maternity to effect the same work as the paternal metaphor in *Totality and Infinity*. He writes of the 'gestation of the other in the same' (Levinas 1974, 75). So as to balance, or even replace, Levinas's paternal metaphor, I would like to briefly sketch Luce Irigaray's idea of the 'placental relation', as a metaphor for self-transcendence toward the Other.

Like Levinas, Irigaray finds her conceptuality in biology, in the 'singularity of the relations between mother and child *in utero*.' For these relations are not of 'fusion'—the unity of the Same—but are 'strangely organized and respectful of the life of both'. (Irigaray, 38) First some biology. It is Helene Rouch, Irigaray's interlocuter, who speaks.

The placenta is . . . a tissue, formed by the embryo, which, while being closely imbricated with the uterine mucosa remains separate from it. . . . However, although the placenta is a formation of the embryo, it behaves like an organ that is practically independent of it. It plays a mediating role on two levels. On the one hand, it's the mediating space between mother and fetus, which means that there's never a fusion of maternal and embryonic tissues. On the other hand, it constitutes a system regulating exchanges between the two organisms, not merely quantitatively regulating the exchanges . . . but also modifying the maternal metabolism: transforming, storing, and redistributing maternal substances for both her own and the fetus' benefit. (Irigaray, 39)

The placenta is then the means by which mother and fetus are both joined and separated. It is, as Rouch goes on to say, 'a sort of negotiation between the mother's self and the other that is the embryo.'

The difference between the 'self' and other is, so to speak, continuously negotiated. It's as if the mother always knew that the embryo (and thus the placenta) was other, and that she lets the placenta know this, which then produces the factors enabling the maternal organism to accept it as other. (Irigaray, 41)

From this it is clear how Irigaray can note the 'almost ethical character of the fetal relation', and suggest it as a metaphor for the relation of self to Other.

The metaphors we take for thinking transcendence, of course, are not innocent. Rouch notes the 'remarkable blindness' of our 'cultural

imaginary' to the 'processes of pregnancy' (Irigaray, 42). We could say that the political has always already entered into the thought of the ethical. This consideration returns me to Levinas and some concluding remarks on the relation of the ethical to the political, and in turn again, to the maternal body—of the Church.

Ethics, Politics and the Placental Church

By way of conclusion I return to the distinction noted at the beginning of the essay, between Levinas's ethics of ethics and what is more normally considered ethics—the right ordering of our social and interhuman environment, which Levinas designates as morals and politics. For Levinas, this distinction is important, since for him morals and politics are to do with our ontological nature, not with the other of being that we encounter in the ethical experience. Nevertheless, he insists that the moral and political are 'ultimately founded on an ethical responsibility towards the other.' (Levinas 1984, 65)

Ethics, as the extreme exposure and sensitivity of one subjectivity to another, becomes morality and hardens its skin as soon as we move into the political world of the impersonal 'third'—the world of government, institutions, tribunals, prisons, schools, committees, etc. But the norm which must continue to inspire and direct the moral order is the ethical norm of the interhuman. If the moral-political order totally relinquishes its ethical foundation, it must accept all forms of society including the fascist or totalitarian, for it can no longer evaluate or discriminate between them. (Levinas 1984, 65–6)

However attractive this idea, is it really so easy to distinguish between a founding ethical norm and the moral-political order erected upon it? Might it not be that the ethical experience of the interface is as dependent on the moral-political order, as is the latter on the former? Or that the Levinasian ethical experience only becomes possible within certain moral-political orders? In other words, might it not be that the ethical has to be learned?

At times, the Levinasian ethic of the face-to-face can seem impossibly daunting. Indeed, Edith Wyschogrod, in her book, *Saints and Postmodernism* (1990), suggests that it is the saints who experience the claim of the face 'more radically than others and respond to it with generosity and compassion.' (Wyschogrod, 229) Richard Kearney, in dialogue with Levinas, asks if the ethical relation is not entirely utopian and unrealistic. And Levinas replies that this is the great objection to his

work. He then offers what the less saintly among us may take as words of comfort.

