

Levinas and Kierkegaard: Judaism, Christianity, and an Ethics of Witnessing*

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As a thorough Christian – or, as he would have put it, infinitely interested in becoming one – Søren Kierkegaard addressed himself neither to Jews nor to Judaism. But they have overheard him. In part because they could not help it...Jews are well advised to be on the alert for what they can learn not only about him but about themselves also. – Rabbi Milton Steinberg, 1949¹

INTRODUCTION

Totalizing ethical constructs, such as Kant and Hegel's systematic moral philosophies, avoid discussions of *subjectivity as responsibility*. If one can "assume or discharge" her obligations toward others, she "must in some sense be identifiable independently of them."² Assumptions and theories about human freedom as existing *a priori* to human beings have run rampant; however, all of these theoretical frameworks, in their attempts to liberate the subject from social commitments, are both ill advised and ultimately do violence to the singular existing individual. Part of the problem is that philosophizing is usually done from the perspective of either methodological atheism or radical negative theology, and not from the point of view of the transcendent.

Emmanuel Levinas and Søren Kierkegaard have brilliantly criticized the history of Western philosophy for its shortcomings and failures.³ Both writers strongly opposed the Hegelian totalizing system, among others. As such, armed with a contemporary philosophical vocabulary, we could accurately describe their projects as deconstructing the philosophical tradition from the inside out, pointing out its paradoxes and aporetic structures. Their insistence on the subject as responsible before understanding this condition pose a serious challenge to all previous thought. For them, subjectivity *is* responsibility; a subject is nothing if not in-relation to some Other individual. However, it would be unwise of us to jump the gun and label these thinkers as postmodern deconstructionists, pure and simple. Both struggled to show philosophy its religious origins and trajectories. Translating Hebrew into Greek were the primary goals for both Levinas and Kierkegaard.

We have a number of writings and lectures that Levinas has left us directly treating the 19th century existentialist thinker, many of whose authors continually were struggling to "become Christians" in Danish Christendom. However, historical hindsight teaches us that Kierkegaard may not have anticipated Levinas; so a part of my task in this presentation is to wonder how Kierkegaard might have responded to Levinas' claims and philosophical discoveries.⁴ Levinas writes, "The substance of Kierkegaard's existential philosophy...makes naked the richness of an individual soul thirsting for salvation, and through this, the existential categories of religious psychology."⁵ Throughout this work, I suggest that they would have more in common than would separate them. Ultimately, I will gesture towards the notion of a 'seamless passage'⁶ that transverses the writings of these two philosophers of faith and morality.

Additionally, in the “Interlude,” I will indirectly defend Kierkegaard against Levinas and Martin Buber’s charges that Kierkegaard’s author Johannes de Silentio rejected ethical responsibility with his notion of the “teleological suspension of the ethical.” I contend that Levinas and Buber’s readings of Kierkegaard in this manner are not accurate to the Kierkegaardian spirit, nor do they reflect complete readings of the Kierkegaardian corpus. Three subsequent sections and the conclusion compose this presentation. Part one, “Ethics beyond ‘Ethics’” will further investigate Levinas and Kierkegaard’s alternative modalities of ethics against their contemporary adversaries. Part two, “Reading, Commandment, and Authority,” will examine Levinas’ notion that “ethics is an optics” (*TI*, 23), that responsibility (for self and others) runs coeval with the human condition for both him and Kierkegaard. Part three, “Responsibility and Love: Interiority and Exteriority” will attempt to read Kierkegaard through Levinas’ ethics of the Other, and allude to a reading of Levinas through Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love*. The paper will conclude with a review of the terrain covered and point toward further directions of inquiry, specifically within the domain of an “ethics of witnessing.” An aim of this paper is, as Steinberg observes, is to continue the “timeless dialectical interchange between the Jewish and Christian faiths.”⁷

ETHICS BEYOND “ETHICS”

Time passed, the possibility was there, Abraham had faith; time passed, it became unreasonable, Abraham had faith. – *FT*, 17

The Torah is given in the Light of a face. The epiphany of the other person is *ipso facto* my responsibility toward him: seeing the other is already an obligation toward him. – *NTR*, 47

For Kierkegaard, as is well known, there are three interconnected “stages on life’s way:” the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. What we conceive as our ethical-universals are revealed as social constructions and conventions once one leaps into the religious mode of existence. Here one relates absolutely to the absolute and relatively to the relative. The knight of faith witnesses ethical commandments in their true light as coming directly from God – as such, there is an ethics that supersedes the ethical-universal mode of existence, or an ethics beyond “ethics.”

As philosophers who thought through the problems of the history of moral philosophy, both Levinas and Kierkegaard sound like divine command theorists who suggest a transcendental and religious source of ethical commandment – one that goes beyond cultural and traditional conceptions of the ethical-as-universal. For Levinas, the infinite responsibility for the Other individual is a concept that the human mind cannot adequately interpret and understand. Similarly, for Kierkegaard’s authors, the move toward paradoxical faith in Religiousness B (as articulated in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*) cannot be intellectualized and formalized into a neat and digestible ethical theory. The singular individual, in both cases, is above the systems of morality and manners that we have created and abided by for centuries. Climacus writes,

If the individual is paradoxical-dialectical, every remnant of original immanence annihilated, and all connection cut away, and the individual situated at the edge of existence, then we have the *paradoxical-religious*. This paradoxical inwardness is the greatest possible, because even the most dialectical qualification, if it is still within immanence, has, as it were, a possibility of an escape, of a shifting away, of a withdrawal into the eternal behind it; it is as if everything were not actually at stake. But the break makes the inwardness the greatest possible (*CUP*, 572).

The religion of immanence, Religiousness A, is without proper revelation. Religiousness A shifts into Religiousness B once one accepts the paradox, namely, that the transcendent resides within the immanent. For Climacus, this is the incarnation of Jesus Christ as fully God, yet, fully human, into the world of humanity. It is within Religiousness B that one realizes that the grounding for ethics is not in humanity, but in a faith-relation to the Creator – God.

Because of their insistence on individual (and interpersonal) ethics, both Levinas and Kierkegaard avoided political sermonizing. The face-to-face relation for Levinas, and the faith encounter for Kierkegaard, resists a straightforward political program. However, contemporary political exigencies necessitated both Levinas and Kierkegaard to comment on current events and social-cultural struggles. Levinas writes

The interhuman perspective can subsist, but can also be lost, in the political order of the City where the Law establishes mutual obligations between citizens. The interhuman, properly speaking, lies in a non-indifference of one to another, in a responsibility of one for another, but before the reciprocity of this responsibility, which will be inscribed in impersonal laws, comes to be superimposed on the pure altruism of this responsibility inscribed in the ethical position of the *I qua I* (*EN*, 100).

The ethical responsibility that I have for another precedes the reciprocal responsibility that she has for me. Politics does not, and should not, dictate ethics in either the Levinasian or Kierkegaardian brands, but it is the ethical which should inform the political. Levinas continues

It is in the interhuman perspective of *my* responsibility for the other, without concern for reciprocity in my call for his or her disinterested help, in the asymmetry of the relation of *one* to the *other*, that I have tried to analyze the phenomenon of useless suffering (*ibid*, 101).

Elsewhere, Levinas observes that “reciprocity is a structure founded on an original *inequality*” (*DF*, 22; my emphasis). The idea of recognition, especially for Hegel, is a second-layer version of human interaction. The first layer is the infinite and asymmetrical responsibility that one has for another.

READING, COMMANDMENT, AND AUTHORITY

For Levinas, ethics is an exegesis. He is “convinced that the Bible is the outcome of prophecies and that in it ethical testimony...is deposited in the form of writings” (*EI*, 115). Reading is thus an ethical act.⁸ He observes, “to read is to keep oneself above the realism – or the politics – of our care for ourselves, without coming however to the good intentions of beautiful souls, or to the normative idealism of what ‘must be’” (*ibid*, 22). Subjectivity is not a given; rather it is a response to commandment, to mitzvot. Kierkegaard’s

pseudonymous authors attempted meet their readers on their own terms, and to seduce them into the next stage or mode of existence. For both authors, against the humanist existentialists, freedom is not the human condition – responsibility is prior to freedom. Levinas writes, “Responsibility prior to any free commitments, the oneself outside of all the tropes of essence, would be responsibility for the freedom of others” (*OB*, 109). Put more simply, “a subject is a *hostage*” to the Other person (*ibid*, 112; my emphasis). “Here I am,” Abraham says in response to God’s command. Silentio adds, when God commanded Abraham, “cheerfully, freely, confidently, loudly he answered: ‘Here am I’” (*FT*, 21). In doing this self-sacrificing act, he receives the gift of grace and becomes a subject.

Silentio’s reflections on Abraham’s trial before God neatly illustrate the Jewish conception of “we will do and we will hear.” Contrary to the western philosophical heritage, the “the temptation of temptation is the temptation of knowledge” (*NTR*, 34). Levinas writes, “Abraham...does not hesitate to place himself over the ethical and knowledge because of his confidence in the unlimited power of God...”⁹ Abraham says to God, “Here I am.” He then responds to God’s command to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Abraham, because of his steadfast faith, does not attempt to understand or to internalize God’s word. He acts before comprehension. This is the kind of responsibility that humans have for one another. In *Ethics and Infinity*, Levinas asserts that the “intersubjective relation is a non-symmetrical relation. In this sense, I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity.... Reciprocity is *his* affair” (98).

A major facet of Levinas’ project is to read Western philosophy through the literary, ethical, and prophetic. Similarly, Kierkegaard wishes to prioritize self-transformation and authentic selfhood over the efficiency-based philosophies of modernity, as observed by Weber and Habermas as strategic action geared toward success. Against Descartes’ mental gymnastics of doubt, Kierkegaard suggests the edifying experience of existential despair, an inner struggle for selfhood. Whereas the intellect eases doubt, only the will and faith are able to ease despair. The resolution of doubt, clarity, cannot also reduce despair. Through the experience of despair, one encounters his freedom. Once one renounces his freedom in the leap of faith, his freedom is actualized. For Kierkegaard’s authors, accepting the paradox is the key to authentic faith in God and charity toward the neighbor.

INTERLUDE: LEVINAS AND BUBER AGAINST KIERKEGAARD

In a 1963 lecture on Kierkegaard, Levinas appears somewhat appalled by the “violence” in Kierkegaard’s writings, arguing that “Kierkegaard’s harshness started with his ‘transcendence of the ethical’” (“EE,” 34). Later, Levinas levels the charge that “it is not at all clear that Kierkegaard located the ethical accurately” (*ibid.*). For Levinas, there is the infinite call to ethical responsibility – that is all there is to human relations. Martin Buber critiques Kierkegaard on similar grounds.¹⁰ He contended that the ethical mode could never be suspended; that religion cannot be reduced to the ethical. Buber is content with God’s request as read in Micah 6:8: “You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.” According to Buber, *this* is the ethical, and it

should not be surpassed. In an indirect response to these challenges, Calvin Schrag notes that

...the suspension in the leap of faith is the suspension of a moral requirement which functions as a universal and subordinates the individual to its general moral sanction. The individual in his religious act of faith stands not in relation to the universal, but he stands in an indelibly personal and unique relation to the Absolute or God.¹¹

It is through radical exteriority and self-emptying that we respond to the face of God and/as the face of the Other individual. Against Buber and Levinas' (mis)interpretation and criticism, the ethical as a mode of existence is not suspended; rather, it is the ethical *as universal moral requirement* is suspended. Silentio observes, in regard to the suspension of the ethical, "that which is suspended is not relinquished but is preserved in the higher, which is its telos" (*FT*, 54). Later, after the suspension, Silentio maintains that "the ethical receives a completely different expression, a paradoxical expression, such as, for example, that love to God may bring the knight of faith to give *love to his neighbor*" (*ibid*, 70; my emphasis). Schrag lends assistance to Silentio here, and is careful to point out that the ethical as mode of existence is *not* discontinuous with the religious stage. It is not as though, in acting religiously, one is allowed to abstain from acting ethically. What counts as ethics receives new meaning and grounding in what Kierkegaard calls the religious stage. Abraham, in his singularity, understands by going beyond the bounds of reason and conventional moral rationality. He responds, that is, he does, and then he hears. Schrag notes, and Silentio would agree, that "the ethical must ultimately be rooted in the religious, and that it is only through the religious act that it receives its valid and authentic expression."¹²

RESPONSIBILITY AND LOVE: INTERIORITY AND EXTERIORITY

...the relation to the face is straightaway ethical. – *EI*, 87

Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love eternally made free in blessed independence. – *WL*, 37

For Kierkegaard, as well as for Levinas, prior to the finite I (ego, self) there was the infinite Thou (Other). God loved me into existence, and His love sustains me, even in my darkest hour. This commanded love serves as the foundation for an aspect of human responsibility that modern (speculative and idealist) philosophy has covered up or confused. With its primary point of origin being the self-identical ego, Descartes and company have missed articulating the actual starting point of subjectivity. Subjectivity starts not in the doubting self, but rather in the self-in-relation to the ethical call of the Other individual. Running contrary to many philosophical and religious traditions, in accepting commandment, there is freedom. For Kierkegaard, as well as for Levinas, the site at which the self encounters God, the Infinite, is through the work of love performed for the Other person. Levinas writes that "the idea of infinity" is a "more contained within the less" (*TI*, 196). The Other, as the visage of complete otherness, transcendence, infinity, is a rupturing and a calling into question of my auto-nomous (self-naming) self.

Kierkegaard's authors are careful to speak *to the individual* as she is in her everyday life. Levinas, by apparent contrast, focuses his entire philosophical and religious writings on the responsibility one has *for the other* human being. Ultimately, though, both writers do as God wills, whether it is through the God-man, Jesus Christ, or Torah and its extension in mitzvot. For the authentic Jew, as well as for the authentic Christian, one's responsibility and utter dependence lie in one's obligation to the transcendent; however the transcendent appears within the finite, within the face of the Other, the neighbor. As the Christian accepts the God-man as the infinite within the finite, so the Jew accepts Torah as the infinite within the finite. Both are living, breathing, prophetic texts that serve to guide the lives of their believers.

The *saying* which Levinas wishes to highlight in existential communication closely resembles Climacus' insistence on the *how* of existence; similarly, the Levinasian *said* parallels the Kierkegaardian *what*. Levinas: "...the *said* does not count as much as the *saying*" (*EI*, 42). Life is lived as an interconnected series of moments, not through a static conception of thought and experience. Any and all attempts to reduce the acts of sayings (the 'how's) to instances of saids (the 'what's) result in inauthentic acts of violence that undo the precedence of the acting over the representation of the act. Commandment, testimony or "witness," is a constant unsaying of the said, in order to let the witness perpetually speak for himself (*TI*, 30). Here Climacus' discussion of contemporaneity fits well with Levinas' discussions of Rosenzweigian time. Levinas writes, "The *otherwise than being* is stated in a saying that must also be unsaid in order to thus extract the *otherwise than being* from the said in which it already comes to signify but a *being otherwise*" (*OB*, 7). Proceeding diachronically, the otherwise than being constantly resists the state of the *said*, or static concretion – the dead writings on an unread piece of paper. Recall Levinas' observation that "ethics is an exegesis."

Similarly, Kierkegaard's authors constantly push their reader to think the "pre-philosophical." The infinite, of course, is beyond recognition, beyond thought, even beyond Being. To use Levinas' phrase, the infinite "is non-thematizable" (*OB*, 12). Before Descartes' thinking being, there is a being thinking. Prior even to that event, there is a responsibility to a self that created the self which attains an awareness of its responsibility and freedom. It is the infinite which allowed the finite its existence. Replacing Descartes' *cogito* with "Je suis pensée; donc je suis" ("I am thought [by the infinite]; therefore I am"), we see that receiving the infinite within the finite is our ethical challenge. This is done by way of the face ("le visage") for Levinas. He writes

The manner in which the other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me, I call the face. This manner does not consist in a theme under my look, in exhibiting itself as a collection of qualities constituting an image. The face of the other overflows the plastic image which it leaves me and destroys at every instant the idea proportioned to me and proportioned to its *ideatum* – the adequate idea. It manifests itself not by these qualities but *kath auto*. It expresses itself (*TI*, 50-51).

In other words, the face is "the manner in which the Other presents himself, reaching beyond the idea I have of the Other" (*ibid*, 50). Paradoxically, the face is something both experienced and something that transcends experience.

Levinas writes, “The face expresses itself in the sensible... [but] the face tears apart the sensible” (*ibid*, 198).

Accepting the call of infinite responsibility for the Other person necessarily yields works of love that do not seek recompense or return. Both responsibility and the gift of commanded love are one-way streets, not reciprocity-seeking, immature attempts at compensation. Kierkegaard writes,

Insofar as you love your friend, you are not like God, because for God there is no distinction. But when you love the *neighbor*, then you are like God (*WL*, 63; my emphasis).

Similarly, for Levinas, every person is wholly Other, and as such, there is no distinction among others, all of whose faces call me to infinite responsibility and obligation. For Levinas, “Love is possible only through the idea of the Infinite – through the Infinite put in me, through the ‘more’ which devastates and awakens the ‘less,’ turning away from teleology, destroying the moment and the happiness of the end” (*LR*, 177). Would we be right in saying that this is Levinas’ teleological suspension of the ethical, or his ethical suspension of the teleological?

CONCLUSION: SEAMLESS PASSAGES AND AN ETHICS OF WITNESSING

A truth witness is a person who in poverty witnesses for the truth, in poverty, in lowliness and abasement... [for Christianity] witness and danger are equivalent. – *EK*, 426-427

In 1976, Levinas gave a set of lectures entitled “God and Onto-theology.” Two of these lectures, “Glory of the Infinite and Witnessing” and “Witnessing and Ethics,” directly speak to the third portion of this presentation’s subtitle. When Abraham disclosed himself to God and proclaimed, “Here I am,” this was witnessing – he opened his self “that expresse[d] the surplus of exigency that expands as the exigency of responsibility is filled” (*GDT*, 198). Levinas asserts, “Bearing witness does not thematize that of which it is the witness, and as such it can be a witnessing only of the infinite” (*ibid*, 196-7). What I find most interesting about the lecture “Witnessing and Ethics” is Levinas’s use of both the Old and New Testament to serve as examples of the ethical dimension of witnessing. He calls on both Jeremiah and Matthew’s gospel to form a seamless passage between Jewish and Christian expressions of proper ethical behavior.

In the introduction to this presentation, I alluded to the notion of a ‘seamless passage’ that exists between the works of the Jewish thinker Emmanuel Levinas and the Christian thinker Søren Kierkegaard. Throughout this paper, it is hoped that the various themes discussed emerge and converge (but not reciprocally) between both religious readers and writers. In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas writes that “Height is heaven. The kingdom of heaven is ethical” (*OB*, 183). God loves unconditionally and particularly, and the human should do likewise. Replacing the Hegelian emphasis on reciprocity, Levinas and Kierkegaard submit an asymmetrical ethics of witnessing. The fundamental human condition is not one of mutuality, but of responsibility and dependence. I am commanded, I am held hostage to the Other person. By becoming the author of my existence, that is, by accepting my infinite responsibility, I realize my freedom to/in the Other. Levinas writes that “the subject [such as Abraham,] who says, ‘Here I

am!' testifies to the Infinite. It is through this testimony [this witness]...that the revelation of the Infinite occurs. It is through this testimony that the very glory of the Infinite glorifies itself" (*EI*, 106-107).

Just as by self-becoming a self is never a fixed or static achievement for Kierkegaard, I can never adequately fulfill my obligations and responsibilities to the Other for Levinas. We could be right in calling both Levinas and Kierkegaard pre-philosophers of hypostasis, struggle, or becoming, although not in the Hegelian sense. Man is always man on the way...

In his 1937 review of Leon Chestov's *Kierkegaard and the Existential Philosophy*, we read Levinas engaging with a serious Kierkegaard scholar. Of course, this review is a brief (three pages) article published in a French-Jewish journal, but it is certainly possible that Kierkegaard's writings had an effect, either directly or indirectly, on Levinas' thinking and writing. Along with Shestov, Kierkegaard and Levinas creatively explore "the synthesis of the Greek [philosophical] spirit and the Judeo-Christian" spirit.¹³ Following Shestov, as contemporary and comparative thinkers, we would be unwise to separate the Hebrew Bible from the Christian New Testament, to force a wedge in between Jewish thinking and ethics from Christian teachings and ways of being. The rereading of Kierkegaard through Levinas, and Levinas through Kierkegaard, points to some interesting convergences and intersections between these two faith traditions, which could result in a 'seamless passage.' A different, but not at all divergent, conceptualization of the sense of similarity and ease of movement between Levinas and Kierkegaard is proposed by Calvin Schrag, whose notion of "transversality" eases the movement from a Jewish ethics to a Christian ethics of transcendental responsibility for the self and/as Other. Levinas and Kierkegaard engage in a "transversal communication," where their conversations would include "a transcendence that is older than religion itself, relativizes the belief systems of the particular historical religions and restrains overtures to ecclesiastical colonization."¹⁴

Bearing witness to Levinas and Kierkegaard, then, is to "find the idea for which I am willing to live and die" (*EK*, 8). This "idea," I maintain, is the responsibility for others as neighbors which takes no account of an "I can;" for the Other person in heteronomous transcendence is the face of God. Accepting the paradox of the infinite within the finite (Torah as the Word of God or Jesus Christ as the God-man) as commandment paradoxically allows one to be a responsible and free existing individual in community with Others. As Abraham went on to be a blessing for so many others, so Levinas and Kierkegaard are a continued blessing to their readers and practitioners of faith and ethical responsibility. Moral and philosophical thinking, for both writers, derives from a religion which is at the same time an ethics. Paradoxically, this is their major contribution to philosophical thought and faith.

