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# The Ethics of the Face to Face Encounter: Schroeder, Levinas, and the Glance

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*L'absolument autre, c'est i'autrui.*

—Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini*

The world is not so profane as to refuse admission to the Infinite; but then, neither is it sacred enough to contain the Absolute in its totality.

—Brian Schroeder, *Altared Ground*

## Introduction

*Altared Ground: Levinas, History, and Violence* appeared in 1996, and I am pleased to draw attention to this extraordinary text a decade later. I shall approach it as much by indirection—by allusion and citation—as close reading; but this does not mean that I am any less prone to pay homage to it. On the contrary: it is by linking this text to certain texts by Levinas and to some current concerns of my own that I will honor it.

Let me say a few words by way of introduction about *Altared Ground* itself. It is a rare and timely contribution: rare, because it is the only text in English (or any language I know of) that explicitly poses questions of history and violence in the aftermath of Levinas; timely, because these same questions are so pressing today, in the wake not just of Levinas's work but of deconstruction and postmodernism more generally. What is violence? What forms does it take? To whom is it done? How is it related to historical events, not only major ones such as the Holocaust or Vietnam or Iraq but to many ongoing daily events, the humiliations and slights that so many must submit to for most of their lives? What is the relation of such undeniable historical violence, such as war, to ethics: that is, to what *should* happen to justice and goodness? These are questions taken up lucidly and pursued insightfully in *Altared Ground*.

This singular book puts a number of leading figures in philosophy into conversation with each other—and with the author himself, who manages

skillfully to create a true *theatricum philosophicum* in which complex ideas come alive and enter into intense dialogue. Two chapters are devoted to Plato, especially to his concepts of imagination and of “the good beyond being.” Hegel receives sustained treatment in four chapters in which mediation, absolute knowledge, and the contrast between drive and infinity are discussed with both accuracy and flair. Heidegger’s thinking about unconcealedness, fundamental ontology, nothingness, and letting be are given incisive treatments. Throughout, Derrida and Nietzsche figure as serious kibitzers, with Merleau-Ponty, Adorno, Gadamer, and Deleuze and Guattari speaking from the sidelines.

Among the primary issues at stake in this groundbreaking book are the nature of ethical space (especially as it is configured in the face to face relation); the rethinking of ethics entailed by such space; the character of violence (particularly the violence that stems from a certain characteristic Western conceptuality); the role of the Other in relation to oneself; a new sense of infinity; the inculcation of justice; the place of religion after Nietzsche and Levinas and Altizer (hence the “altar” in *Altared Ground*); and, above all, the fate of the idea of *ground* itself as it is related to a new sense of subjectivity in the postmodern (Schroeder prefers to say “postmetaphysical”) era. As Schroeder proclaims at the beginning of the text:

What is proposed is an interrogation into the relation between the philosophical concepts of ground (*Grund*), subjectivity, and violence. . . . Specifically what is at issue is the relation between infinity and alterity, the determination of the origin of ethics, and thus the possibility of a *non-totalizing ground* for the ethical (intersubjective) relation that *preserves the autonomy of the subject*, the principal legacy of the Enlightenment. (i)<sup>1</sup>

And, indeed, in every chapter of this challenging book, the tension between the irreplaceable but problematized human subject and the equally problematic ground provided by the human other is laid bare and probed. For this reason, I have decided to focus on that relation between self and other, which is the seat of ethical life: the face to face relation that is the unique and indispensable scene of such life, its proper/improper territory, *there where the ethical emerges and is realized*.

*Altared Ground* is an extended meditation on the ground of ethics and (by implication and sometimes expressly) politics. Refusing the monolithic ground of reason found in Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics* or in Kant’s aptly entitled “Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,” Schroeder navigates

through the virtual Sargasso Sea of confusion that has all but scuttled previous ethical thought in the West. In an ingeniously named series of chapters that range from ForeGround to BackGround, UnderGround to IdeoGround, MystiGround to TransGround, and DiaGround to HyperGround, Schroeder demonstrates, by the very hypertrophy of groundings entailed by the ethical relation, that there is no single Ground of ethics, least of all a rational ground that can claim complete conceptual coherence. But he does not leave us in an endless eddy either: by the end of the book, we are on the high and open seas of chastened and clarified thinking about the things that matter—war and violence, the good and the just, self and other, person and God, eschatology and apocalypse. These topics give ground (in both senses of this ambiguous expression) to a vision of postmetaphysical courage and rigor, a vision in which philosophy finds renewed inspiration beyond deconstructionist dissolutions and postmodern disillusionings.

### Taking it in at a Glance

When I see someone in distress—in pain or suffering of any kind, mental as well as physical—I feel instantly obliged. Obligated, first of all, to take notice, and obliged as well to take action if this is pertinent or helpful. How much of ethical life pivots on this pristine perception of distress is rarely discussed by ethicists, who tend to regard it as a merely preliminary moment, a prelude to proper action, something that precedes principled conduct: a matter of mere “apprehension” and not to be confused with the “comprehension” that being an ethical person entails.<sup>2</sup> The (at least) implicit argument—an argument that has sedimented itself in much of our commonsensical thought about being ethical—is that it is one thing to observe a situation of distress, but quite another thing to think about it, much less to act on it. We presume that the real action resides elsewhere: e.g., in consideration of principles, memory of past actions, and in the future action that is being called forth.

And yet I would like to claim that this supposedly minor moment contains, either actually or by adumbration, the entirety of the ethical phenomenon. It is a moment of “the world of pure experience” in William James’s term, and as such holds within itself potentially the whole of ethical life. The first moment is already the subsequent moment; apprehension is already comprehension; perception is reflection and not some dumb beginning: “in my beginning is my end.”

And I want to take a further step and argue that this first moment is itself condensed into a quite singular activity, that of the *glance*, which despite its ap-

parently exiguous character is capable of bearing ethical matters on its slender shoulders. After all, we do take in the world at a glance, as we know whenever we let our look flit across the surfaces of things in order to gain a sweeping, if altogether momentary, view of them. The glance is closely affiliated with what both Kierkegaard and Heidegger call “the moment of vision,” the *Augenblick*, wherein *Blick* means “look” or “glance.” It is also closely related to what Husserl calls the “source point” and James the “saddle back” of the present. All four thinkers conjoin in regarding the present moment as nonpunctiform, as open and extended, as capable of conveying content of undelimited expansiveness. It is as if the very concentration, the focus, provided by the present moment allowed it to be the purveyor of all that we experience.

As this moment is the Archimedian point of our temporal experience, so the glance is the fulcrum of ethical life. It is as if its very meagerness, its status as a mere “peri-phenomenon,” is its very advantage. For it is in merely glancing that we take in the ethical equivalent of what Dewey would call “the problematic situation.” We do this so frequently and so unselfconsciously that we rarely pause to consider its larger significance.

### Glancing Differently

If you are as skeptical as I imagine you may be regarding what I have said so far, consider a few cases in point. I encounter a woman on a plane that is flying between Chengdu, China, and Lhasa, Tibet. She is in an advanced state of a crippling disease, perhaps multiple sclerosis. Her twisted body moves only with great difficulty, but she insists on moving herself. She walks down the aisle, resting heavily on a cane at each step. Her glance engages mine, and in that brief moment (which I have never forgotten) I perceive her distress: her need for support from others, yet her proud defiance of this same support as long as she can walk on her own. In this case, there is nothing I can do except look back sympathetically and realize that I have been put on ethical notice: I have grasped human frailty and mortality, mine as well as my fellow passenger’s, and I have been reminded of the fact that, at some point in life, each of us will require the concrete assistance of others.

Or take a less melodramatic case, that of happening upon two colleagues in heated dispute. One sees at a glance—one *knows* at a glance—that they are re-enacting an ancient quarrel. Here, my own intervention is indeed called for, and I try to intercede (in my capacity as friend as well as chairman of my department) in order to alleviate the acrimony. I point out the unsuspected common ground they share, and how they are not nearly as antithetical to

each other as they take themselves to be. My action follows forthwith from my initial glance at their locked-in conflict; no separate act of reflection is required, since I am already reflective from the start: I *understand* the dispute even as I come upon it unbidden.

But what of situations not known in advance, ones that do not have a familiar history? Here, too, the glance is often definitive. Once, in Chicago, I heard cries from the other side of the street; glancing over, I saw a man beating up a woman, holding her against a car with one hand as he pummeled her with the other. I knew, at a glance, that this was not a mugging but a lover's quarrel: something about the intensity of the interaction betokened this. And I also knew what I had to do, without any time to ponder the circumstance: cross the street, walk directly toward the couple, yet without threatening to do anything in particular. I was banking on the embarrassment of the other in merely being *perceived* in his violent behavior, which is exactly what happened. He glimpsed me coming toward him and his girlfriend, and then he stopped hitting her, walking away abruptly. This was not heroism on my part; it was an instinctive sense that any interference, even just approaching without saying a word or lifting an arm, would effectively undermine the basic action.

Of course, glances don't always work to constructive effect. They can be quite damaging: as we realize every time we are the object of an insulting or supercilious look. A great deal of social life, much more than we usually expect, arises from glances being exchanged, often in hurtful ways. Whenever we "size up" someone as possessing inferior character or breeding, as "not worth our time," we are contributing to social malaise by disaggregating the body politic. In this case, the glance does not so much reveal what needs to be done from an ethical perspective (as in the incident on the Chicago streets) as it is the doing itself. Instead of being acutely percipient, it has become a form of action. And it can be both at once, as occurs when a glance takes in a scene while itself altering that scene by its very surveillance.

A last variation occurs when the glance is used to detect what is happening but itself goes undetected. A friend of mine described this situation recently by recounting that she and a woman friend were both having dinner with a man ("George") who had formerly dated the friend ("Carol") but was now seeing her ("Martha") but on the sly, since neither wanted to hurt Carol's feelings. Nevertheless, George was attending to her, Martha, in an intense way at the dinner; and Martha stole a glance at Carol at one point to see if Carol was upset over the extra attention given her by George. In fact, Carol was visibly unhappy—so much so that later, after George had left, Carol lit into Martha

for having let him approach her so warmly at dinner. Thanks to her glance, Martha had anticipated this attack and was prepared for it. In this case, the glance was interpersonally informative, helped to ameliorate a later development that would have turned out much worse had she not been forewarned of her friend's unhappiness. A single glance, one that was itself unreturned, took in a complex social dynamic and played an integral role in the eventual resolution of an inherently conflictual situation. It is my contention that this and other variations happen more often than we may imagine.

### Getting to the Other

Even given such instances—and doubtless many others, as we can detect in reading novels by Henry James or Marcel Proust, in which an entire dialectic of glancing is often at play—we might still wonder about the source of the ethical force of the glance. How could such a diminutive act have so much to do with what is, arguably, the heaviest, most burdened part of our lives—that is, the realm of ethical commitments and obligations? I would suggest that it is because the glance is an intrinsic part of the face to face encounter with others that it possesses such enormous ethical import. But this indicates that we must first grasp what it is about the face to face encounter that makes it so ethically significant.

Only in the face to face encounter, insists Levinas, do we experience human others (*autrui*) in their true exteriority, their absolute alterity. All other ways of encountering others reduces them to forms of *being* that are subject to appropriation and domination by ontological categories—categories that at once comprehend and totalize these others. Instead of grasping others as otherwise-than-being—that is to say, in their goodness (for the Good is, once more, “beyond Being” in the Platonic phrase relished by Levinas)—we construe them in terms of stratified and neutralized concepts that fail to capture what is most arrestingly specific about them: their ethical claim on us. This claim is not conveyed by concepts such as “the Kingdom of Ends” or “enlightened self-interest” or “the greatest good for the greatest number”—all of which are only designations of planiform probability, projections of what certain philosophers or politicians wish to be the case for all human beings—but by the actual encounter with other human beings in their intrinsic destitution. Only in such an encounter do we suspend the universalizing tendency to think of others in terms of what Levinas calls “the imperialism of the Same”<sup>3</sup> (i.e., as just another version of ourselves—our race, gender, nation, language, mores) and apprehend these others as radically other: as not assimilable (or

not assimilable only) to the leveled-down categories of history, sociology, psychology, and of previous ethical theories themselves. We come up against the others as deeply disparate from ourselves, as metaphysically different, as the Different itself. Regarding *these* others, no description or inclusion in generic terms is possible; if such description or inclusion is attempted, it is tantamount to misrepresentation and is the very basis of injustice and war.

These latter represent the inevitable outcome of regimenting the other into ontological terms that always fail to fit the particular other with whom I am confronted in a given circumstance—terms such as “white male intellectual,” “Marxist female,” “migrant laborers,” etc. True as these are historically (and essential as it may be to use them for strategic political purposes), they miss utterly the specificity of the encounter with what Kierkegaard called, prophetically, “*that* individual.” To do justice to the thatness—which is to *do justice*, period, for Levinas—I must own up to something at once prior and particular. This is the other’s face (*visage*).

Ethics, then, resides in the face to face encounter, in its unguarded openness and transparency, in its abrupt actuality. For only then and there do I find the other as Other, as existing in separation from me even as we share the fact and fate of being members of the same species. Facing the Other is thus a facing up to the Other’s transcendence, to his or her refusal to be drawn into the web of the Same, to be alter to every ego. As Schroeder shows so illuminatingly in *Altared Ground*, this face to face encounter is not to be confused with the anxious engagement with one’s own nothingness, one’s uncanny lack of ultimate foundation, one’s thrownness into the world (92–94). In particular, this engagement possesses a facelessness that precludes an ethical relation: “What does it mean to say,” asks Schroeder, “that one is able to have a face to face ‘relationship’ with that which does *not* have a face ([i.e., the] nothing)?” (98). Schroeder puts “relationship” into scare quotes in order to indicate that there is no genuine relation here: as Sartre might put it, one is one’s own nothingness (this is precisely why one is so anguished over it), whereas a relation is between distinguishable items, however closely connected they may be. As Levinas says himself: relationship “implies terms, substantives. It takes them to be coordinated, but also independent” (cited in Schroeder 99). This is just what happens in the face to face encounter: I and the Other are independent of each other, metaphysically “separate,” yet we are intensely engaged at this very moment. “The same and the other at the same time maintain themselves in relationship and *absolve* themselves of this relation, remain absolutely separated” (Levinas, *Totality* 102).<sup>4</sup> In other words, Levinas wants to have it both ways, not because it is easier or repre-

sents some sort of compromise (just the opposite!), but because this is the very character of the ethical relation itself. As Schroeder aptly puts it: “Ethics, the welcoming of the Other by the self, is only accomplished through the recognition and maintenance of the radical disjunction of same and other, of subject and object” (97).

Anxiety over one’s uncanny thrownness into the world is therefore not at stake when I encounter the Other face to face on his or her own terms. Instead of being an occasion for realizing my freedom (as both Heidegger and Sartre would claim) and thus for personal empowerment, this encounter puts me in debt to the Other and makes me realize my responsibility for that Other. In short, I am placed in an essentially “apologetic” position in which I must make amends to the Other, tacitly if not explicitly, for not having done more to help that other. It is a circumstance of “the asymmetry of proximity,” as Levinas comes to call it in *Otherwise than Being* (158). Neither freedom nor equality—nor, for that matter, fraternity—is at stake as I encounter the other face to face. For then I am brought up against the Other not as a partner, a *copain* (i.e., a chum or pal of equal standing), but as incommensurable, as towering over me, as absolute in his or her “height.” This Other is unique and does not submit to the generalities and platitudes of collectivities; instead of consolidating itself into something conceptually or historically coherent, it is radically heterogeneous—not just to me but to other Others as well. In Schroeder’s words: “It is not the individual, the I, who in acknowledging her or his freedom renounces all systems or totalities that impinge upon that radical freedom [i.e., as in Kierkegaard or Sartre]; it is the Other (*l’autrui*) that refuses such systemization or totalization” (96).

Let’s note where we are. Our best guide remains *Altered Ground*, which is unerring in its delineation of the perplexities as well as the strengths of Levinas’s take on the face to face relation. On the one hand, this relation brings out in the subject, the self as witness of the Other, an acute sense of obligation and justice, of desire as transcendence toward the Good, which is revealed only in the face of the Other. Schroeder writes: “In its nudity and defenselessness the face [of the Other] is an appeal for justice and a call to responsibility for the sake of the Other. This obligation towards the Other is the calling into question of the freedom of the selfsame, of rationality’s claim to comprehend the other” (96). The critique of freedom and rationality is not made in the name of the autonomous subject but is based precisely in the subject’s heteronomy, its reliance on the Other to set the terms of the ethical relation. This is to undo modernity at its own game of enfranchising the subject at the expense of the Other, whether this Other be the colonized

Other of extra-European origin; the Other gendered as 'female'; the Other as mentally ill or retarded; in short, the Other in its "heterogeneous multiplicity" (to adapt a term Bergson applied to time). Now the Other is given not just "respect" or "rights" or "recognition" but something much more powerful than these modernist concessions in the guise of universality, these forms of cosmopolitanism.

The Other is endowed with a Goodness that belongs only to the Other *as other*, that can be desired only *in the Other*, not in oneself. The self, as "psychism," is called to bear witness to the Other in its transcendent Goodness, and "separation [from the Other] is produced within the self as a psychism" (Schroeder 96); but ethics is not about the interest or prospering or perfecting of the self. It bears exclusively on the unmitigated obligation one has to Others. On the other hand, and precisely from the position of abjection thus underlined by Levinas, the prospect of a new tyranny emerges. To the tyranny of neutrality, of conceptual comprehensiveness, of *ontology*—all of which belong to the self, to the same—there is to be added the menace of a different tyranny: that imposed by the Other to whom one is subject in the ethical relation. With this Other, one has an asymmetrical and irreversible relation: it makes the Other one's "master," a word Levinas does not hesitate to use in this context. Schroeder articulates the threat of this second tyranny in the form of two questions: "[D]oes the insistence on absolute separation, the maintenance of which is ethics, result in an ideology that ends in a tyranny of the other? What would prevent such an other from committing the violence of coercion?" (97).

These are exactly the right questions to ask of Levinas, indeed of anyone who makes the face to face relation the clue to ethical life. How are they to be answered?

### Overcoming Separation in a Glance

One way to answer the questions is to emphasize the factor of separation itself: its very absoluteness means that the Other, however much he or she stands over me like a Colossus of sheer Difference, cannot absorb me entirely, cannot swallow me as I might fear, if I have what Sartre calls a "Jonah complex." This is the direction Brian Schroeder takes when he writes, "The notion of distance or separation functions in a critical capacity for an understanding of freedom [i.e., as not wholly abrogated] and the constitution of subjectivity. One interprets the world only in distancing oneself from it" (97). One protects oneself from the possible violence of the Other by recourse to the

paradox of asymmetrical proximity—namely, that one is apart in the very midst of the most intimate ethical bonding with the Other. The violence of being incorporated by the Other is averted by the same means by which one avoids doing violence to that Other: separation itself. Thanks to this metaphysical fact, one neither crushes the Other nor is crushed by this Other. To be subject to the Other, and subjected precisely for one's ethicality, is not (necessarily) to be the abject subject, the slave or prisoner, of that Other. One can be subjected to otherness and yet not be its pawn.

But there is a second way out, one that is enacted daily, so often indeed that we rarely stop to notice it. This is the glance. Despite its diminutive physiology and delimited scope, the glance effectively opposes the tyranny of the Other. It does so most dramatically in moments of defiance, as when (in a passage from Faulkner's *Light in August*) Joe Christmas looks back at those who have just castrated him, undoing their sadistic tyranny for one poignant moment:

But the man on the floor had not moved. He just lay there, with his eyes open and empty of everything save consciousness, and with something, a shadow, about his mouth. For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes. Then his face, body, all, seemed to collapse, to fall in upon itself and from out the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent black blood seemed to rush like a released breath. (407)

Sartre comments: “[T]his explosion of the Other’s look in the world of the sadist causes the meaning and goal of sadism to collapse. The sadist discovers that it was *that freedom* which he wished to enslave, and at the same time he realizes the futility of his efforts” (382).

But even short of such melodrama, the glance is an effective response to the Other’s tyranny. It intercedes to support the self from the killing scrutiny of the Other, from being overwhelmed by the height and mastery possessed by the Other.<sup>5</sup> For all its unrehearsed and spontaneous character, it is a powerful form of resistance. It also acts as a force of collusion with the Other in opposing, with that Other, a larger totality such as that of class or state; hence, the telling phrase “conniving glances.” Short of this, even just to “exchange meaningful glances”—another telling locution—is to alleviate the pressure brought by the Other, including the pressure to be ethical at all costs. The glance, as the gestural equivalent of the *Augenblick*, allows one the momentary luxury of distancing oneself from such pressure. And, by its very return action (every glance is at once a glance out and a glance back, a two-beat action I have examined elsewhere<sup>6</sup>) a glance effects a retreat into the

sanctuary of the self: to the open-eyed, outward look with which it begins, it always adds, by way of necessary supplement, the closing of the look that brings one back into the interiority of the psychism.

In these various ways, whether through direct opposition, subtle collusion, or withdrawal into oneself, a glance, a mere glance, effects an extrication from the Other's tyranny. But there is an even stronger point to be made regarding the antityranny of the glance (which can itself be quite imperious on occasion): its ingreience in the face to face relation itself. If it is by means of this relation that the tyranny of the Other over oneself at once presents itself and is resolved (i.e., thanks to separation), and that tyrannizing of the Other by oneself is also overcome (thanks to the rebarbative nudity of the Other's face, which refuses conceptualizing and ontologizing just as much as it pleads "don't murder me!"), both of these vanquishings of tyranny are facilitated—indeed, often outright implemented—by the glance. The glance, we might say, is the saving grace of the face to face relation and thus the very vehicle of ethical realization.

If we begin to think in this direction, we shall only rejoin Brian Schroeder once again. Although he does not focus on the glance *per se*, he makes one remark that is very suggestive in this context:

The neutrality of the third term, of thought that becomes the mode of identification by which the other is reduced to a moment of the same, is criticized [by Levinas] as a light that illumines not a particular existent but all beings, bringing them into full presence, *naked under the lidless eye of Spirit or Being*. (97)<sup>7</sup>

To be "naked under the lidless eye of Spirit or Being" is to be in a situation in which glances have been altogether foreclosed. In the floodlight of ontology, in the glaring light of its supposed neutrality, one cannot escape by glancing—either by glancing *out* of the compound of comprehension in which one has been rigorously enclosed or by glancing *back* into oneself on the near side of the glare. Nor is the sphinx of "Spirit or Being" capable of glancing out or back either. For a look to be lidless is for it to lack the capacity to glance, which requires not just the movement of the eye but its closure or "cut." As Derrida says à propos of the *Augenblick*: it is, literally, "blink of the instant":

Nonpresence and nonevidence are admitted into the blink of the instant. There is a duration to the blink, and it closes the eye. This alterity is in fact the condition for presence, presentation, and thus for *Vorstellung* in general. (65)<sup>8</sup>

To be without the blink is to be fixed in a stare: the everlasting stare of noetic scrutiny, the steady stare of the scientist, the stare of the spirit of gravity as epitomized in the vacant but relentless stare of the Egyptian sphinx. Moreover, Derrida here suggests that the blink, that close ally of the glance, is itself a form of alterity, with every bit as much right as the alterity of the Levinasian Other. For it brings the sling blade of nonpresence into the sloe-eyed openness of pure presence, being the condition of possibility for the latter. Just so, the glance effects nonpresence by its backward beat and is equally the condition of possibility for pure visibility, which it searches out and constitutes. The glance, abetted by the blink, insinuates nonpresence and nonevidence into the heart of the face to face relation, which, construed as “nudity” and “revelation,” threatens to be itself a form of unexamined full presence.<sup>9</sup>

To make my case more completely than I can in this essay, I would have to show how the blink and the wink, as well as the sly look (not to be confused with the petrifying *regard* of Sartre’s description), all contribute to the glancing world in which the face to face relation is most richly realized. The glance is not just an instrument or a part of such a relation; it extends it beyond sheer staring confrontation into subtle variations. It is even the living medium in which this relation grows and prospers, feeling its own way and finding its own truth.

### Questioning the Face

But you may be wondering: why all the fuss over the face to face encounter, including the glance? Is this so special, after all? Granting its importance for concrete human interaction, is it really necessary for ethical life? Kant, for one, would be quite skeptical of any such intimate arrangement as it bears on ethics. The actuality of human beings who are confronted with each other in person is more apt to bring out their individual interests and empirical needs and desires. It certainly does not guarantee (nor does it necessarily foster) their ethical reality, which is independent of all such interests, needs, and desires. The only community that matters for ethics is a community of noumenal beings, namely, the Kingdom of Ends, which is a gathering of wholly spiritual entities who do not confront one another (nor do they glance at each other, so far as I know). Even the community at stake in aesthetic judgment, the imputed group of like-minded judges of art, is not in a face to face relation, since it includes all who might judge a given work of art. In art as in ethics, the face to face encounter is replaced by ideal communities of non-present beings.

Jacques Derrida, doubtless Levinas's most trenchant critic, rejoins Kant, otherwise a most unlikely ally, in being equally skeptical of the face to face as a basis of ethical action. In particular, the sheer presence entailed by the *en face* relation is of dubious valence for Derrida, since it only serves to reinforce the priority of presence that has been the bane of Western metaphysics since Parmenides and Plato: "Le visage est présence, *ousia*" (Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics" 149). Levinas and Derrida join forces in their common critique of "ontology" as the ultimately totalizing enterprise in the West, even as they part ways when it comes to the virtues of direct presence—nearness or proximity—as this figures into ethics. Levinas's belated introduction of the trace, which complicates presence even if it does not eliminate it, would seem to bring him closer to Derrida; yet the face remains the bearer of the trace of "illeity" for Levinas: it is a trace of a higher presence or what Schroeder, who compares Derrida and Levinas at many reprises, would call "hyperground." For Levinas, either the face is itself an ultimate form of presence or it presents the trace of another presence, that of God (who does not present His face). Derrida would urge us to deconstruct both modes of presence.

Other contemporaries of Levinas are just as skeptical as Derrida of the primacy of the face to face encounter. Merleau-Ponty, a proponent of the "primacy of perception," maintains that "the other is never present face to face" (cited in Schroeder 114). Merleau-Ponty's point is that the other need not be present in this special revelatory mode, since I am already conjoined with the other through sharing in the world's flesh, both being figures in the same scene: "myself and the other are like two nearly concentric circles which can be distinguished only by a slight and mysterious slippage . . . [with the result that] the mystery of the other is nothing but the mystery of myself" (cited in Schroeder 113–14). As Schroeder remarks, it follows that "the chiasmatic self-Other relation is a reciprocal and reversible event for Merleau-Ponty" (114). It is just such reciprocity and reversibility that Levinas denies in the face to face relation, a relation of "instruction" and not exchange—hence, a relation in which one party must be in a position of "vigilant passivity to the call of the other" (Schroeder 102).<sup>10</sup>

Still another take on the face to face relation is that of Deleuze and Guattari, who speak of "faciality" in *A Thousand Plateaus*. On their reading, the face is a field of alterity and is not limited to what is grasped directly in the immediate presence of the other. On the contrary, what is most important about the face is its correlation with the larger landscape in which it is set; instead of bearing down on the face proper, Deleuze and Guattari recommend an escape from the face into the landscape within which it is set. Thus,

a face is not individual but a neutral location of social assemblages: “the face constructs the wall . . . the signifier needs . . . to bounce off of” (Schroeder 126). In this way, the face signifies “something absolutely inhuman” (Schroeder 126). It is true, as Schroeder remarks, that Levinas, along with Deleuze and Guattari, rejects modernist conceptions of subjectivity; but it remains the case that the latter thinkers want to put the face “on the road to the asignifying and asubjective” (126), that is to say, to put us in a direction that exceeds any particular face to face encounter. As with Derrida, the intense intimacy of this encounter, its aura of privileged presence, is questioned; and as with Merleau-Ponty, a more comprehensive field is charted out, a field aptly designated by the term “landscape” on the part of Merleau-Ponty as well as Deleuze and Guattari.

### Glancing v. Looking

I cite these various figures from contemporary French thought to indicate that they, like Kant before them, would question the exemplary character of the face to face relation, proposing other paradigms for ethics (and politics) that exceed the confines of this relation. Levinas is not left, however, without resources in responding to these critiques. His tactic overall is to insist that the face to face relation contains far more than appears on a first consideration. Not only does it involve a complex asymmetry and elements of mastery, passivity and height, but it also includes a linguistic component that fills out the relation and allows it to bear the full load of the ethical. For the face of the Other in the ethical relation is not mute: it is not a dumb object, an inarticulate *visage*. From the very beginning it *speaks*; it not only looks back at me, it puts its thoughts into discourse: it is a talking face. Such speech renders it articulate in its demand upon us, and, most important, it is the basis for the dialogue whereby I can relate to it now and in the future. In Schroeder’s words, “The ethical self is desirous of the Other, not for the sake of possession or dominance, but to formulate a *dialogical* relation. . . . The absolute separation between the self and Other is ethically maintained in the face to face relation that is the essence of speech, of discourse” (108).

The point is not just that the face is an effective communicative vehicle, as on certain expressive theories of language (for which other parts of the body are also expressively pertinent); it is that the face that faces us in the ethical relation comes *already speaking*, speaking before speech as it were. Thus, Levinas’s claim in *Totality and Infinity*: “Meaning is the face of the Other, and all recourse to words takes place already within the primordial

face to face of language" (206). Thus, too, his claim in *Otherwise than Being* that the face is the scene of the *saying* that precedes the *said* — a saying that is at one with the face and enters into a "spiraling movement" (*un mouvement en vrille*) with the said.<sup>11</sup> As Schroeder specifies this situation, "antecedent to [fully constituted] speech, to words in the order of the said, saying signifies in the distinct relationship of proximity" (112).

Such saying is at once enigmatic and epiphanous. It is enigmatic insofar as there is no simply statable message or thesis to be found in the saying of the face. For intelligible meaning to emerge, the saying has to enter the realm of the said; short of this, one experiences the expressivity of prediscursive speech, in which the ethical imperative is contained, even if not in so many words. (When it is put into so many words, we have to do with the categorical imperative and other fully formulated imperatives.) What Schroeder terms "the enigmatic paradox" refers to this ambiguous status of saying in the face to face relation: we are summoned by the Other to be responsible for that Other, even to sacrifice and substitute ourselves for him or her, and yet this happens without the summons being put into well-formed sentences. In fact, the infinity of the Other is "betrayed" when this translation occurs, even if this betrayal is (again in Schroeder's words) "*necessary* for the revelation of the ethical imperative expressed in the face."<sup>12</sup>

The saying at stake here is epiphanous inasmuch as it escorts in the *revelation* of the Other that is not to be confused with the *disclosure* of that Other. "Disclosure" signifies the uncovering of a phenomenon, bringing it into what Husserl liked to call "the brightly lit circle of pure presentation." It is part of the Western obsession with illuminational models of truth, an obsession still to be found in Heidegger's endorsement of the "clearing" (*Lichtung*) as the place in which the truth of Being is disclosed. But in revelation we witness a literal epi-phenomenon, an appearing beyond appearance itself, something other than being. This is the infinity of the Other. "The epiphany of the face," writes Schroeder, "is the breaking forth of the Infinite into the finite order of history" (116). This means that the Infinite, or more exactly, the idea of the Infinite, breaks up the totalities of the finite world of conceptual comprehension. In this breakup, in the epiphany of the saying face, is to be found the essence of the ethical, which can never be reduced to the phenomenal order of interest or utility, of goods or services, stated (said) commands or imperatives. The enigmatic paradox, restated to include the epiphanous face, is that "the infinite *overflows* the totality of history and of thought and that the meaning of this surplus or plenitude is ethical" (125).<sup>13</sup>

In these two ways, then—by way of saying and of revelation—the face to face relation shows itself to be the appropriate locus of the ethical: where else, asks Levinas, can the infinity of the Other, thus his or her Goodness (an infinite property), emerge? Certainly not in any group or tradition, which level down Infinity to the finite and Goodness to a given good. How else can it be made known except in the expressive face of this same Other, who speaks to me of my responsibility (for example, in the basic imperative not to murder him or her)? Certainly not in the apophantic utterances of classical ethics, which tell us what we should finally be (typically in relation to some abstract ideal of being good) instead of how we should act in relation to a specific Other, whom we now encounter face to face. Ethics starts in this encounter, and it also ends here: there is no larger playing field, not landscape, not society, not history, not ontology. Or, more exactly, there certainly are such encompassing fields, but they are not the ones peculiarly pertinent to the ethical. The playing field of ethics is here and now and always—in the moment of encounter with the Other in destitution and distress, making a call to us and a demand upon us.

It is my contention that in this delimited domain of the ethical, the glance is an extremely important player, much more so in any case than has been previously recognized by previous ethicists. This includes Levinas, who is strangely silent on the specific modalities of the face to face encounter and who may have been motivated to overlook the significance of the glance in the wake of the notoriety that came to accrue to the “look” as a result of Sartre’s celebrated description of it in *Being and Nothingness*. Nevertheless, the petrifying power of *le regard*, exemplified by the Medusa’s head, is precisely the sense of vision Levinas would link to the Western obsession with illumination and comprehension—that is, the effort to bring things into the light of day where they can be scrutinized with neutrality and objectivity. Just this sense of seeing is antithetical to the ethical relation, wherein we are enjoined to grasp the Other in his or her fragility and distress (though also, and as a function of this very need, as an uncompromisable obligation placed on us to witness the Other).

The glance is something else again from the look. Unlike the look, which freezes intimacy or overlooks it altogether, the glance is well suited to the close quarters of the face to face circumstance. It gains impressions and picks up nuances in an especially skillful way. It can increase intimacy itself, as when welcoming and seductive glances are exchanged directly between two parties; but even short of this, and apart from alienating glances, the glance can discern signs of distress of the very sort that are ethically relevant on the

Levinasian paradigm. Glancing at the way in which my friend has dressed in a semideliberately unattractive way, I read right away the self-effacement she is feeling at her current lot in life. The distress is worn on her sleeve quite literally, and it only takes a glance to apprehend and comprehend it all at once. In fact, it is this very “all at once” temporal structure of the glance that renders it so valuable for grasping the face to face situation in which I so often find myself. Even if Heidegger is right—that anxiety arises from the facelessness of one’s own nothingness—the anxiety itself is seen all at once on my other friend’s face as I see him struggling to articulate his difficulty with certain colleagues in a philosophy department.

Perhaps most important is the factor of surprise, which is part of the game of glancing. It is not that I always glance in order to be surprised; but whenever I do glance, I find myself surprised to some significant degree (Casey, “World” 13–37). A glance, we might say, is open to surprise and has a special sensitivity for it. I take things in at a glance not to understand things in their essence—this is better done by the never closing eye of social or natural Science, exhibiting the “overarching self-imposed sovereignty of *theoria*” (Schroeder 122)—but to follow out their incursions and immersions in unexpected corners of the world. In short, there is a spontaneous alliance between the glance and the face to face encounter, an alliance evident in the internal connection between revelation and surprise. As Schroeder remarks in commenting on this connection, “Revelation [of the Other in the face to face encounter] is always surprise, [something] non-thematizable and non-totalizable. . . . The non-violent rupture of the totality will be a moment of surprise” (115, 127).<sup>14</sup> The glance delivers surprise by piercing the pretenses and dissevering the defenses of the identities and unities, samenesses and egoities, by which we compulsively hide ourselves and protect ourselves, from each other and from ourselves. It has a specifically disruptive power that makes it an efficacious, vanguard force in the critique of totality (and thus of war and violence, which always attend totality) that is the ultimate aim of the book entitled *Totality and Infinity*. What better agent of detotalizing than the glance, which cuts through cant and convention alike?

The subtitle of Levinas’s masterwork is “An Essay on Exteriority.” Here as well, in the difficult realm of absolute separation, the glance is an active ally. For I, this lonely psychism, am needed to grasp and maintain the alterity of the Other, to keep the Other other, exterior to my needs if not to my desire. As Levinas puts it in *Totality and Infinity*, “it is in order that alterity be produced in being that a ‘thought’ is needed and an I is needed” (cited in Schroeder 122).<sup>15</sup> The relation to the Other comes irreversibly from myself

to that Other, and not the other way around: I respond to the Other as I see that other in need and thus needing me. In effecting this response, the glance is indispensable; cutting across personal and social space, not to mention prejudice and dogmatism, the glance reaches out to the needful alterity of the Other. Levinas puts it this way:

A relation whose terms do not form a totality can hence be produced within the general economy of being only as proceeding from the I to the other, as a *face to face*, as delineating a distance in depth—that of conversation, of goodness, of Desire—irreducible to the distance [which] the synthetic activity of the understanding establishes between the diverse terms, other with respect to one another, that lend themselves to its synoptic operation. (Schroeder 122)<sup>16</sup>

So, too, the glance proceeds from me to you, delineating a distance in the depth of our relation, being irreducible to anything like a “synoptic gaze” (Levinas, *Totality* 53).

In the chapter entitled “DiaGround” in his book *Altared Ground*, Brian Schroeder asks: “What are the ways in which plurality and multiplicity, namely, the face to face relations, keep getting co-opted by the unities of things like persons?” (125) One answer is that the foreclosure of the glance, the failure to take in the Other with openness and surprise, and the suspension of the glance’s spontaneous deconstruction of *doxa* and *hexis*, “belief” and “habit”—with these cessations of the power of the glance, the unifying and totalizing of heterogeneous multiplicity become dominant. And yet, all it takes to reverse these seemingly ineluctable processes is a glance at, or toward, or with, an Other with whom we are in close proximity, face to face. Then the production of what Sartre calls “detotalized totalities” arises, undermining the ontosclerosis of institutions and personal relations Sartre himself considers inevitable. All that has become all too solid dissolves—with a mere glance.

As Schroeder says: “Even if it is the case that the face to face relation is continually corrupted [insofar as] it is a relation within being and not exterior to it, there is always a possible surprise assessed beyond the reconceptualizations of the Other” (127). Can it be that the most effective surprise is made possible by the least obvious act? Does this demure act give surprising hope to an otherwise hopeless circumstance of neutralization and indifference? Schroeder asks: “How can it be that hope is given, on the one hand, in the slenderest and most distant projective terms, and on the other, experientially in the most concrete and ordinary manner, namely, in the face to face relation?”

(127) How can hope be given, indeed, if not by the glance, that most slender of projective acts, occurring as it does in “the most concrete and ordinary manner”? Is the true epiphany not that which is realized by the glance?

### Leading Questions

You will doubtless be wondering whether I have doubly confined ethics, first by agreeing with Levinas that the face to face encounter is the very scene of ethical conduct: the place where ethical dilemmas first arise and where, too, they are resolved (if they ever are resolved). Following Levinas, I am taking the face to face situation as the very seat of morality, the site of *Sittlichkeit*. And I am proposing one further apparent confinement: that this scene of the ethical occurs concretely and specifically in and through the glance, construed as the gestural basis of moral interaction, the bodily *lingua franca* of ethical interchange. Beyond spontaneous speech as the expressive vehicle of the Other’s demand upon me, there is a second form of expression, this one altogether prediscursive yet not less effective and no less articulate in its own way. Language is allied with theory, i.e., spectatorial viewing (a *theoros* is a person who observes spectacles in nearby cities). Stopping short of propositional language, the glance has nothing of the studied look, the patient observation, so prized in Western theorizing, which prides itself on being independent of practice, including *ethical* practice, as is already emphasized by Aristotle. The glance itself is altogether part of practice—so much so, so immersed in it, that we rarely pause to notice its importance; and it is part of ethical practice in particular, again a much more important part than has been previously recognized. The importance is found in its role as the conveyor of ethical intentions, as the purveyor of ethical discourse, and as the watchful surveyor of the ethical scene. By simply glancing at the other’s face, we detect what he or she is about to do, both in terms of express aims or tacit wishes; and by exchanging significant glances, we display our own intentions in such a way as to engage the other before, or under, or through explicit verbal exchanges. The entire face to face encounter is tessellated with glances, tracked and traced by them. If the face to face encounter is as indispensable to ethics as Levinas claims it is—and as Schroeder also assures us it is, here allying himself with Levinas versus skeptics such as Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, and Deleuze and Guattari—then it behooves us to own up to the dense fabric of glances from which it is composed and by which it is sustained.

The encounter in the *agora*, supposedly the scene of the most highly theoretical endeavor, was also a scene in which glances were transmitted. People

were then face to face, often by chance (as Aristotle explicitly mentions in his discussion of *tuché* in his *Physics*), and spoke about matters of ethics and politics. Yet this public space, paradigmatic for constructive discourse about these matters (as emphasized by Hannah Arendt), was riven by glances as well as by words—the two together intertwined in ways that added depth and subtlety to the encounter, giving flesh to the bones of abstract thinking. And if it is true (as Derrida claims) that “all the classical thoughts interrogated by Levinas are drawn toward the *agora*,”<sup>17</sup> so the face to face encounter always draws us toward a comparable scene of active engagement in which glancing is as crucial as speaking, the two together co-constituting the place where the ethical happens.

If this is so, my first question to Brian Schroeder would be this: does he agree that the face to face encounter as set forth by Levinas calls for supplementation of the sort for which I have here been arguing? (Where I am using the concept of “supplement” in Derrida’s own sense of being not just an addition but something necessary to the very matter one is supplementing.)

From here, I have a series of other questions to pose, which are directed at once to Schroeder and to Levinas:

1. Does ethical obligation obtain toward the nonhuman realm (i.e., animals and trees and mountains)? This is a realm I know Schroeder is deeply concerned about, with his longstanding interest in environmental matters. If the face to face is indeed the *sine qua non* of ethical life, and if it is exclusively between human beings, how shall we regard our responsibility toward those we do not encounter face to face? (My own suspicion is that, precisely in the absence of doubly articulated language, the significance of glancing becomes only more heightened, particularly as concerns the world of animals and perhaps the inanimate as well.)
2. Does ethical responsibility entail the renunciation of political power? Schroeder cites Levinas: “What is this original trace, this primordial desolation? It is the nakedness of a face that faces, expressing itself, interrupting order [including political order],” then comments, “The ethical power or resistance that is conveyed through the face is paradoxically the absolute renunciation of power in the political (broadly construed) sense of domination of the Other” (116). Schroeder gives as a reason for this diremption between the ethical and the political the lack of mediation in the former: “There is no sense of mediation in *ethical* intersubjectivity, though there is [mediation] in all democratic political and legal relations” (121).<sup>18</sup> Here I would only ask whether such an absolute difference between the ethical and the

political is really necessary, or is in fact the case. Certainly, if politics entails domination—if it is always the politics of *The Prince*—then one would hope that the ethical points in quite a different direction. But if it only calls for a more extensive mediation than does the ethical, one might hope that the ethical and the political were ultimately conterminous and cooperative. Put otherwise: is not the face to face already mediated to a significant degree such that it does not constitute an entirely closed domain? Does not the presence of speech therein already introduce mediation in the very midst of desire and goodness? Indeed, does not the face itself (including its glancing powers) import mediation in the form of history, as is implied in this statement from *Altered Ground*: “As a *historical* entity, the Other is present to consciousness via the face; but as the trace of the transhistorical Infinite, of the absolutely other, the Other conveys the invisible passivity of ethical obligation” (120).<sup>19</sup> Here mediation is brought into the face to face encounter, and yet, by the same stroke, excluded once again within that same encounter. Can we have it both ways?

3. We have just been brought to history, about which Schroeder poses a pointed question at the beginning of his book: “Does Levinas’s conception of the absolutely other as the Other . . . not mean . . . that every metaphysical category is totally abstract and non-actual including, above all, the category of the infinite? [Such a question] indict[s] Levinas of a certain, if not radical, a- or even non-historicity of thought” (18). Derrida, in “Violence et métaphysique,” is deeply worried about this, too: “It is evident that Levinas thus describes *history* as blindness to the other and laborious procession of the same. One could ask oneself if history can be history, *if there is a history*, when negativity is confined to the circle of the same . . . [and] if history itself does not commence with this relation to the other which Levinas posits beyond history.”<sup>20</sup> My question here is closely related to my earlier concern with the problem of two tyrannies: If the same is indeed closed off from history (or the political), will it not only suffer from abstraction and seclusion (and thus ineffectiveness), but will it not also become despotic in its own domain? To be without history is not only to be powerless in history; it is to garner, surreptitiously, a spurious but dangerous power that is self-aggrandizing and self-fulfilling, that says, in effect, “whatever history may judge to be the case, I know this to be right.” Granting that historical judgment must always come after the fact—the historian is the “survivor,” as Levinas says in *Totality and Infinity* (220–47)—does this mean that the face to face encounter is historyless? Does it not have to contain—indeed, engender—history in some significant

sense if it is indeed the pivot of the ethical life? Is not this life a life in a concrete life-world, hence a world with its own history, albeit one quite different from national or world history of the sort about which Levinas is justly suspicious? Recalling Derrida's claim that, for Levinas, "the infinite passage through violence is called history" (*Violence* 130), I am moved to ask: is there not another sense of history than that of violence?