'Where did you ever see the ethical relation practised?', people say to me. I reply that its being utopian does not prevent it from investing our everyday actions of generosity or goodwill towards the other: even the smallest and most commonplace gestures, such as saying 'after you' as we sit at the dinner table or walk through a door, bear witness to the ethical. (Levinas 1984, 68)

Here again we find the ethical and the moral-political or social, distinguished. The ethical 'invests' and appears in polite practice. But is it only a matter of experiencing the ethical *through* polite practice? Is it perhaps not also that in learning such practice, we begin to learn the ethical? If so, we might then say that before the ethical can befall us, we must already have begun to learn certain discourses; discourses which include practices of politeness, charity, comfort and caress.

The ethical experience of the face-to-face is narrated in the gospel stories. We might say that it is in learning these stories—and in learning to follow them creatively—that the Christian community learns to experience the ethical. The Church seeks to learn self-transcendence toward the Other in the practice of following the Christ, which is learnt in the daily life of the community and above all in the gathering for the Eucharist: when the body of the holy Other touches in a communion that is other than being.

Helene Rouch, in her conversation with Luce Irigaray, relates the Christ 'who gives himself "to be eaten" in communion' with the pregnant woman who offers her body as food to her child (Irigaray, 43). This then might suggest a theology of the Other in which we can think of eucharistic and churchly practice as a placental relation in which the community is both fed and learns to feed the Other.

1 Emmanuel Levinas (1906–) was born in Lithuania of Jewish parents, but took French nationality in 1930. In 1923 he went to Strasbourg to study philosophy. There he was influenced by the philosophy of Blondel and Bergson, and became a friend of Maurice Blanchot. In the late 1920s he attended lectures by Husserl and Heidegger, and began to write his dissertation on Husserl's theory of intuition. Imprisoned for much of the war, he afterwards returned to Paris and became director of the École Normale Israélite Orientale. He has held posts at the University of Poitiers, Paris-Nanterre and the Sorbonne. His most important works are *Existence and Existents* (1947 ET 1978), *Time and the Other* (1947 ET 1987), *Totality and Infinity* (1961 ET 1969) and *Otherwise than Being* (1974 ET 1981).

Levinas' philosophy can be fully understood only when situated within the tradition of phenomenology that seeks to steer a middle course between idealism and realism in the wake of Descartes' turn to the subject. There is no space to rehearse this

situation here; merely to note that phenomenology is always in danger of collapsing into idealism, and Levinas, like Merleau-Ponty, seeks security from this in the body.

Unlike Sartre, he looks outward from self to other, and is not frightened by the question of God (Levinas 1984, 53). But it is only by bearing Descartes in mind that one can understand Levinas' obsessions. From a certain point of view they can seem irrelevant or quaint.

- 2 In part, the distinction between 'Other' and 'other' follows that of Levinas' translators, in translating 'autrui' and 'autre', the other human being and the other thing. But it also marks the distinction between the other as other within the ethical relation, and the other reduced to the same within the ontological relation.
- 3 In an important move away from the language of being to that of language itself, Levinas articulates the distinction between attitude and category as that between Saying and Said. It is the distinction between the act of speaking and what is said in that speaking. Saying is the bodily event of relating to another; 'a way of giving everything, of not keeping anything for oneself' (Levinas 1984, 65). But how is Saying to be articulated in philosophical discourse without thereby reducing it to the level of the Said? How to say the unsayable? Here there is not space to pursue these important questions, beyond noting that Levinas' work may be understood as a showing of the unsayable in the Said. He works within the ontological-phenomenological tradition in order to show what it forgets or represses. See further Critchley and Ward.

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Israelites and Canaanites, Christians and Jews: Studies in Self-Definition

Paul Joyce

My concern is with the phenomenon of self-definition, and particularly with the self-definition of one group over against another group. I shall consider two test-cases, one ancient and the other modern, the self-definition of Ancient Israel in relation to the Canaanites as evidenced in the Hebrew Bible, and the self-definition of Christians in relation to Jews in the Christian experience of reading the Hebrew Bible as Old Testament.¹

Self and Other in Ancient Israel

I begin with the distinction between Israel and Canaan as presented in the Bible. This case illustrates how complex can be the mixture of reality and fantasy in the self-definition of a nation. Some words from the book of Deuteronomy:

'You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom