

FIRST PHILOSOPHY ACCORDING TO EMMANUEL LEVINAS THE DEVELOPMENT OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL AWARENESS TOWARDS THE OTHER

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Abstract:

The aim of this article is to highlight the philosophical upheaval introduced by the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, which gives a prominent place to ethics in relation to the other branches of philosophy. We will emphasise this ethical turn for phenomenology and ontology, where philosophy is transformed into 'ethical reflection', by attempting to awaken the critical problematic in Levinas's philosophy.

We will also discuss the central concept of Levinas' ethical philosophy. Thus, we will clarify the demarcation between his own philosophy and what he assimilated from Husserl and Heidegger, given that Levinas' work to renew the philosophical discourse will lead to an «ethical phenomenology» which neither Husserl nor Heidegger knew the path.

Keywords: Ethics, Being, Phenomenology, Ontology, Other.

Introduction

The questions raised by the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas are inseparable from contemporary philosophical questioning, marked by the reinvention of philosophical thought and its fundamental concepts. Levinas has linked the return and recurrence of philosophical questioning to issues of ontology and being. In his 1935 essay '*De l'évasion*', he emphasises that he is trying to reinterpret the question of ontology, not through the veracity of its propositions, nor in the quest and attempt to establish the predominance of the external world over knowledge. It is rather a quest to establish an ethical relationship with «Other», without referring to any ontology, idealism or autonomous philosophy that has tried to reduce and reframe the Other to the measure of the Same.

Levinas's philosophy reflects a critical orientation, as can be seen from his various writings, which offer a critical reading of major philosophical themes. It also presents an original philosophy that has found its soul through the great philosophical questions it has explored thanks to its critical interrogation of the history of philosophy, as well as the decisive debate that pitted it against the great philosophers of its time (Husserl and Heidegger). In addition to his critical reading of the philosophy of these philosophers, he strove to establish an 'ethical philosophy' as the 'first philosophy' and fundamental task of philosophy.

This is perhaps what made Levinas see the need for a radical revision of the meaning of philosophy and of 'first philosophy', which would take an ethical turn, and 'ethics' is the subject that Levinas opposed (phenomenology and fundamental ontology). If Husserl's first philosophy remained frozen in theory and science, as for the 'Fundamental Ontology' to which Heidegger gave the legitimacy of answering the question forgotten in the history of metaphysics, i.e. the question of

being, it has become, according to Levinas, a question that is impossible to answer, and this has become a motivation for leaving this thought, as he indicated in his book "*De l'Existence à l'Existant*", for a different ontology, or as he expressed it in his great book, «*Otherwise than being, or beyond essence*», where 'beyond essence' refers to this going beyond the idea of Being as the highest horizon of philosophy, towards the 'idea of the Good' as the original meaning that precedes and gives meaning to existence. and from the idea of Being to the Other as the forgotten one in the history of Western philosophy.

This is where the depth of Levinas's thought lies in relation to the main thrusts of contemporary philosophy. The challenge that his ethical philosophy embodies is that of the 'human other' and of the ethical relationship with him in all its dimensions and meanings. This is why his philosophy appears in its main title as a philosophy of the Other and as an ethical reflection on the 'other' as the pivot of human relationships.

The question that Levinas proposed in this context, in search of ways out and renewal of philosophical thought, centred on the following points: what are the philosophical possibilities that allow us to move away from the model of phenomenological and ontological thought? What can justify his philosophical assertion that ethics is the first and principal task of philosophy?

1-Phenomenological conversion in the Levinasian reading

In ethical philosophy, phenomenology is perceived as lacking in scientificity, in contrast to Husserl's early philosophy, which aimed to go beyond traditional metaphysics and subject-object dualism. However, Levinas refuted this view by denouncing the fate of phenomenology as a rigorous scientific discipline in his thesis entitled 'The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology'. Thus, Levinas's approach to metaphysics can be seen as a continuation of Husserl's 'end of metaphysics/first philosophy', while overcoming the idea that philosophy has a special project or programme, as Husserl believed¹.

Indeed, Levinas has opted for an approach distinct from that of Husserl with regard to the assertions of phenomenology. Thus, Levinas no longer calls for a philosophy centred on knowledge that demands exactitude and certainty: « Philosophy has not become a rigorous science ... philosophy refuses this spiritual way of life »². This statement implies that Levinas has highlighted the failure of Husserl's ambitions to transform philosophy into a rigorous scientific discipline worthy of the precision of mathematics, an aspiration that Levinas considers to be one of the aberrations of Western philosophy in general, It has always emphasised the need to determine the nature of thought and its functions in constructing the mighty edifices of truth and certainty, and since (Descartes and Bacon) it has sought precise methods for exploring the essence of this truth.

For Levinas, phenomenology therefore remains an enquiry into the relationship between the world and consciousness, In this philosophy, we are inclined to consider lived experience as ambiguous knowledge that reflection, where «intentional consciousness will convert into clear and

¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethique et infini*, France, Librairie Arthème Fayrad, 22 Edition, 2018, p 85.

² Emmanuel Levinas, *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J VRIN, Quatrième édition, 2016, p 155.

distinct data»³ This concentration on consciousness and the activity of the transcendental ego as a constitutive element and source of meaning indicates that the understanding of existence is linked to the understanding and clarification of the functioning of consciousness, which leads us to neglect other aspects of the intentional act. according to Levinas, who, through his critical reading of phenomenological methodology, is attempting to broaden its scope and possibilities, which have remained hostage to the initial principles enunciated by Husserl.

Levinas conceived of phenomenology as a method of research emancipated from superficial experiences and therefore as a method capable of opening up to the deepest points of meaning, broadening its scope to include ethical questions and the question of the 'other', thus leading phenomenology to the search for the pre-original. This is perhaps what Levinas emphasised in his text «The Ruin of Representation» in his book (*Discovering Existence with Husserl and Heidegger*), in which he points out that if we want to develop a post-Husserlian phenomenology, we must abandon the idea of a phenomenology of representation, we must also abandon the correlation of subject and object that determines intentionality, where meaning comes from the presence of the object before consciousness⁴, and open ourselves up to another dynamic that gives vitality to intentionality and enters into a new meaning that makes it possible to give meaning to this same presence and therefore to abandon it: «the totalizing and totalitarian representation»⁵, which has been the main concern of phenomenology as a tendency towards global and objective knowledge, determined by transcendental subjectivity, and in this way the concept of transcendence will be freed from total vision.

Levinas defines the essence of ethics in his critical context of phenomenology and the concept of intentionality by saying: «Ethics must bring... transcendence to a conclusion, because the essence of ethics lies in its transcendent intention, and not every transcendent intention has the noesis-noem structure»⁶.

What Levinas means here by transcendental intentionality is the relation that is established through the encounter with the Other, who is not an object or a theme to be thematised in the structure of cognitive consciousness, because the Other as 'Otherness' is not an object of knowledge. This prevents the relationship between the self and the other from being a relationship of knowledge, but rather an ethical relationship, which requires a moral awareness that precedes consciousness for Levinas, and because ethics precedes knowledge, the self exposes itself to the other in the encounter, because the encounter demands hospitality and generosity and even kindness for the sake of the other, so that the transcendence of the other is due to the fact that ethics precedes the self and obliges it to renounce its own transcendence for the sake of the other.

Indeed, Levinas wants to go further than Husserl on intentionality, that is, to reveal the fullness of the intentional dimension that is not necessarily subject to the objective act of knowledge, and unlike Husserl, Levinas pays attention to «non-intentional consciousness' where: 'Pre-reflexive, non-intentional consciousness cannot be described as awareness of this passivity ... the timidity of the non-intentional as a childhood of the mind to be overcome or an access of

³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre nous, Essais sur le penser -à- l'autre*, Paris, Edition Grasset & Fasquelle, 1991, p 137.

⁴ Levinas, *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, Op.cit. p 179.

⁵ Ibid, p 188.

⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini, essai sur l'extériorité*, Original Edition : Martinus Nijhoff, 1971, p 15.

weakness»⁷ He starts from the spontaneity of the self and its initial innocence to propose another understanding of human relationships that Western philosophy has judged to be based on rationality and truth.

In this ethical perspective proposed by Levinas, the concepts of phenomenology are overturned. For example, intentionality: its meaning becomes not the awareness of the self directed towards the object, but how the object (Other) becomes the one that questions the self, that is, in ethical terms. It is this ethical perspective that destroys the primacy of the transcendental ego as the giver of meaning in phenomenology.

Intersubjectivity becomes purely moral. So that the self is incapable of representing the object (the other) and of perceiving it. This ethical perspective is sufficient to destroy the rule of representation in phenomenology, because it is not necessary for every relationship with something to be a reflexive relationship like the one between subject and object. The 'other' is not an object, and consequently not everything that the subject encounters can be represented in Consciousness, as was the case in Husserl's phenomenology.

The ethical relationship of which Levinas speaks is not a relationship between self and other in the epistemological sense, but an ethical relationship based on tolerance and recognition, to which Levinas gives a deeper meaning and which is primordial for the epistemological objectives of phenomenology, which can be considered as an expansion of phenomenological research.

According to Smadar Bustan's reading, Levinas's critique seeks to reveal the reductionism adopted by the phenomenological methodology of life and experience within the folds of consciousness. We understand that Levinas's critique aims to seek the possibility of stating the primacy of actual real life, of life as 'representation' in which feelings and emotions are reduced to representations within consciousness⁸.

What distinguishes the methodological use of phenomenology between Husserl and Levinas? Husserl's aim is to master the method and employ it by rigorously describing the intentional patterns of consciousness, suspending our judgements and preconceptions, whereas Levinas develops a method that enables us to discover meaning in our lived experience, to be in constant contact with what is external and different from us (others), and enables us to grasp the total meaning of ethics.

What we need to remember from all this, what Levinas goes beyond in phenomenology, is the idea of the 'transcendental ego' as the source of meaning. Philosophy in its phenomenological context, according to Levinas, is not a question of knowledge but a search for a relationship that cannot be intentional, that is to say subject-object relationship, but a search for an ethical relationship with the 'other', which brings the philosophy of ethics to its core.

2-From ontology to ethics

⁷ Levinas : *Entre Nous, Essais sur le penser -à- l'autre*, Op.cit. p 138.

⁸ Smadar BUSTAN, *DE L'INTELLECTUALISME A L'ETHIQUE, Emmanuel Levinas et la phénoménologie d'Edmund Husserl*, Bruxelles, Edition OUSIA, 2014, p 39.

The relationship of Levinas's philosophy to Heideggerian ontology is ambiguous. Although he declared very early on the need to leave the atmosphere of Heideggerian philosophy⁹, on the other hand, he admits that he has not been able to overcome the influence of the ideas in Heidegger's "*Being and Time* (1927)", and he acknowledges this on several occasions in his works, for example in "*Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974)", he writes "These lines and those that follow owe a great deal to Heidegger"¹⁰. Despite the critical position that "Fundamental Ontology" occupies in Levinas's texts, the originality of this philosophy concerning the question and interpretation of Being is, in our opinion, the secret behind Levinas's obsession with Heidegger's philosophy.

Levinas wrote: "Meditation on (Sein und Zeit) has led me to thoughts that have never lost sight of this primordial book, while at the same time distancing me from its thesis on the fundamental priority of ontology"¹¹. The question of Being was the common thread running from Levinas's philosophy to the question of ethics, for before he declared that ethics was the first philosophy, his philosophical commitment from his earliest works was centred on the question of Being, as can be seen in his essay (*De l'évasion/ On Escape* 1935), in which he sets himself the task of renewing the question of 'being'¹². This question remained at the centre of his attention, and he continued to seek an answer to it throughout his later philosophical works.

The question of "Being" is the most important question that Levinas tried to reinterpret, seeking a way to go beyond this question in its ontological sense¹³, as Levinas proposes to ask the question of existence from a different angle. In his analysis of the question of existence, Levinas links the question of existence in its ontological dimension to the question of true existence, It means searching for that relationship between existence in the ontological sense and existence in the real sense. Thus, he argues that existence as a projection into the world and abandonment, as Heidegger and Sartre believed, so that existence becomes a project and freedom, is not the only interpretation, but can be interpreted from an ethical perspective as we are in this world and this existence to coexist with and for others.

The new angle of view that Levinas proposes for answering the question of being consists in considering the human situation from an ethical angle, and not from an ontological position, which explains Levinas's attempt to go beyond the Western philosophical heritage based on the principle of subjectivity and knowledge, in order to pose the question of being from an ethical angle not based on the primacy of the ego, of knowledge and understanding, but on the basis of recognition and the right to exist.

As we find in the formulation of his question on "being", in contradiction with Heidegger's question: "The question par excellence is not, or the first question is not "why is there being rather than nothing?" but "do I have the right to be"¹⁴. Thus, Levinas's philosophy appears as an attempt to replace thought that thinks the question of Being ontologically by thought that

⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existant*, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J VRIN, 2004, p 19.

¹⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être, ou au-delà de l'essence*, Paris, Original Edition Martinus Nijhoff, édition 10, 2017, p 67.

¹¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre nous, Essais sur le penser -à- l'autre*, Op.cit, p 212.

¹² Emmanuel Levinas, *De l'évasion*, Paris, Fata Morgana, édition 3, 2018, p 99.

¹³ Francis Guibal, *Emmanuel Levinas, le sens de la transcendance autrement*, Paris, PUF, 2009, P15.

¹⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J VRIN, 2004, p 257.

thinks it ethically and humanly, because the question of the right to existence is a question about the meaning of human existence and the meaning of human life, since this substitution, according to what Levinas wants through his philosophy, becomes the compensation of the primacy of ontology by the primacy of ethics, "the question of the meaning of being : not the ontological understanding of this extraordinary verb, but the ethics of the justice of being"¹⁵.

Levinas underlines this clearly when he states: "At the unveiling of being in general, as the basis of knowledge and as the meaning of being, the relationship with the being that expresses itself pre-exists; at the level of ontology, the ethical level"¹⁶It is therefore clear that the ethical relationship with others is prior to the ontological relationship with being, and is not an ontological structure of man as Heidegger believed (being-with-others). The primacy of the understanding of being in Heideggerian ontology is what made him neglect the ethical relationship to the Other, which is why Levinas goes beyond the idea of the unveiling of being as embodied by Heidegger towards the opening that is an opening to the Other. This argument is the main task of Levinas's philosophy, for the revival of the concept of the "Other" is what constitutes the main question of his philosophy of the ethical relationship.

The ethical relationship sought by Levinas: "l'un-pour-l'autre/ one for the other "¹⁷ is the theoretical basis that allows us to think of the relationship in contrast to the ontological sense. On the one hand, l'un-pour-l'autre refers to a meaning opposite to the ontological meaning proposed by Heidegger (being-with-others). On the other hand, it allows us to envisage the meaning of existence not as dereliction or anguish. This reflects a key concept that Levinas introduces into his ethical arsenal: the concept of "proximity", which contradicts the Heideggerian sense of (being-with-others) as an obligation or existential condition.

Levinas defines 'proximity' as follows: "Proximity is not mere coexistence, but concern"¹⁸ and a responsibility towards the other, a concern that gives priority to the Other over Being, the priority of responding to the call of the Other over the interest of the self, what Levinas called "indifference", which reflects the movement of the moral transcendence of the self when it is stripped of its interest in being for the sake of others. Perhaps this is what Levinas means: "Ethics is not at all a layer over ontology, but what is in some way more ontological than ontology, an emphasis of ontology".¹⁹

Ethics is the fruit of Levinas's hermeneutic efforts in his critical reading of the history of Western philosophy and his rethinking of the question of ethics. The substitution of the ethical question for the question of being is the major achievement of Levinas's work. As Derrida recognised in his comparison of the difference between Heidegger's and Levinas's return to the idea of a 'beyond essence', Heidegger's approach will lead him to recognise the ontological transcendence of being, whereas Levinas's return will lead him to an ethical transcendence against ontological transcendence²⁰.

¹⁵ Ibid, p 257.

¹⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini, essai sur l'extériorité*, Op.cit, p 220.

¹⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être, ou au-delà de l'essence*, Op.cit, p 214.

¹⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, Op.cit. p 322.

¹⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, Op.cit, p 143.

²⁰ Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture de la différence*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1967. pp 208- 209.

The difference between Heidegger and Levinas appears through the fate of the interpretation of the meaning of being; Heidegger tends to rethink metaphysics by reinterpreting the meaning of being, whereas Levinas agrees with his master on the necessity of the metaphysical analysis of being, but disagrees with him on the meaning of being, which is transcendent to existing: "And yet the transcendence of being described by immanence is not the only transcendence of which the philosophers themselves speak. Philosophers also bring us the enigmatic message of the beyond of Being"²¹.