4. Speaking of violence, I want to return to Schroeder a question he asks of Levinas midway through *Altared Ground*: "But does Levinas constitute a violence towards the very alterity he seeks to preserve in that he places the signification of otherness beyond history and therefore *de-existentializes* the suffering and oppression of the Other? Does the opposition of ethics and history, of metaphysics and ontology, of infinity and totality, negate . . . ethical praxis itself?" (116) In other words, has Levinas's commitment to the face to face, which is the *situs* of the first members of each of the dyads just mentioned, estranged him permanently from a model of effective action in the world? Certainly so, if the *face à face* is hermetically sealed from the uncomfortable intrusions of the world; certainly not, if it is not so sealed but brings those intrusions into the purview of the same. That the latter is the case is suggested by the fact that Levinas starts from the undeniable facticity of suffering and distress—from destitution—as the first moment of the ethical. But are the later moments—those of the demand for justice, the invocation of goodness, the call to substitute oneself for the other—shielded from the harsh realities of history and politics? Do they signify retreat into what Derrida calls (with a slightly different inflection) "a pure non-violence"<sup>21</sup>?
5. Finally, and to come full cycle in these remarks, we need to return to the question of *ground*. How shall we, how can we, use this term after Heidegger and Derrida have so thoroughly deconstructed it? Does Levinas allow us to hazard it again, this time on a different basis? Such would seem to be at least a tacit claim throughout *Altared Ground*, a title whose punning character is here especially pertinent. Is the face to face a groundless ground for ethics—for ethics to begin again, or rather to recover the abyssal ground on which it has always stood? Twice, at least, Schroeder points in this direction: once, when he speaks of an "an-archic past"—that is, "revealed as the non-grounding ground of ethical signification" (123). This is the past that is revealed by the trace belonging to the face: the past that was never a present, thus never a ground for its present recollection. Then, when he states that "the enigmatic 'ground' of the ethical relationship, of meaning itself, is paradoxically, the absence of all grounds" (147), the scare quotes associated with the first use of "ground" in this sentence are

telling: the word is affirmed, yet also retracted, in one and the same typographical gesture. This would suggest that every time we look into the source of ground, what grounds ground itself, we find an abyss (as Derrida would say) or the uncanny (as Heidegger would put it). That is one way in which ground is altered/altared, changed/honored. But there is another way, one suggested by the chapter titles of *Altared Ground*, which proliferate grounds: BackGround, IdeoGround, WarGround, TransGround, MiddleGround, and the like. Here, ground is ungrounded differently: by a sheer proliferation of grounding terms, showing that ground itself is no single thing, as if to say that ground is not so much abyssal or uncanny as it is self-engendering, giving rise to a heterogeneous multiplicity that defies ontological closure and unification. This way lies the smooth space of *A Thousand Plateaus*, with its rhizomatic root system: another degrounded ground.

By the end of the elegant and extraordinary text *Altared Ground*, we are left wondering: which way are we to go—into the pit or into the rhizome, and will we be able to take Levinas with us? Where does the face to face encounter take us, after all? Who can say, just glancing at it? Or will the glance take us out of the pit and beyond the rootstalk into the plant that exfoliates above the ground, in the HelioSpace and HyperPlace that characterize the face to face encounter and its ethical bearing?

#### NOTES

1. Italics in the original.
2. On apprehension vs. comprehension in its originally Hegelian acceptance, see Hegel sect. 90. The ethical implications of this distinction are sketched in Schroeder 12.
3. Levinas writes, "The metaphysical other is other with an alterity that is not formal, is not the simple reverse of identity, and is not formed out of resistance to the same, but is prior to every initiative, to all imperialism of the same" (*Totality* 38–39).
4. Italics in the original. With his usual acumen, Schroeder spells out this same paradox by simultaneously affirming "both the concrete personal nature of the face to face *and* the absolute distance or separation that remains between the self and Other" (96; italics in the original).
5. Levinas writes: "Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power. It issues from the State and in the non-violence of the totality without securing itself against the violence from which this non-violence lives, and which appears in the tyranny of the State" (*Totality* 46, cited in Schroeder 97).
6. Compare with Casey 46–73.
7. Italics added.
8. "Blink of the instant" is in italics in the original.
9. It was perhaps in recognition of the danger of construing the face to face relation as

a matter of pure presence that Levinas introduced the idea of "trace" into its constitution shortly after the publication of *Totality and Infinity*; compare with Levinas "Trace."

10. This is Levinas's phrase.
11. On this spiraling movement, see Levinas *Otherwise* 44.
12. Italics in the original. Schroeder speaks of "enigmatic paradox" (112).
13. Italics in the original.
14. Schroeder speaks of "the *surprise* of exteriority which paradoxically arises from the interiority that the face signifies at the trace of the Infinite" (13). Italics in the original.
15. Italics in the original.
16. Italics in the original.
17. Derrida 145: "Toutes les pensées classiques interrogées par Levinas sont ainsi traînées vers l'*agora*."
18. Italics in the original. Schroeder also remarks: "There appears to be an internal contradiction between the affirmation of ethical transcendence and the refusal of historical mediation. The Other is not only refractory to categorization by thought; the Other is also 'flesh', to borrow Merleau-Ponty's term. Does the denial of mediation as a path to the 'royal road of ethics' [Derrida] render the problems of injustice, suffering, and murder meaningless?" (117)
19. Italics in the original.
20. Italics in the original.
21. "Violence" 146-7: "Pure violence, a relationship between beings without faces, is not yet violence, is pure nonviolence. And inversely: pure nonviolence, the nonrelation of the same to the other (in the sense understood by Levinas) is pure violence. Only a face can arrest violence, but can do so, in the first place, only because a face can provoke it."

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