CHAPTER IV

SUBSTITUTION

Ich bin du, wenn ich bin.

Paul Celan

I. PRINCIPLE AND ANARCHY

In the relationship with beings, which we call consciousness, we identify beings across the dispersion of silhouettes in which they appear; in self-consciousness we identify ourselves across the multiplicity of temporal phases. It is as though subjective life in the form of consciousness consisted in being itself losing itself and finding itself again so as to possess itself by showing itself, proposing itself as a theme, exposing itself in truth. This identification is not the counterpart of any image; it is a claim of the mind, proclamation, saying, kerygma. But it is not at all arbitrary, and consequently depends on a mysterious operation of schematism, in language, which can make an ideality correspond to the dispersion of aspects and images, silhouettes or phases. To become conscious of a being is then always for that being to be grasped across an ideality and on the basis of a said. Even an empirical, individual being is broached across the ideality of logos. Subjectivity qua consciousness can thus be interpreted as the articulation of an ontological event, as one of the mysterious ways in which its "act of being" is deployed. Being a theme, being intelligible or open, possessing oneself, the moment of having in being—all that is articulated in the movement of essence: losing itself and finding itself out of an ideal principle, an ἀρχή, in its thematic exposition, being thus carries on its affair of being. The detour of ideality leads to coinciding with oneself; that is, to certainty, which remains the guide and guarantee of the whole spiritual adventure of being. But this is why this adventure is no adventure. It is never dangerous; it is self-possession, sovereignty, ἀρχή. Anything unknown that can occur to it is in advance disclosed, open, manifest, is cast in the mould of the known, and cannot be a complete surprise.

For the philosophical tradition of the West, all spirituality lies in consciousness, thematic exposition of being, knowing.
In starting with sensibility interpreted not as a knowing but as proximity, in seeking in language contact and sensibility, behind the circulation of information it becomes, we have endeavored to describe subjectivity as irreducible to consciousness and thematization. Proximity appears as the relationship with the other, who cannot be resolved into "images" or be exposed in a theme. It is the relationship with what is not disproportionate to the \( \delta \alpha \nu \gamma \eta \) in thematization, but incommensurable with it, with what does not derive its identity from the kerygmatic logos, and blocks all schematism.

Not able to stay in a theme, not able to appear, this invisibility which becomes contact and obsession is due not to the nonsignifyingness of what is approached, but to a way of signifying quite different from that which connects exposition to sight. Here, beyond visibility there is exposed no signification that would still be thematized in its sign. It is the very transcending characteristic of this beyond that is signification. Signification is the contradictory trope of the-one-for-the-other. The-one-for-the-other is not a lack of intuition, but the surplus of responsibility. My responsibility for the other is the for of the relationship. The very signifyingness of signification, which signifies in saying before showing itself in the said. The-one-for-the-other is the very signifyingness of signification! It is not that the "beyond" would be "further" than everything that appears, or "present in absence," or "shown by a symbol"; that would still be to be subject to a principle, to be given in consciousness. Here what is essential is a refusal to allow oneself to be tamed or domesticated by a theme. The movement going "beyond" loses its own signifyingness and becomes an immanence as soon as logos interpellates, invests, presents and exposes it, whereas its adjacency in proximity is an absolute exteriority. Incommensurable with the present, unassimilable in it, it is always "already in the past" behind which the present delays, over and beyond the "now" which this exteriority disturbs or obsesses. This way of passing, disturbing the present without allowing itself to be invested by the \( \delta \alpha \nu \gamma \eta \) of consciousness, straitening with its furrows the clarity of the ostensible, is what we have called a trace.2 Proximity is thus anarchically a relationship with a singularity without the mediation of any principle, any ideality. What concretely corresponds to this description is my relationship with my neighbor, a signifyingness which is different from the much-discussed "meaning-endowment." Since signification is this very relationship with the other, the-one-for-the-other. This incommensurability with consciousness, which becomes a trace of the who knows where, is not the insistent relationship of knowing in which everything is equalized, nor the indifference of spatial contiguity; it is an assignation of me by another, a responsibility with regard to men we do not even know. The relationship of proximity cannot be reduced to any modality of distance or geometrical contiguity, nor to the simple "representation" of a neighbor; it is already an assignation, an extremely urgent assignation - an obligation, anachronously prior to any commitment. This anteriority is "older" than the a priori. This formula expresses a way of being affected which can in no way be invested by spontaneity: the subject is affected without the source of the affection becoming a theme of representation. We have called this relationship irreducible to consciousness obsession. The relationship with exteriority is "prior" to the act that would effect it. For this relationship is not an act, not a thematizing, not a position in the Fichtean sense. Not everything that is in consciousness would be posited by consciousness - contrary to the proposition that seemed to Fichte to be fundamental.

Obsession is irreducible to consciousness, even if it overwhelms it. In consciousness it is betrayed, but thematized by a said in which it is manifested. Obsession traverses consciousness countercurrentwise, is inscribed in consciousness as something foreign, a disequilibrium, a delirium. It undoes thematization, and escapes any principle, origin, will, or \( \delta \alpha \nu \gamma \eta \), which are put forth in every ray of consciousness. This movement is, in the original sense of the term, anarchical. Thus obsession can nowise be taken as a hypertrophy of consciousness.

But anarchy is not disorder as opposed to order, as the eclipse of themes is not, as is said, a return to a diffuse "field of consciousness" prior to attention. Disorder is but another order, and what is diffuse is thematizable.3 Anarchy troubles being over and beyond these alternatives. It brings to a halt the ontological play which, precisely qua play, is consciousness, where being is lost and found again, and thus illuminated. In the form of an ego, anachronously \textit{delayed} behind its present moment, and unable to recuperate this delay - that is, in the form of an ego unable to conceive what is "touching" it, the ascendance of the other is exercised upon the same to the point of interrupting it, leaving it speechless. Anarchy is persecution. Obsession is a persecution where the persecution does not make up the content of a consciousness gone mad; it designates the term in which the ego is affected, a form which is a defecting from consciousness. This inversion of consciousness is no doubt a passivity - but it is a passivity beneath all passivity. It cannot be defined in terms of intentionality, where undergoing is always also an assuming, that is, an experience always anticipated and consented to, already an origin and \( \delta \alpha \nu \gamma \eta \). To be sure, the intentionality of consciousness does not designate voluntary intention only. Yet it retains the initiating and inchoative pattern of voluntary intention. The given enters into a thought which recognizes in it or invests it with its own project, and thus exercises mastery over it. What affects a consciousness presents itself at a distance from the first, manifests itself a priori from the
first, is represented does not knock without announcing itself, leaves, across the interval of space and time, the leisure necessary for a welcome. What is realized in and by intentional consciousness offers itself to protention and diverges from itself in retention, so as to be, across the diversity, identified and possessed. This play in being is consciousness itself: presence to self through a distance, which is both loss of self and recovery in truth. The for itself in consciousness is thus the very power which a being exercises upon itself, its will, its sovereignty. A being is equal to itself and is in possession of itself in this form; domination is in consciousness as such. Hegel thought that the I is but consciousness mastering itself in self-equality, in what he calls “the freedom of this infinite equality.”

The obsession we have seen in proximity conflicts with this figure of a being possessing itself in an equality, this being ἄρχειν. How can the passivity of obsession and a place in consciousness, which is wholly, or is in the end, freedom? For in consciousness everything is intentionally assumed. Consciousness is wholly equality (equality of self with self, but also equality in that for consciousness responsibility is always strictly measured by freedom, and is thus always limited). How in consciousness can there be an undergoing or a passion whose active source does not, in any way, occur in consciousness? This exteriority has to be emphasized. It is not objective or spatial, recuperable in immanence and thus falling under the orders of – and in the order of – consciousness; it is obsession, non-thematizable and, in the sense we have just defined, anarchic.

It is in a responsibility that is justified by no prior commitment, in the responsibility for another – in an ethical situation – that the me-ontological and metalogical structure of this archaie takes form, undoing the logos in which the apology by which consciousness always regains its self-control, and commands, is inserted. This passion is absolute in that it takes hold without any a priori. The consciousness is affected, then, before forming an image of what is coming to it, affected in spite of itself. In these traits we recognize a persecution; being called into question prior to questioning, responsibility over and beyond the logos of response. It is as though persecution by another were at the bottom of solidarity with another. How can such a passion take place and have its time in consciousness?

2. RECURRENCE

But consciousness, knowing of oneself by oneself, is not all there is to the notion of subjectivity. It already rests on a “subjective condition,” an identity that one calls ego or I. It is true that, when asking about the meaning of this identity, we have the habit either of denouncing it in a refined substance, or of finding in it once again the for-itself of consciousness. In the traditional teaching of idealism, subject and consciousness are equivalent concepts. The who or the me are not even suspected. This one is a nonrelation, but absolutely a term. Yet this term of an irreversible assignation is perhaps dissimulated, under the outdated notions of the soul. It is a term not reducible to a relation, but yet it is in recurrence. The ego is in itself like a sound that would resound in its own echo, the node of a wave which is not once again consciousness. The term in recurrence will be sought here beyond or on the hither side of consciousness and its play, beyond or on the hither side of being which it thematicizes, outside of being, and thus in itself as in exile. It will be found under the effect of an expulsion. Whose positive meaning has to be explicated. Under the effect of such an expulsion outside of being, it is in itself. There is expulsion in that it assigns me before I show myself, before I set myself up. I am assigned without recourse, without fatherland, already sent back to myself, but without being able to stay there, compelled before commencing. Nothing here resembles self-consciousness. It has meaning only as an upsurge in me of a responsibility prior to commitment, that is, a responsibility for the other. There I am one and irreplaceable, one inasmuch as irreplaceable in responsibility. This is the underside of a fabric where there is consciousness and which takes place in being.

Nothing here resembles self-consciousness. The reduction of subjectivity to consciousness dominates philosophical thought, which since Hegel has been trying to overcome the duality of being and thought, by identifying, under different figures, substance and subject. This also amounts to undoing the substantivity of substance, but in relationship with self-consciousness. The successive and progressive disclosure of being to itself would be produced in philosophy. Knowing, the discovering, would not be added on to the being of entities, to essence. Being's essence carries on like a vigilance exercised without respite on this very vigilance, like a self-possession. Philosophy which states essence as an ontology, concludes this essence, this lucidity of lucidity, by this logos. Consciousness fulfills the being of entities. For Sartre as for Hegel, the oneself is posited on the basis of the for-itself. The identity of the I would thus be reducible to the turning back of essence upon itself. The I, or the oneself that would seem to be its subject or condition, the oneself taking on the figure of an entity among entities, would in truth be reducible to an abstraction taken from the concrete process of self-consciousness, or from the exposition of being in history or in the stretching out of time, in which, across breaks and recoveries, being shows itself to itself. Time, essence, essence as time, would be the absolute itself in the return to self. The multiplicity of unique
subjects, entities immediately, empirically, encountered, would proceed from this universal self-consciousness of the Mind: bits of dust collected by its movement or drops of sweat glistening on its forehead because of the labor of the negative it will have accomplished. They would be forgettable moments of which what counts is only their identities due to their positions in the system, which are reabsorbed into the whole of the system.

The reflection on oneself proper to consciousness, the ego perceiving the self, is not like the antecedent recurrence of the oneself, the openness without any duality of oneself, from the first backed up against itself, up against a wall, or twisted over itself in its skin, too tight in its skin, in itself already outside of itself. Its restlessness also does not convey dispersion into phases, exterior to one another, in a flux of immanent time in the Husserlian sense, retaining the past and being on the future. The oneself is not the ideal pole of an identification across the multiplicity of psychic silhouettes kerygmatically proclaimed to be the same by virtue of a mysterious schematism of discourse. The oneself does not bear its identity as entities, identical in that they are said without being unsaid, and thus are thematized and appear to consciousness. The uncancellable recurrence of the oneself in the subject is prior to any distinction between moments which could present themselves to a synthesizing activity of identification and assemblage to recall or expectation. The recurrence of the oneself is not relaxed and lighted up again, illuminating itself thereby like consciousness which lights up by interrupting itself and finding itself again in the temporal play of retentions and protentions. The oneself does not enter into that play of exposures and dissimulations which we call a phenomenon (or phenomenology, for the appearing of a phenomenon is already a discourse). The oneself takes refuge or is exiled in its own fullness, to the point of explosion or fission, in view of its own reconstitution in the form of an identity identified in the said. Verbs, possessive adjectives and the syntactic figures one would like to use to disarticulate the singular torsion or contraction of the oneself bear already the mark of the oneself, of this torsion, this contraction, this fission. That is perhaps also the meaning of Leibniz' mysterious formula, "the ego is innate to itself." The self involved in maintaining oneself, losing oneself or finding oneself again is not a result, but the very matrix of the relations or events that these pronominal verbs express. The evocation of maternity in this metaphor suggests to us the proper sense of the oneself. The oneself cannot form itself; it is already formed with absolute passivity. In this sense it is the victim of a persecution that paralyzes any assumption that could awaken in it, so that it would posit itself for itself. This passivity is that of an attachment that has already been made, as something irreversibly past, prior to all memory and all recall. It was made in an irrecoverable time which the present, repre-

sented in recall, does not equal, in a time of birth or creation, of which nature or creation retains a trace, unconvertible into a memory. Recurrence is more past than any remembrable past, any past convertible into a present. The oneself is a creature, but an orphan by birth or an atheist no doubt ignorant of its Creator, for if it knew it it would again be taking up its commencement. The recurrence of the oneself refers to the hither side of the present in which every identity identified in the said is constituted. It is already constituted when the act of constitution first originates. But in order that there be produced in the drawing out of essence, coming out like a colorless thread from the distaff of the Parques, a break in the same, the nostalgia for return, the hunt for the same and the recoveries, and the clarity in which consciousness plays, in order that this divergence from self and this recapture be produced, the retention and protention by which every present is a re-presentation - behind all the articulations of these movements there must be the recurrence of the oneself. The disclosure of being to itself lurks there. Otherwise essence, exonerated by itself, constituted in immanent time, will posit only indiscernible points, which would, to be sure, be together, but which would neither block nor fulfill any fate. Nothing would make itself. The breakup of "eternal rest" by time, in which being becomes consciousness and self-consciousness by equalizing itself after the breakup, presuppose the oneself. To present the knot of ipseity in the straight thread of essence according to the model of the intentionality of the for-itself, or as the openness of reflection upon oneself, is to posit a new ipseity behind the ipseity one would like to reduce.

The oneself has not issued from its own initiative, as it claims in the plays and figures of consciousness on the way to the unity of an Idea. In that idea, coinciding with itself, free inasmuch as it is a totality which leaves nothing outside, and thus, fully reasonable, the oneself posits itself as an always convertible term in a relation, a self-consciousness. But the oneself is hypostasized in another way. It is bound in a knot that cannot be undone in a responsibility for others. This is an anarchic plot, for it is rather the underside of a freedom, a free commitment undertaken in a present or a past that could be remembered, nor slave's alienation, despite the gestation of the other in the same, which this responsibility for the other signifies. In the exposure to wounds and outrages, in the feeling proper to responsibility, the oneself is provoked as irreplaceable, as devoted to the others, without being able to resign, and thus as incarnated in order to offer itself, to suffer and to give. It is thus one and unique, in passivity from the start, having nothing at its disposal that would enable it to not yield to the provocation. It is one, reduced to itself and as it were contracted, expelled into itself outside of being. The exile or refuge in itself is without conditions or support, far from the abundant covers and excuses
which the essence exhibited in the said offers. In responsibility as one assigned or elected from the outside, assigned as irrepeable, the subject is accused in its skin, too tight for its skin. Cutting across every relation, it is an individual unlike an entity that can be designated as ἁρρατ. Unless, that is, the said derives from the uniqueness of the oneself assigned in responsibility the ideal unity necessary for identification of the diverse, by which, in the amphibology of being and entities, an entity signifies. The hypostasis is exposed as oneself in the ascendant form, before appearing in the said proper to knowing as the bearer of a name. The metaphor of a sound that would be audible only in its echo meant to approach this way of presenting one's passivity as an underside without a right side.

Prior to the return to itself proper to consciousness, this hypostasis, when it shows itself, does so under the borrowed mask of being. The event in which this unity or uniqueness of the hypostasis is brought out is not the grasping of self in consciousness. It is an assignation to answer without evasion, which assigns the self to be a self. Prior to the play of being, before the present, older than the time of consciousness that is accessible in memory, in its "dear old man, never remote enough," the oneself is exposed as a hypostasis, of which the being it as an entity is but a mask. It bears its name as a borrowed name, a pseudonym, a pro-noun. In itself, the oneself is the one or the unique separated from being.

The oneself proper to consciousness is then not again a consciousness, but a term in hypostasis. It is by this hypostasis that the person, as an identity unjustifiable by itself and in this sense empirical or contingent, emerges substantively. It is its stance that is resistant to the erosion of time and history, that is, struck by a death always violent and premature. An identity prior to the for-itself, it is not the reduced or germinal model of the relationship of oneself with oneself that cognition is. Neither a vision of oneself by oneself, nor a manifestation of oneself to oneself, the oneself does not coincide with the identifying of truth, is not stakable in terms of consciousness, discourse and intentionality. The unjustifiable identity of ipseity is expressed in terms such as ego, I, oneself, and, this work aims to show throughout, starting with the soul, sensibility, vulnerability, manhood and materiality, which describe responsibility for others. The "fulcrum" in which this turning of being back upon itself which we call knowing or mind is produced thus designates the singularity par excellence. It can indeed appear in an indirect language, under a proper name, as an entity, and thus put itself on the edge of the generality characteristic of all said, and there refer to essence. But it is first a non-qualitative, no one, clothed with purely borrowed being, which masks its nameless singularity by conferring on it a role. The locus of support for the mind is a personal pronoun. If the return to self proper to cognition, the original truth of being, consciousness, can be realized, it is because a recurrence of ipseity has already been produced. This is an inversion in the process of essence, a withdrawing from the game that being plays in consciousness. It is a withdrawal in oneself which is an exile in oneself, without a foundation in anything else, a non-condition. This withdrawal excludes all spontaneity, and is thus always already effectuated, already past. Ipseity is not an abstract point, the center of a rotation, identifiable on the basis of the trajectory traced by this movement of consciousness, but a point already identified from the outside, not having to identify itself in the present nor to state its identity, already older than the time of consciousness.

The identity already realized, the "fact" or the "already done" that the oneself contributes to consciousness and knowing, does not refer mythically to a duration prior to duration, to a fabric that would still be loose enough so as to permit the flexion upon oneself of the for-itself. The for-itself is a tension irreducible to the beating of self-consciousness, the relaxing and recovering proper to the same. The oneself comes from a past that could not be remembered, not because it is situated very far behind, but because the oneself, incommensurable with consciousness which is always equal to itself, is not "made" for the present. The oneself, an inequality with itself, a deficit in being, a passivity or patience and, in its passivity not offering itself to memory, not affecting retrospective contemplation, is in this sense undecidable, with an undecidability which is not that of a pure actuality. It is the identity of the singular, modified only in the erosion of ageing, in the permanence of a loss of self. It is unsayable, and thus unjustifiable. These negative qualifications of the subjectivity of the oneself do not consecrate some ineffable mystery, but confirm the presupposition, prelogical and in a certain sense atomic, that is, indivisual, unity of the self, which prevents it from splitting, separating itself from itself so as to contemplate or express itself, and thus show itself, only under a comic mask, to name itself otherwise than by a pro-noun. This prevention is the positiveness of the one. It is in a certain sense atomic, for it is without any rest in itself, "more and more one," to the point of breakup, fission, openness. That this unity be a torsion and a restlessness, irreducible to the function that the oneself exercises in the ontology accomplished by consciousness, which, by the oneself, operates its turning back over itself, presents a problem. It is as though the atomic unity of the subject were exposed outside by breathing, by divesting its ultimate substance even to the mucous membrane of the lungs, continually splitting up.

The oneself does not rest in peace under its identity, and yet its restlessness is not a dialectical secession, nor a process equalizing difference. Its unity is not just added on to some content of ipseity, like the indefinite article which substantifies even verbs, "nominalizing" and thematizing
them. Here the unity precedes every article and every process; it is somehow itself the content. Recurrence is but an "outdoing" of unity. As a unity in its form and in its content, the oneself is a singularity, prior to the distinction between the particular and the universal. It is, if one likes, a relationship, but one where there is no disjunction between the terms held in relationship, a relationship that is not reducible to an intentional openness upon oneself, does not purely and simply repeat consciousness in which being is gathered up, as the sea gathers up the waves that wash the shore. The ego is not in itself like matter which, perfectly espoused by its form, is what it is; it is in itself like one is in one's skin, that is, already tight, ill at ease in one's own skin. It is as though the identity of matter resting in itself concealed a dimension in which a retreat to the hither side of immediate coincidence were possible, concealed a materiality more material than all matter—a materiality such that irritability, susceptibility or exposedness to wounds and outrage characterizes its passivity, more passive still than the passivity of effects. Maternity in the complete being "for the other" which characterizes it, which is the very signifyingness of signification, is the ultimate sense of this vulnerability. This hither side of identity is not reducible to the for-itself, where, beyond its immediate identity, being recognizes itself in its difference. We have to formulate what the irremissibility and, in the etymological sense of the term, the anguish of this in-itself of the oneself are. This anguish is not the existential "being-for-death," but the constriction of an "entry inwards," or the "hither side" of all extension. It is not a flight into the void, but a movement into fullness, the anguish of contraction and breakup. This describes the relation in which a subject is imolated without fleeing itself, without entering into ecstasy, without taking a distance from itself, in which it is pursued into itself, to the hither side of rest in itself, of its coincidence with itself. This recurrence, which one can, to be sure, call negativity (but a negativity antecedent to discourse, the unexceptionable homeland of dialectical negativity), this recurrence by contraction, is the self.

It is the negativity characteristic of the in itself without the openness of nothingness, penetrating into the plenum—in itself in the sense of an sich and in sich. It lies behind the distinction between rest and movement, between the being as home with oneself (chez soi) and wandering, between equality and difference. This negativity reminds us of the formulas of the Parmenides concerning the moment in which the One "being in motion... (it) comes to a stand... being at rest... changes to being in motion," and in which it "must not be at any time." (156c). "This strange sort of nature" which "is situated between motion and rest" (156d) is not a cross-section of time at a point that preserves dynamically, in potency, the contradiction between the present and the future or the past. Nor is it an extra-temporal ideality which dominates temporal dispersal, for both points and idealties in their own way presuppose the ontological adventure. This "strange sort of nature" is something on the hither side, without any reference to thematization, without even references to references rising in it, like "itch," without any dialectical germination, quite sterile and pure, completely cut off from adventure and reminiscence. No grounds (non-lieu), meanwhile or contra-tempo time (or bad tunes (malheur)), it is on the hither side of being and of the nothingness which is thematizable like being.

The expression "in one's skin" is not a metaphor for the in-itself; it refers to a recurrence in the dead time or the meanwhile which separates inspiration and expiration, the diastole and systole of the heart beating dully against the walls of one's skin. The body is not only an image or figure here; it is the distinctive in-one'self of the contraction of ipseity and its breakup. This contraction is not an impossibility to forget oneself, to detach oneself from oneself, in the concern for oneself. It is a recurrence to oneself, to the out of an irreconcilable exigency of the other, a duty overflowing my being, a duty becoming a debt and an extreme passivity prior to the tranquility, still quite relative, in the inertia and materiality of things at rest. It is a restlessness and patience that support prior to action and passion. Here what is due goes beyond having, but makes giving possible. This recurrence is incarnation. In it the body which makes giving possible makes one other without alienating. For this other is the heart, and the goodness, of the same, the inspiration or the very psyche in the soul.

The recurrence of ipseity, the incarnation, far from thickening and humifying the soul, oppresses it and contracts it and exposes it naked to the other to the point of making the subject expose its very exposedness, which might cloak it, to the point of making it an uncovering of self in saying. The concept of the incarnate subject is not a biological concept. The schema that corporeality outlines submits the biological itself to a higher structure; it is dispassion, but not nothingness, for it is a negativity caught up in the impossibility of evading, without any field of initiative. It is, improbably enough, a retreat into the fullness of the punctual, into the inextendedness of the one. Responsibility prior to any free commitment, the oneself outside of all the tropes of essence, would be responsibility for the freedom of the others. The irremissible guilt with regard to the neighbor is like a Nessus tunic my skin would be.

3. THE SELF

Returning now to the theme of the first part of this exposition, we have to
ask if this folding back upon oneself proper to ipseity (which does not even have the virtue of being an act of folding itself, but makes the act of consciousness turning back upon itself possible), this passive folding back, does not coincide with the anarchic passivity of an obsession. Is not obsession a relationship with the outside which is prior to the act that would open up this exterior? The total passivity of obsession is more passive still than the passivity of things, for in their "prime matter" things sustain the kerygmatic logos that brings out their outlines in matter. In falling under this saying that ordains, matter takes on meaning, and shows itself to be this or that—a thing. This fall—or, this case—a pure surrender to the logos, without regard for the propositions that will make of the thing a narrative to which the logos belongs, is the essence of the accusatory. The logos that informs prime matter in calling it to order is an accusation, or a category. But obsession is anarchical; it accuses me beneath the level of prime matter. For as a category takes hold of matter, it takes as its model still what resistance, impenetrability, or potency remains in that matter, that "being in potency." Prime matter, presented as a being in potency, is still potency, which the form takes into account. It is not by chance that Plato teaches us that matter is eternal, and that for Aristotle matter is a cause; such is the truth for the order of things. Western philosophy, which perhaps is reification itself, remains faithful to the order of things and does not know the absolute passivity, beneath the level of activity and passivity, which is contributed by the idea of creation. Philosophers have always wished to think of creation in ontological terms, that is, in function of a preexisting and indestructible matter.

In obsession, the accusation effected by categories turns into an absolute accusative in which the ego proper to free consciousness is caught up. It is an accusation without foundation, to be sure, prior to any movement of the will, an obsession and persecuting accusation. It strips the ego of its pride and the dominating imperialism characteristic of it. The subject is in the accusative, without recourse in being, expelled from being, outside of being, like the one in the first hypotheses of Parmenides, without a foundation, reduced to itself, and thus without condition. In its own skin. It is not under a form, but tight in its skin, encumbered and as it were stuffed with itself, suffocating under itself, insufficiently open, forced to detach itself from itself, to breathe more deeply, all the way, forced to dispossess itself to the point of losing itself. Does this loss have as its term the void, the zero point and the peace of cemeteries, as though the subjectivity of a subject meant nothing? Or do the ego becumbered with oneself and the suffering of constriction in one's skin, better than metaphors, follow the exact trope of an alteration of essence, which inverts, or would invert, into a recurrence in which the expulsion of self outside of itself is its substitu-

tion for the other? Is not that what the self emptying itself of itself would really mean? This recurrence would be the ultimate secret of the incarnation of the subject; prior to all reflection, prior to every positing, an indebtedness before any loan, not assumed, anarchical, subjectivity of a bottomless passivity, made out of asignment, like the echo of a sound that would precede the resonance of this sound. The active source of this passivity is not thematizable. It is the passivity of a trauma, but one that prevents its own representation, a deafening trauma, cutting the thread of consciousness which should have welcomed it in its present, the passivity of being persecuted. This passivity deserves the epithet of complete or absolute only if the persecuted one is liable to answer for the persecutor. The face of the neighbor in its persecuting hatred can by this very malevolent as something pitiful. This equivocation or enigma only the persecuted one who does not evade it, but is without any references, any recourse or help (that is its uniqueness or its identity as unique) is able to endure. To undergo from the other is an absolute patience only if by this from-the-other is already for-the-other. This transfer, other than interested, "otherwise than essence," is subjectivity itself. "To tend the cheek to the smiter and to be filled with shame," to demand suffering in the suffering undergone (without producing the act that would be the exposing of the other cheek) is not to draw from suffering some kind of magical redemptive virtue. In the trauma of persecution it is to pass from the outrage undergone to the responsibility for the persecutor, and, in this sense from suffering to expiation for the other. Persecution is not something added to the subjectivity of the subject and his vulnerability; it is the very movement of recurrence. The subjectivity as the other in the same, as an inspiration, is the putting into question of all affirmation for oneself, all egoism born again in this very recurrence. (This putting into question is not a preventing!) The subjectivity of a subject is responsibility of being-in-question in the form of the total exposure to offence in the cheek offered to the smiter. This responsibility is prior to dialogue, to the exchange of questions and answers, to the thematization of the said, which is superposed on my being put into question by the other in proximity, and in the saying proper to responsibility is produced as a digression.

The recurrence of persecution in the oneself is thus irreducible to intentionality in which, even in its neutrality as a contemplative movement, the will is affirmed. In it the fabric of the same, self-possession in a present, is never broken. When affected the ego is in the end affected only by itself, freely. Subjectivity taken as intentionality is founded on auto-revelation as an auto-revelation, source of an impersonal discourse. The recurrence of the self in responsibility for others, a persecuting obsession, goes against intentionality, such that responsibility for others could never mean altruis-
tic will, instinct of "natural benevolence," or love. It is in the passivity of obsession, or incarnated passivity, that an identity individuates itself as unique, without recourse to any system of references, in the impossibility of evading the assignation of the other without blame. The re-presentation of self grasps it already in its trace. The absolution of the one is neither an evasion, nor an abstraction; it is a concreteness more concrete than the simply coherent in a totality. For under accusation by everyone, the responsibility for everyone goes to the point of substitution. A subject is a hostage.

Obsessed with responsibilities which did not arise in decisions taken by a subject "contemplating freely," consequently accused in its innocence, subjectivity in itself is being thrown back on oneself. This means concretely: accused of what the others do or suffer, or responsible for what they do or suffer. The uniqueness of the self is the very fact of bearing the fault of another. In responsibility for another subjectivity is only this unlimited passivity of an accusative which does not issue out of a declension it would have undergone starting with the nominative. This accusation can be reduced to the passivity of the self only as a persecution, but a persecution that turns into an expiation. Without persecution the ego raises its head and covers over the self. Everything is from the start in the accusative. Such is the exceptional condition or unconditionality of the self, the signification of the pronoun self for which our Latin grammars themselves know no nominative form.

The more I return to myself, the more I divest myself, under the traumatic effect of persecution, of my freedom as a constituted, willful, imperialist subject, the more I discover myself to be responsible; the more just I am, the more guilty I am, I am "in myself" through the others. The psyche is the other in the same, without alienating the same. Backed up against itself, in itself because without any recourse in anything, in itself like in its skin, the self in its skin both is exposed to the exterior (which does not happen to things) and obsessed by the others in this naked exposure. Does not the self take on itself, through its very impossibility to evade its own identity, toward which, when persecuted, it withdraws? Does not a beginning rise in this passivity? The undeclinability of the ego is the irresponsibility of the accusation, from which it can no longer take a distance, which it cannot evade. This impossibility of taking any distance and of slipping away from the Good is a firmness more firm and more profound than that of the will, which is still a tergiversation.

The inability to decline indicates the anachronism of a debt preceding the loan, of an expenditure overflowing one's resources, as in effort. It would be an exigency with regard to oneself where what is possible is not measured by a reflection on oneself, as in the for-itself. In this exigency with regard to oneself the self answering to the exigency does not show itself in the form of a direct object complement—what would be to suppose an equality between self and self. This exigency with regard to oneself without regard for what is possible, that is, beyond all equity, is produced in the form of an accusation preceding the fault, borne against oneself despite one's innocence. For the order of contemplation it is something simply demented. This extreme accusation excludes the declinability of the self, which would have consisted in measuring the possibles in oneself, so as to accuse oneself of this or that, of something committed even if in the form of original sin. The accusation that weighs on the self as a self is an exigency without consideration for oneself. The infinite passion of responsibility, in its return upon itself goes further than its identity, to the hither side or beyond being and the possible, and puts the being in itself in deficit, making it susceptible of being treated as a negative quantity.

But how does the passivity of the self become a "hold on oneself"? If that is not just a play on words, does it not presuppose an activity behind the absolutely anarchical passivity of obsession, a clandestine and dissimulated freedom? Then what is the object of the exposition developed to this point? We have answered this question in advance with the notion of substitution.

4. SUBSTITUTION

In this exposition of the in itself of the persecuted subjectivity, have we been faithful enough to the anarchy of passivity? In speaking of the recurrence of the ego to the self, have we been sufficiently free from the postulates of ontological thought, where the eternal presence to oneself subordinates even its absences in the form of a quest, where eternal being, whose possible are also powers, always takes up what it undergoes, and whatever be its submission, always arises anew as the principle of what happens to it? It is perhaps here, in this reference to a depth of anarchical passivity, that the thought that names creation differs from ontological thought. It is not here a question of justifying the theological context of ontological thought, for the word creation designates a signification older than the context woven about this name. In this context, this said, is already effaced the absolute diachrony of creation, refractory to assembling into a present and a representation. But in creation, what is called to being answers to a call that could not have reached it since, brought out of nothingness, it obeyed before hearing the order. Thus in the concept of creation ex nihilo, if it is not a pure nonsense, there is the concept of a passivity that does not revert into an assumption. The self as a creature is conceived in a passivity more
alienation in the form of incarnation, as being-in-one's-skin, having-the-other-in-one's-skin.

In this substitution, in which identity is inverted, this passivity more passive still than the passivity conjoined with action, beyond the inert passivity of the designated, the self is absolved of itself. Is this freedom? It is a different freedom from that of an initiative. Through substitution for others, the oneself escapes relations. At the limit of passivity, the oneself escapes passivity or the inevitable limitation that the terms within relation undergo. In the incomparable relationship of responsibility, the other no longer limits the same, it is supported by what it limits. Here the overdetermination of the ontological categories is visible, which transforms them into ethical terms. In this most passive passivity, the self liberates itself ethically from every other and from itself. Its responsibility for the other, the proximity of the neighbor, does not signify a submission to the non-ego; it means an openess in which being's essence is surpassed in inspiration. It is an openness of which inspiration is a modality or a foretaste, or, more exactly, of which it retains the aftertaste. Outside of any mysticism, in this inspiration, the possibility of every sacrifice for the other, activity and passivity coincide.

For the venerable tradition to which Hegel refers, the ego is an equality with itself, and consequently the return of being to itself is a concrete universality, having been separated itself from itself in the universality of the concept and death. But viewed out of the obsession of passivity, of itself acharachical, there is brought out, behind the equality of consciousness, an inequality. This inequality does not signify an inadequation of the apparent being with the profound or sublime being, nor a return to an original innocence (such as the inequality of the ego itself in Nablert, who is perhaps faithful to the tradition in which non-coincidence is only privation). It signifies an inequality in the oneself due to substitution, an effort to escape concepts without any future but attempted anew the next day. It signifies a uniqueness, under assignation, of responsibility, and because of this assignation not finding any rest in itself. The self without a concept, unequal in identity, signifies itself in the first person, setting forth the plane of saying, procuring itself in saying as an ego or as me, that is, utterly different from any other ego, that is, having a meaning despite death. Contrary to the ontology of death this self opens an order in which death can be not recognized. An identity in diastasis, where coinciding is wanting, I am a self in the identifying recurrence in which I find myself cast back to the hither side of my point of departure! This self is out of phase with itself, forgetful of itself, forgetful in biting in upon itself, in the reference to itself which is the gnawing away at oneself of remorse. These are not events that happen to an empirical ego, that is, to an ego already posited and fully identified, as a
trial that would lead it to being more conscious of itself, and make it more apt to put itself in the place of others. What we are here calling oneself, or the other in the same, where inspiration arouses respiration, the very pneuma of the psyche, precedes this empirical order, which is a part of being, of the universe, of the State, and is already conditioned in a system. Here we are trying to express the unconditionality of a subject, which does not have the status of a principle. This unconditionality confers meaning on being itself, and welcomes its gravity. It is as resting on a self, supporting the whole of being, that being is assembled into a unity of the universe and essence is assembled into an event. The self is a subiectum; it is under the weight of the universe, responsible for everything. The unity of the universe is not what my gaze embraces in its unity of apperception, but what is incumbent on me from all sides, regards me in the two senses of the term, accuses me, is my affair. In this sense, the idea that I am sought out in the intersideral spaces is not science-fiction fiction, but expresses my passivity as a self.

The self is what inverts the upright imperturbable work, without exemptions, in which being's essence unfolds. To be in oneself, backed up against oneself, to the extent of substituting oneself for all that pushes one into this null-place, is for the I to be in itself, lying in itself beyond essence. The reclusion of the ego in itself, on the other side of its identity, in the other, the expiration supporting the weight of the non-ego, is neither a triumph nor a failure. Failing already presupposes a freedom and the imperialism of a political or ecclesiastical ego, that is, a history of constituted and free egos. The self as an expiration is prior to activity and passivity.

In opposition to the vision of thinkers such as Eugen Fink or Jeanne Delhomme, who require, among the conditions of the world, a freedom without responsibility, a freedom of play, we discern in obsession a responsibility that rests on no free commitment, a responsibility whose entry into being could be effected only without any choice. To be without a choice can seem to be violence only to an abusive or hasty and impudent reflection, for it precedes the freedom non-freedom couple, but thereby sets up a vocation that goes beyond the limited and egoist fate of him who is only for-himself, and washes his hands of the faults and misfortunes that do not begin in his own freedom or in his present. It is the setting up of a being that is not for itself, but is for all, is both being and disinterestedness. The for itself signifies self-consciousness; the for all, responsibility for the others, support of the universe. Responsibility for the other, this way of answering without a prior commitment, is human fraternity itself, and it is prior to freedom. The face of the other in proximity, which is more than representation, is an unrepresentable trace, the way of the infinite. It is not because among beings there exists an ego, a being pursuing ends, that

being takes on signification and becomes a universe. It is because in an approach, there is inscribed or written the trace of infinity, the trace of a departure, but trace of what is inordinate, does not enter into the present, and inverts the arché into anarchy, that there is forsakenness of the other, obsession by him, responsibility and a self.19 The non-interchangeable par excellence, the I, the unique one, substitutes itself for others. Nothing is a game. Thus being is transcended.

The ego is not just a being endowed with certain qualities called moral which it would bear as a substance bears attributes, or which it would take on as accidents in its becoming. Its exceptional uniqueness in the passivity or the passion of the self is the incessant event of subjection to everything, of substitution. It is a being divesting itself, emptying itself of its being, turning itself inside out, and if it can be put thus, the fact of "otherwise than being." This subjection is neither nothingness, nor a product of a transcendental imagination. In this analysis we do not mean to reduce an entity that would be the ego to the act of substituting itself that would be the being of this entity. Substitution is not an act; it is a passivity inconvertible into an act, the hither side of the act-passivity alternative, the exception that cannot be fitted into the grammatical categories of noun or verb, save in the said that thematizes them. This recurrence can be stated only as an in-itself, as the underside of being or as otherwise than being.20 To be oneself, otherwise than being, to be dis-interested, is to bear the wretchedness and bankruptcy of the other, and even the responsibility that the other can have for me. To be oneself, the state of being a hostage, is always to have one degree of responsibility more, the responsibility for the responsibility of the other.21

Why does the other concern me? What is Hecuba to me? Am I my brother's keeper? These questions have meaning only if one has already supposed that the ego is concerned only with itself, is only a concern for itself. In this hypothesis it indeed remains incomprehensible that the absolute outside-of-me, the other, would concern me. But in the "prehistory" of the ego posited for itself speaks a responsibility. The self is through and through a hostage, older than the ego, prior to principles. What is at stake for the self, in its being, is not to be. Beyond egoism and altruism it is the religiosity of the self.

It is through the condition of being hostage that there can be in the world pity, compassion, pardon and proximity— even the little there is, even the simple "After you, sir." The unconditionality of being hostage is not the limit case of solidarity, but the condition for all solidarity. Every accusation and persecution, as all interpersonal praise, recompense, and punishment presuppose the subjectivity of the ego, substitution, the possibility of putting oneself in the place of the other, which refers to the trans-
ference from the "by the other" into a "for the other," and in persecution from the outrage inflicted by the other to the expiation for his fault by me. But the absolute accusation, prior to freedom, constitutes freedom which, allied to the Good, situates beyond and outside of all essence.

All the transfers of feeling, with which the theorists of original war and egoism explain the birth of generosity (it is, however, not certain that war was at the beginning, before the altars), would not succeed in being fixed in the ego if it were not with its whole being, or rather with its whole disinterestedness, subjected not, like matter, to a category, but to the unlimited accusative of persecution. The self, a hostage, is already substituted for the others. "I am an other," but this is not the alienation Rimbaud refers to. I am outside of any place, in myself, on the hither side of the autonomy of auto-affection and identity resting on itself. Impassively undergoing the weight of the other, thereby called to uniqueness, subjectivity no longer belongs to the order where the alternative of activity and passivity retains its meaning. We have to speak here of expiation as uniting identity and alterity. The ego is not an entity "capable" of expiating for the others: it is this original expiation. This expiation is voluntary, for it is prior to the will's initiative (prior to the origin). It is as though the unity and uniqueness of the ego were already the hold on itself of the gravity of the other. In this sense the self is goodness, or under the exigency for an abandon of all having, of all one's own and all for oneself, to the point of substitution. Goodness is, we have said, the sole attribute which does not introduce multiplicity into the One that a subject is, for it is distinct from the One. If it showed itself to the one, it would no longer be a goodness in it. Goodness invests me in my obedience to the hidden Good.

The individuation or superindividuation of the ego consists in being in itself, in its skin, without sharing the conatus essendi of all beings which are beings in themselves. It consists in my being faced with everything that is only because I am by regard for all that is. It is an expiating for being. The self is the very fact of being exposed under the accusation that cannot be assumed, where the ego supports the others, unlike the certainty of the ego that rejoins itself in freedom.

5. COMMUNICATION

It is with subjectivity understood as self, with the excising and dispossessing, the contraction, in which the ego does not appear, but immolates itself, that the relationship with the other can be communication and transcendence, and not always another way of seeking certainty, or the coinciding with oneself. Paradoxically enough, thinkers claim to derive communication out of self-coinciding.21 They do not take seriously the radical reversal, from cognition to solidarity, that communication represents with respect to inward dialogue, to cognition of oneself, taken as the trope of spirituality. They seek for communication a full coverage insurance, and do not ask if inward dialogue is not beholden to the solidarity that sustains communication. In expiation, the responsibility for the others, the relationship with the non-ego, precedes any relationship of the ego with itself. The relationship with the other precedes the auto-affection of certainty, to which one always tries to reduce communication.

But communication would be impossible if it should have to begin in the ego, a free subject, to whom every other would be only a limitation that invites war, domination, precaution and information. To communicate is indeed to open oneself, but the openness is not complete if it is on the watch for recognition. It is complete not in opening to the spectacle of or the recognition of the other, but in becoming a responsibility for him. The overemphasis of openness is responsibility for the other to the point of substitution, where the for-the-other proper to disclosure, to monstration to the other, turns into the for-the-other proper to responsibility. This is the thesis of the present work. The openness of communication is not a simple change of place, so as to situate a truth outside instead of keeping it in oneself. What is surprising is the idea or the folly of situating it outside. Would communication be something added on? Or is not the ego a substitution in its solidarity as something identical, a solidarity that begins by bearing witness of itself to the other? Is it not then first of all a communicating of communication, a sign of the giving of signs, and not a transmission of something in an openness? It is to singularly displace the question to ask if what shows itself in this openness is as it shows itself, if its appearing is not an appearance. The problem of communication reduced to the problem of the truth of this communication for him that receives it amounts to the problem of certainty, of the coinciding of self with self, as though coinciding were the ultimate secret of communication, and as though truth were only disclosure. The idea that truth can signify a witness given of the infinite22 is not even suggested. In this preeminence of certainty, the identity of a substance is taken on for the ego, is said to be a monad, and is henceforth incapable of communication, save by a miracle. One is then led to look for a theory, from Cassirer to Binswanger, according to which a prior dialogue sustains the ego which states it, rather than the ego holding forth a conversation.

Those who wish to found on dialogue and on an original we the upsurge of egos, refer to an original communication behind the de facto communication (but without giving this original communication any sense other than the empirical sense of a dialogue or a manifestation of one to the
other— which is to presuppose that we that is to be founded), and reduce the problem of communication to the problem of its certainty. In opposition to that, we suppose that there is in the transcendence involved in language a relationship that is not an empirical speech, but responsibility. This relationship is also a resignation (prior to any decision, in passivity) at the risk of misunderstanding (like in love, where, unless one does not love with love, one has to resign oneself to not being loved), at the risk of lack of and refusal of communication. The ego that thematizes is also founded in this responsibility and substituition. Regarding communication and transcendence one can indeed only speak of their uncertainty. Communication is an adventure of a subjectivity, different from that which is dominated by the concern to recover itself, different from that of coinciding in consciousness; it will involve uncertainty. It is by virtue of its eidos possible only in sacrifice, which is the approach of him for which one is responsible. Communication with the other can be transcendent only as a dangerous life, a fine risk to be run. These words take on their strong sense when, instead of only designating the lack of certainty, they express the gratuity of sacrifice. In a fine risk to be run, the word “fine” has not been thought about enough. It is as antithetical to certainty, and indeed to consciousness, that these terms take on their positive meaning, and are not the expression of a makeshift.

It is only in this way that the absolutely exterior other is near to the point of obsession. Here there is proximity and not truth about proximity, not certainty about the presence of the other, but responsibility for him without deliberation, and without the compulsion of truths in which commitments arise, without certainty. This responsibility commits me, and does so before any truth and any certainty, making the question of trust and norms an idle question, for in its uprightness a consciousness is not only naivety and opinion.

The ethical language we have resorted to does not arise out of a special moral experience, independent of the description hitherto elaborated. The ethical situation of responsibility is not comprehensible on the basis of ethics. It does indeed arise from what Alphonse de Waelhens called nonphilosophical experiences, which are ethically independent. The constraint that does not presuppose the will, nor even the core of being from which the will arises (or which it breaks up), and that we have described starting with persecution, has its place between the necessity of “what cannot be otherwise” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, E), of what today we call eidetic necessity, and the constraint imposed on a will by the situation in which it finds itself, or by other wills and desires, or by the wills and desires of others. The tropes of ethical language are found to be adequate for certain structures of the description; for the sense of the approach in its contrast with knowing, the face in its contrast with a phenomenon.

Phenomenology can follow out the reverting of thematization into anarchy in the description of the approach. Then ethical language succeeds in expressing the paradox in which phenomenology finds itself abruptly thrown. For ethics, beyond politics, is found at the level of this reverting. Starting with the approach, the description finds the neighbor bearing the trace of a withdrawal that orders it as a face. This trace is significant for behavior, and one would be wrong to forget its anarchic insinuation by confusing it with an indication, with the manifestation of the signified in the signifier. For that is the itinerary by which theological and edifying thought too quickly deduces the truths of faith. Then obsession is subordinated to a principle that is stated in a theme, which annuls the very anarchy of its movement. The trace in which a face is ordered is not reducible to a sign: a sign and its relationship with the signified are synchronic in a theme. The approach is not the thematization of any relationship, but is this very relationship, which resists thematization as anarchic. To thematize this relationship is already to lose it, to leave the absolute passivity of the self. The passivity prior to the passivity-activity alternative, more passive than any inertia, is described by the ethical terms accusation, persecution, and responsibility for the others. The persecuted one is expelled from his place and has only himself to himself, has nothing in the world on which to rest his head. He is pulled out of every game and every war. Beyond autoaffection, which is still an activity, even if it is strictly contemporaneous with its passivity, the self is denuded in persecution, from which an accusation is inseparable, in the absolute passivity of being a creature, of substitution. In divesting the ego of its imperialism, the hetero-affection establishes a new undecidability: the self, subjected to an absolute accusative, as though this accusation which it does not even have to assume came from it. The self involved in the growing away at oneself in responsibility, which is also incarnation, is not an objectification of the self by the ego.

The self, the persecuted one, is accused beyond his fault before freedom, and thus in an unavowable innocence. One must not conceive it to be in the state of original sin; it is, on the contrary, the original goodness of creation. The persecuted one cannot defend himself by language, for the persecution is a disqualification of the apology. Persecution is the precise moment in which the subject is reached or touched with the mediation of the logos.

6. "FINITE FREEDOM"

The views that have been expounded can then not be reproached for the imprudence of affirming that the first word of the "mind," that which makes all the others possible, and even the words "negativity" and "con-
sciousness," would be naive unconditioned "Yes" of submission, negating truth, and all the highest values! The unconditionality of this yes is not that of an infantile spontaneity. It is the very exposure to critique, the exposure prior to consent, more ancient than any naive spontaneity. We have been accustomed to reason in the name of the freedom of the ego— as though I had witnessed the creation of the world, and as though I could only have been in charge of a world that would have issued out of my free will. These are presumptions of philosophers, presumptions of idealists! Or evasions of irresponsible ones. That is what Scripture reproaches Job for. He would have known how to explain his miseries if they could have devolved from his faults! But he never wished evil! His false friends think like he does: in a meaningful world one cannot be held to answer when one has not done anything. Job then must have forgotten his faults! But the subjectivity of a subject come late into a world which has not issued from his projects does not consist in projecting, or in treating this world as one's project. The "lateness" is not insignificant. The limits it imposes on the freedom of subjectivity is not reducible to pure privation. To be responsible over and beyond one's freedom is certainly not to remain a pure result of the world. To support the universe is a crushing charge, but a divine discomfort. It is better than the merits and faults and sanctions proportionate to the freedom of one's choices. If ethical terms arise in our discourse, before the terms freedom and non-freedom, it is because before the bipolarity of good and evil presented to choice, the subject finds himself committed to the Good in the very passivity of supporting. The distinction between free and non-free would not be the ultimate distinction between humanity and inhumanity, nor the ultimate mark of sense and nonsense. To understand intelligibility does not consist in going back to the beginning. There was a time irreducible to presence, an absolute unrepresentable past. Has not the Good the subject with an election recognizable in the responsibility of being hostage, to which the subject is destined, which he cannot evade without denying himself, and by virtue of which he is unique? A philosopher can give to this election only the signification circumscribed by responsibility for the other. This antecedence of responsibility to freedom would signify the Goodness of the Good: the necessity that the Good choose me first before I can be in a position to choose, that is, welcome its choice. That is my pre-originarily susceptiveness. It is a passivity prior to all receptivity, it is transcendent. It is an antecedence prior to all representable antecedence: immemorial. The Good is before being. There is diachrony: an unbridgeable difference between the Good and me, without simultaneity, odd terms. But also a non-indifference in this difference. The Good assigns the subject, according to a suspicion that cannot be assumed, to approach the other, the neighbor. This is an assignment to a non-erotic proximity, to a desire of the non-desirable, to a desire of the stranger in the neighbor. It is outside of concupiscence, which for its part does not cease to seduce by the appearance of the Good. In a Luciferian way it takes on this appearance and thus claims to belong to the Good, gives itself out to be its equal, but in this very pretension which is an admission it remains subordinated. But this desire for the non-desirable, this responsibility for the neighbor, this substitution as a hostage, is the subjectivity and uniqueness of a subject.

From the Good to me, there is assignation, a relation that survives the "death of God." The death of God perhaps signifies only the possibility to reduce every value arousing an impulse to an impulse arousing a value. The fact that in its goodness the Good declines the desire it arouses while inclining it toward responsibility for the neighbor, preserves difference in the non-indifference of the Good, which chooses me before I welcome it. It preserves its illeity to the point of letting it be excluded from the analysis, save for the trace it leaves in words or the "objective reality" in thoughts, according to the unimpeachable witness of the Descartes' Third Meditation. That in responsibility for another, the ego, already a self, already obsessed by the neighbor, would be unique and irreplaceable is what confirms its election. For the condition for, or the unconditionality of, the self does not begin in the auto-affection of a sovereign ego that would be, after the event, "compassionate" for another. Quite the contrary: the uniqueness of the responsible ego is possible only in being obsessed by another, in the trauma suffered prior to any auto-identification, in an unrepresentable before. The one affected by the other is an anarchic trauma, or an inspiration of the one by the other, and not a causality striking mechanically a matter subject to its energy. In this trauma the Good reabsorbs, or redeems, the violence of non-freedom. Responsibility is what first enables one to catch sight of and conceive of value.

What of the notion of finite freedom? No doubt the idea of a responsibility prior to freedom, and the compositibility of freedom and the other such as it shows itself in responsibility for another, enables us to confer an irreducible meaning to this notion, without attacking the dignity of freedom which is thus conceived in finitude. What else can finite freedom mean? How can a will be partially free? How can the Freckel free ego undergo the suffering that would come to it from the non-ego? Does the finitude of freedom signify the necessity by which a will to will finds itself in a given situation which limits the arbitrariness of the will? That does not cut into the infinity of freedom beyond what the situation determines. In finite freedom, there can then be disengaged an element of pure freedom,
which limitation does not affect, in one’s will. Thus the notion of finite freedom rather poses than resolves the problem of a limitation of the freedom of the will.

The responsibility for another, an unlimited responsibility which the strict book-keeping of the free and non-free does not measure, requires subjectivity as an irreplaceable hostage. This subjectivity it denudes under the ego in a passivity of persecution, repression and expulsion outside of essence, into oneself. In this self, outside of essence, one is in a deathlike passivity! But in responsibility for the other for life and death, the adjective unconditional, undecimblable, absolute take on meaning. They serve to qualify freedom, but wear away the substrate, from which the free act arises in essence. In the accusative form, which is a modification of no nominative form, in which I approach the neighbor for whom, without having wished it, I have to answer, the irreplaceable one is brought out (s’accuse). This finite freedom is not primary, is not initial; but it lies in an infinite responsibility where the other is not other because he strikes up against and limits my freedom, but where he can accuse me to the point of persecution, because the other, absolutely other, is another one (s’accuse). That is why finite freedom is not simply an infinite freedom operating in a limited field. The will which it animates wills in a passivity it does not assume. And the proximity of the neighbor in its trauma does not only strike up against me, but exalts and elevates me, and, in the literal sense of the term, inspires me. Inspiration, heteronomy, is the very pneuma of the psyche. Freedom is borne by the responsibility it could not shoulder, an elevation and inspiration without complacency. The for-the-other characteristic of the subject can be interpreted neither as a guilt complex (which presupposes an initial freedom), nor as a natural benevolence or divine "instinct," nor as some love or some tendency to sacrifice. This is quite the opposite of the Fichtean conception, where all suffering due to the action of the non-ego is first a positing of this action of the non-ego by the ego.

But in the irreplaceable subject, unique and chosen as a responsibility and a substitution, a mode of freedom, ontologically impossible, breaks the unrenderable essence. Substitution frees the subject from enmity, that is, from the enchantment to itself, where the ego suffocates in itself due to the tautological way of identity, and ceaselessly seeks after the distraction of games and sleep in a movement that never wears out. This liberation is not an action, a commencement, nor any vicissitude of essence and of ontology, where the equality with oneself would be established in the form of self-consciousness. An anarchic liberation, it emerges, without being assumed, without turning into a beginning, in inequality with oneself. It is brought out without being assumed, in the undergoing by sensibility beyond its capacity to undergo. This describes the suffering and vulnerability of the sensible as the other in me. The other is in me and in the midst of my very identification. The ipseity has become at odds with itself in its return to itself. The self-accusation of remorse gnaws away at the closed and firm core of consciousness, opening it, fissioning it. In consciousness equality and equilibrium between the trauma and the act is always reestablished. Or at least this equilibrium is sought in reflection and its figures, although the possibility of total reflection and of the unity of Mind, beyond the multiplicity of souls, is not effectively ensured. But is not that the way an other can of itself be in the same without alienating it, and without the emancipation of the same from itself turning into a slavery to anyone? This way is possible because, since an "inmemorial time," anarchically, in subjectivity the by-the-other is also the for-the-other. In suffering by the fault of the other dawns suffering for the fault of others, supporting. The for-the-other keeps all the patience of undergoing imposed by the other. There is substitution for another, expiation for another. Remorse is the trope of the literal sense of the sensibility. In its passivity is effaced the distinction between being accused and accusing oneself.

The recurrence in the subject is thus neither freedom of possession of self by self in reflection, nor the freedom of play where I take myself for this or that, traversing avatars under the carnival masks of history. It is a matter of an exigency coming from the other, beyond what is available in my powers, to open an unlimited "deficit," in which the self spends itself without counting, freely. All the suffering and cruelty of essence weighs on a point that supports and expiates for it.

Essence, in its seriousness as persistence in essence, fills every interval of nothingness that would interrupt it. It is a strict book-keeping where nothing is lost nor created. Freedom is compromised in this balance of accounts in an order where responsibilities correspond exactly to liberties taken, where they compensate for them, where time relaxes and then is tightened again after having allowed a decision in the interval opened up. Freedom in the genuine sense can be only a contestation of this book-keeping by a gratuity. This gratuity could be the absolute distraction of a play without consequences, without traces or memories, of a pure pardon. Or, it could be responsibility for another and expiation.

In expiation, on a point of the essence there weighs the rest of the essence, to the point of expelling it. The self, the subjection or subjectivity of the subject, is the very over-emphasis of a responsibility for creation. Responsibility for the other, for what has not begun in me is responsibility in the innocence of being a hostage. My substitution for another is the trope of a sense that does not belong to the empirical order of psychological events, an Einfühlung or a compassion which signify by virtue of this sense.
My substitution— it is as my own that substitution for the neighbor is produced. The Mind is a multiplicity of individuals. It is in me—in me and not in another, in me and not in an individuation of the concept Ego—that communication opens. It is I who am integrally or absolutely ego, and the absolute is my business. No one can substitute himself for me, who substitutes myself for all. Or, if one means to remain with the hierarchy of formal logic—genus, species, individual—it is in the course of the individuation of the ego in me that is realized the elevation in which the ego is for the neighbor, summoned to answer for him. When this relation is really thought through, it signifies the wound that cannot heal over of the self in the ego accused by the other to the point of persecution, and responsible for its perpetrator. Subjection and elevation arise in patience above non-freedom. It is the subjection of the allegiance to the Good.