Levinas wrote in "*Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*" "The beyond of being ... was recognised as Good by Plato. Whether Plato made it an idea and a source of light - it doesn't matter. He was inspired by the idea of "beyond essence"²² as an idea of the "Supreme Good" that was embodied in Plato. Levinas borrowed it as the essence of ethics. Plato's idea of the Good precedes existence and truth. He saw it as the ontological foundation of existence and knowledge. From this perspective, Levinas would not limit the task of philosophy to an ontological interpretation of being, which Heidegger saw as the origin of all meaning, especially after Levinas demonstrated the inability of fundamental ontology to understand the meaning of being.

Rather, Levinas sought to re-establish metaphysics as a search for what is beyond essence, i.e. the Good, and this led him to introduce the question of ethics as the meaning of being against Onto-logy (as rationality and understanding of being), that is, as a metaphysics prior to ontology, concerned with meaning (pre-original), and it is only through it that the meaning of being can be justified by the ethical relationship between the Self and the Other.

On all this, we can say: Levinas's conception of ethics as a primary philosophy involved overturning the traditional conception of the subject of philosophy that still dominates the orientations of contemporary philosophical thought (Husserl and Heidegger), since he replaced their questions with the ethical question to become the fundamental and procedural question of primary philosophy. This helped to replace the primacy of the ontological question with the primacy of the ethical question by changing the field and methods of questioning, moving from reflection on "being" to reflection on "ethics" and from reflection on existence to reflection on human interaction.

3-Ethics as a primary philosophy

The first philosophy for Levinas will be contrary to what Husserl might have envisaged, as well as to the Western philosophical tradition since Aristote, which sees the first philosophy (Metaphysics) as an understanding of "being as being". For Levinas, the first philosophy will not be a theoretical science specialising in the study of being as Aristote did, something of which Derrida was well aware when he said that Levinas's aim with regard to metaphysics "Metaphysics, which Levinas wants to raise from its subordination and whose concept he wants to restore against the whole of the tradition stemming from Aristote"²³.

²¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*, Op.cit. p 264.

²² Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être, ou au-delà de l'essence*, Op.cit, p 36.

²³ Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture de la différence*, Op.cit. p 123.

Far from these Western philosophical approaches to metaphysics, Levinas underpins his philosophy by engaging with the ethical question as a necessary question for understanding the meaning of being. According to Derrida, Levinas's use of religious concepts and expressions is understood as an openness to the Other, (Autrui: the orphan and the widow, to the other in his vulnerability). In Derrida's reading, Levinas's thought appeals instead to "an ethical relationship_a non-violent relationship to the infinite as infinitely-other, to the Other"²⁴ because, in Levinas's perspective, the relationship to the infinite can only take place through the relationship to the Other.

We can understand how Levinas introduces the question of primary philosophy or meta-ethics by changing his area of study from ontology to ethics, which constitutes a departure from the traditional conception of Western metaphysics, insofar as it expresses his break with the traditional conception of Western metaphysics, posing the question of ethics means being concerned with the ethical relationship that unites us with others and reflecting on how to preserve human existence, but in all this, the self will not be the primary moral legislator, but the transcendent Other who seeks protection and care from the self, which leads us to go beyond the traditional sense of the self that reduces everything to what corresponds to it and returns the different to the same, and the role of the ethical self becomes the preservation of the Other and of the idea of difference.

For Levinas, philosophy is the search for a 'pre-original' meaning that transcends the limits of traditional metaphysics: "Ethics, beyond vision and certainty, draws the structure of exteriority as such"²⁵ Metaphysics, as the search for meaning coming from exteriority, becomes the basis of ethics. To justify his argument, Levinas has no choice but to return to a new interpretation of Platonism and its idea of the supreme good that lies "beyond essence", in other words by taking the concept out of its ideal and ontological sphere of philosophy and locating it in the sphere of ethics, Through this ontological and metaphysical interpretation of the idea of the Supreme Good, Levinas is able to recast the question of being into a question about the meaning and value of the good from an ethical point of view.

According to Jean-Marc Narbonne, Levinas reconsidered the original idea of transcendence through a Greek reflection by Plato in his idea of the good beyond essence, where Levinas would find a way out of the Western philosophical tradition and its failure to grasp the idea of transcendence ²⁶, which is in fact the depth of his ethical philosophy as a description of the inter-human relationship that always turns towards Exteriority and (the good beyond) as the essence of being, and as a movement without returning to oneself, that is, an opening to the other and to the Absolute.

As "ethics as the first philosophy", "it does not limit itself to preparing the theoretical exercise of thought which would monopolise transcendence. The traditional opposition between theory and practice will be erased on the basis of metaphysical transcendence"²⁷. This statement gives us a new understanding of ethics, in the sense that it is not simply a theoretical

²⁴ Ibid, p 123.

²⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini, essai sur l'extériorité*, Op.cit, p 440.

²⁶ Jean-Marc Narbonne, *Levinas et l'héritage Grec*, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J.VRIN, 2004, p 58.

²⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini, essai sur l'extériorité*, Op.cit, p 15.

philosophy that monopolises the concept of transcendence in abstract thought, as was the case in modern philosophies that consider the meaning of transcendence according to the subject-object duality, either by considering existence as transcendent, or by privileging the knowing subject over the object of knowledge.

For Levinas, the Other is neither a Noem nor an Alter-ego according to the phenomenological conception. Through this idea, he criticises the concept of the Husserlian intersubjective relation, because the Other escapes consciousness, and transcendence also escapes any thematisation or reduction, thus denying the ego as the constitutive ego of the world and of things.

In Levinas's ethics, "the other is transcendence"²⁸, because the question of transcendence goes beyond these cognitive and objective limits and rises to the level of experience, where the ethical relationship with the other requires an empirical and objective connotation through the encounter, and the encounter through the face represents the experience of openness to the infinite, as a gateway to the metaphysical relationship with the infinite/transcendent, where "a relationship with the absolutely other or truth is established"²⁹.

Consequently, the task of Levinasian philosophy is in part a questioning of authentic transcendence as "metaphysical-ethical transcendence"³⁰. He focuses his moral philosophy on "human interaction" within the inter-human relationship as the path to transcendence. According to David Banon, the relationship with the Other and transcendence is not a relationship of knowledge like the subject-object relationship, but a primordial relationship, a relationship with (An-archic)³¹, where the relationship between the ego and the Other plays out as a real relationship as an experience of the relationship with metaphysical transcendence.

4-Conclusion

Levinas's idea of ethics as a 'first philosophy', focused on the 'ethical relationship with the other', is one of his criticisms of the Western philosophical tradition. In his view, the latter has not paid enough attention to this ethical problem, as it has shaped Western thought. The history and various philosophies of Western thought have given rise to a self-centred, isolated self, preoccupied with the other and with difference. From this perspective, Levinas opts for an opposite approach to develop his philosophy, basing himself on the idea of otherness and difference as the major axes of his reflection on the meaning of existence and ethics.

Levinas aims to establish ethics as a primary philosophy, building on the phenomenological approach and incorporating some of his own innovations. Beyond this shared approach, an essential element is that these two philosophies focus on the relationship between man and the world. Their aim was to adjust the perspective from which man and existence are viewed, which was at the heart

²⁸ Corine Pelluchon, *POUR COMPRENDRE LEVINAS, un philosophe pour notre temps*, Paris, Editions Du SEUIL, 2020, p 38.

²⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini, essai sur l'extériorité*, Op.cit, p 15.

³⁰ Bernard Forthomme, *Une philosophie de la transcendance, la métaphysique d'Emmanuel Levinas*, Paris, pensée universelle, Vrin, 1979, p 286.

³¹ David Banon, *De l'être à la lettre, Philosophie et judaïsme dans l'œuvre d'Emmanuel Levinas*, Paris, Hermann Editeurs, 2022, p 110.

of Husserl's and Levinas's concerns. Husserl focused on redefining and formulating the concept of the transcendental ego in an attempt to change the perspective of man and existence, while Levinas generally directed his efforts towards the quest for an ethical approach based on the idea of the Other.

Levinas differs from the Western ontological tradition, notably Heidegger, in that his questioning of Being is based on an ethical reflection linked to the human condition rather than an ontological perspective. This justifies Levinas's effort to go beyond the Western philosophical heritage based on the concept of subjectivity and knowledge, in order to approach the question of existence from an ethical angle that is not based on ontology, but on the ethical foundation and recognition of the right to existence.

Consequently, Levinas's critique can be understood in all its depth as a surpassing and exploration of the 'ethical' question; the surpassing according to Levinas can be seen as twofold: One surpassing Husserlian phenomenology, and the other surpassing Heidegger's ontological phenomenology.

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