Major Works Cited:

Levinas:		Kierkegaard:	
DF	<i>Difficult Freedom</i>	CUP	<i>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</i>
“EE”	“Existence and Ethics”	EK	<i>The Essential Kierkegaard</i>
EI	<i>Ethics and Infinity</i>	FT	<i>Fear and Trembling</i>
EN	<i>Entre Nous</i>	WL	<i>Works of Love</i>
GDT	<i>God, Death, and Time</i>		
NTR	<i>Nine Talmudic Readings</i>		
OB	<i>Otherwise than Being</i>		
TI	<i>Totality and Infinity</i>		

NOTES:

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¹ 1949. “Kierkegaard and Judaism,” *The Menorah Journal* 37:2; 163-180, pp. 163, 164

² 1983. “Emmanuel Levinas’ Theory of Commitment,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 44: 2 (Dec.); 145-168, p. 146

³ Kierkegaard wrote the following critique of the present age, of which modern philosophy is included: “The present age is essentially a sensible, reflecting age, devoid of passion, flaring up in the superficial, short-lived enthusiasm and prudentially relaxing in indolence” (EK, 252).

⁴ Some very interesting cross-readings of Kierkegaard and Levinas have been explored by Merold Westphal. However, for the purposes of this paper, I did not initially consult with these secondary sources very much, as I wished to offer a personal and original reading of these two thinkers. See Westphal, 1993. “Levinas and the Immediacy of the Face,” *Faith and Philosophy* 9:4 (October), 486-502; 1995a. “Levinas’s Teleological Suspension of the Religious,” in Adriaan T. Peperzak, ed. *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature, and Religion*. New York: Routledge; 151-160; 1995b. “The Transparent Shadow: Kierkegaard and Levinas in Dialogue,” in Martin J. Matušík & Merold Westphal, eds. *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press; 265-281; 2000. “Commanded Love and Divine Transcendence in Levinas and Kierkegaard,” in Jeffrey Bloechl, ed. *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God: Essays on the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. New York: Fordham Univ. Press; 200-223; 2002. “Transcendence, Heteronomy, and the Birth of the Responsible Self,” in Martin Beck Matušík and William L. McBride, eds. *Calvin O. Schrag and the Task of Philosophy after Postmodernity* Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press; 201-225; and n/d. “The Many Faces of Levinas as a Reader of Kierkegaard.”

⁵ Levinas, 1937. “Review of Leon Chestov’s *Kierkegaard and the Existential Philosophy*,” *Revue des Etudes Juives* 101: 1-2; pp. 139-141. Trans. by James McLachlan and retrieved from <http://www.angelfire.com/nb/shestov/sk/Levinas.html>, p. 139

⁶ I am adapting (and hopefully furthering) this phrase from James Alison and Sandor Goodhart (2002), who co-presented wonderfully interesting readings of Scripture as seen from the perspectives of Judaism and Christianity, at the 2002 Colloquium on Violence and Religion [COV&R] meeting. The COV&R is dedicated to interpreting and furthering the work of French theorist René Girard. See 2002. “Seamless Passages: Prophetic and Messianic Readings in Judaism and Christianity.” Presentation at the Colloquium on Violence and Religion annual conference (June 5), Purdue University (<http://www.sla.purdue.edu/academic/idis/jewish-studies/cov&r/program.html>).

⁷ Steinberg, 1949; p. 169

⁸ Levinas: “A direct optics – without the mediation of any idea – can only be accomplished as ethics. Integral knowledge or Revelation (the receiving of the Torah) is ethical behavior” (*NTR*, 47).

⁹ Levinas, 1937, 140

¹⁰ See Buber’s “On the Suspension of the Ethical,” in *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation Between Religion and Philosophy*. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1952; pp. 115-120

¹¹ Schrag, 1959. “Note on Kierkegaard’s Teleological Suspension of the Ethical,” *Ethics* 70:1 (Oct.); 66-68, p. 67

¹² *ibid.*, 67

¹³ Levinas, 1937, 141

¹⁴ Schrag, 1997. *The Self after Postmodernity*. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 148