The disinterestedness of the subject is a descent or elevation of the ego to me. This movement is not reducible to the formalism of the logical operation of generalization or specification. Philosophy, which is consigned in the said, converts disinterestedness and its signification into essence and, by an abuse of language, to be sure, says that of which it is but a servant, but of which it makes itself master by saying it, and then reduces its pretensions in a new said. The subject posited as deposed is me; I universalize myself. And that is also my truth, my truth of being mortal, belonging to generation and corruption, which the negativity of the universalization presupposes. But the concept of the ego can correspond to me only inasmuch as it can signify responsibility, which summons me as irreplaceable. That is, in my flight out of concepts, which is not the naivety or blindness of non-thought, for positively it is responsibility for my neighbor. (It is time the abusive confusion of foolishness with morality were denounced.) Thus there is true movement between the conceptuality of the ego and the patience of a refusal of concepts, between universality and individuation, between mortality and responsibility. The very diachrony of truth is in this alternation. This ambiguity puts concepts into question inasmuch as it shakes the very idea of truth as a result, truth abiding in the present with an as it were monosyllabic sense. The ego involved in responsibility is me and no one else, me with whom one would have liked to pair up a sister soul, from whom one would require substitution and sacrifice. But to say that the other has to sacrifice himself to the others would be to preach human sacrifice! “Me” is not an inimitable nuance of Gemeingkeit that would be added on to a being belonging to the genus “soul” or “man” or “individual,” and would thus be common to several souls, men and individuals, making reciprocity possible among them from the first. The uniqueness of the ego, overwhelmed by the other in proximity, is the other in the same, the psyche. But is it I, I and no one else, who am a hostage for the others. In substitution my being that belongs to me and not to another is undone, and it is through this substitution that I am not “another,” but me. The self in a being is exactly the not-being-able-to-slip-away-from an assignation that does not aim at any generality. There is no ipseity common to me and the others; “me” is the exclusion from this possibility of comparison, as soon as comparison is set up. The ipseity is then a privilege or an unjustifiable election that chooses me and not the ego. I am unique and chosen; the election is in the subject. The conceptualization of this last refusal of conceptualization is not contemporaneous with this refusal; it transcends this conceptualization. This transcendence separating itself from the consideration that conceptualizes it, the diachrony of subjectivity, is my entry into the proximity of the neighbor.

Subjectivity is being hostage. This notion reverses the position where the presence of the ego to itself appears as the beginning or as the conclusion of philosophy. This coinciding in the same, where I would be an origin, or, through memory, a covering over of the origin, this presence, is, from the start, undone by the other. The subject resting on itself is confounded by wordless accusation. For in discourse it would have already lost its traumatic violence. The accusation is in this sense persecuting: the persecuted one can no longer answer it. More exactly, it is accusation which I cannot answer, but for which I cannot decline responsibility. Already the position of the subject is a deposition, not a conatus essendi. It is from the first a substitution by a hostage expiating for the violence of the persecution itself. We have to conceive in such terms the de-substantiation of the subject, its de-reification, its disinterestedness, its subjection, its subjectivity. It is a pure self, in the accusative, responsible before there is freedom. Whatever be the ways that lead to the superstructure of society, in justice the dissymmetry that holds me at odds with regard to the other will find again law, autonomy, equality.

To say that the ego is a substitution is then not to state the universality of a principle, the quiddity of an ego, but, quite the contrary, it is to restore to the soul its egoity which supports no generalization. The way by which, from this situation, the logos arises to the concept of the ego passes through the third party. The subject as an ego is not an entity provided with egoity as an eidetic structure, which should make it possible to form a concept of it, and make the singular entity be its realization.

Modern antihumanism, which denies the primacy that the human person, free and for itself, would have for the signification of being, is true over and beyond the reasons it gives itself. It clears the place for subjectivity positing itself in abnegation, in sacrifice, in a substitution which precedes the will. Its inspired intuition is to have abandoned the idea of person, goal and origin of itself, in which the ego is still a thing because it
is still a being. Strictly speaking, the other is the end; I am a hostage, a responsibility and a substitution supporting the world in the passivity of assignation, even in an accusing persecution, which is undeniable. Humanism has to be denounced only because it is not sufficiently human.

Will it be said that the world weighs with all its suffering and all its fault on the ego because this ego is a free consciousness, capable of sympathy and compassion? Will it be said that only a free being is sensitive to the weight of the world that weighs on it? Let us admit for a moment a free ego, capable of deciding for solidarity with others. At least it will be recognized that this freedom has no time to assume this urgent weight, and that consequently it is as checked or undone under the suffering. It is impossible to evade the appeal of the neighbor, to move away. One approaches the other perhaps in contingency, but henceforth one is not free to move away from him. The assumption of the suffering and the fault of another likewise goes beyond the passivity: it is a passion. This condition or unconditionality of being a hostage will then at least be an essential modality of freedom, the first, and not an empirical accident of the freedom, proud in itself, of the ego.

To be sure – but this is another theme – my responsibility for all can and has to manifest itself also in limiting itself. The ego can, in the name of this unlimited responsibility, be called upon to concern itself also with itself. The fact that the other, my neighbor, is also a third party with respect to another, who is also a neighbor, is the birth of thought, consciousness, justice and philosophy. The unlimited initial responsibility, which justifies this concern for justice, for oneself, and for philosophy can be forgotten. In this forgetting consciousness is a pure egoism. But egoism is neither first nor last. The impossibility of escaping God, the adventure of Jotah, indicates that God is at least here not a value among values. (I pronounce the word God without suppressing the intermediaries that lead me to this word, and, if I can say so, the anarchy of his entry into discourse, just as phenomenology states concepts without ever destroying the scaffolding that permit one to climb up to them.) The impossibility of escaping God lies in the depths of myself as a self, as an absolute passivity. This passivity is not only the possibility of death in being, the possibility of impossibility. It is an impossibility prior to that possibility, the impossibility of slipping away, assumed susceptibility, gravity without any frivoltiy. It is the birth of a meaning in the obtuseness of being, of a “being able to die” subject to sacrifice.

The self inasmuch as, in an approach, it abrogates the egoism of perseverance in being, which is the imperialism of the ego, introduces meaning into being. There could be no meaning in being which could not be measured to being. Mortality renders senseless any concern that the ego would have for its existence and its destiny. It would be but an evasion in a world without issue, and always ridiculous. No doubt nothing is more comical than the concern that a being has for an existence it could not save from its destruction, as in Tolstoi’s tale where an order for enough boots for 25 years is sent by one that will die the very evening he gives his order. That is indeed as absurd as questioning, in view of action, the stars whose verdict would be without appeal. But through this image one sees that the comical is also tragic, and that it belongs to the same man to be a tragic and a comical personage.

The approach, inasmuch as it is a sacrifice, conveys a sense on death. In it the absolute singularity of the responsible one encompasses the generality or generalization of death. In it life is no longer measured by being, and death can no longer introduce the absurd into it. Death gives lie to pleasure, in which for the space of an instant the tragi-comedy is forgotten, and which would be defined by this forgetting. But despite all its adversity, it is accorded with the for-the-other of approach. No one is so hypocritical as to claim that he has taken from death its sting, not even the promises of religions. But we can have responsibilities and attachments through which death takes on a meaning. That is because, from the start, the other affects us despite ourselves.

If one had the right to retain one trait from a philosophic system and neglect all the details of its architecture (even though there are no details in architecture, according to Valéry’s profound dictum, which is eminently valid for philosophical construction, where the details alone prevent collapse), we would think here of Kantism, which finds a meaning to the human without measuring it by ontology and outside of the question “What is there here...?” that one would like to take to be preliminary, outside of the immortality and death which ontologies run up against. The fact that immortality and theology could not determine the categorical imperative signifies the novelty of the Copernican revolution: a sense that is not measured by being or not being; but being on the contrary is determined on the basis of sense.