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Ethics and the Primacy of the Other:
A Levinasian Foundation for Phenomenological Research

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Abstract

This paper compares Heidegger's "dasein-centric" existential hermeneutic to Levinas's primacy of the Other and the importance the latter places on the ethical relationship. Invoking the concepts of totality and infinity, the paper discusses the ways in which one encounters the Other and how signification arises from the ethical relationship. This is followed by a discussion of how Levinas's ethics might influence existential phenomenological research methodology, pointing to the ethical demands described by Levinas as seeming to have priority over the praxis of research insofar as the Other calls us beyond the methodological framework. Finally, the paper considers the extent to which the ethical demands of Levinas's phenomenology are met by the special place of the research participant and the attitude of empathic presence prescribed within the Heideggerian framework.

Introduction

This paper seeks to explore the practical implications of Levinas's phenomenology of the Other for existential-phenomenological research in the tradition of the so-called "Duquesne School" and at the University of Dallas (see Garza, 2004, for a broader discussion of this lineage). It is acknowledged that there is a wide variety of phenomenological research done elsewhere, including Duquesne University (for more detailed accounts of this lineage, see Polkinghorne, 1989; Smith, 1983, 2002; and von Eckartsberg, 1998) and Seattle University (Halling, Kunz, & Rowe, 1994). Within the Duquesne and Dallas traditions, phenomenological research has been rooted in Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (Garza, 2007). At Seattle University, however, the dialogal approach to phenomenological research of Kunz and his colleagues has a Levinasian foundation (Halling et al., 1994; Kunz, 2006), representative of an emerging direction in phenomenological research.

The scope of this paper limits our ability to speak to the broad variety of phenomenological research.[1] We have, however, discussed this variety elsewhere (Garza, 2007), but for our present purposes we will limit ourselves to the tradition of research born out of the "Duquesne School"[2] and currently practised at the

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[1] See, for example, to point to just a few: Benner, 1985, 1994, 2000; Dahlberg, Drew, & Nystrom, 2001; Dahlberg & Halling, 2001; Moustakas, 1990, 1994; Schutz, 1979; Schutz & Luckman, 1973; researchers inspired by Schutz's work like Frank, 1978; MacRae, 2004; Parsons, 1973; Sorrell, 2006; Thibodeau & MacRae, 1997; and, finally, van Manen, 1990, 1997.

[2] For examples of foundational research from the Duquesne School, see the following [all cited in Churchill & Wertz, 2002]: Aanstoos, 1984; Colaizzi, 1973, 1978; Fischer, 1974, 1978, 1985; Giorgi, 1975, 1985; Giorgi et al., 1971-1983; Valle, 1998; Valle & Halling, 1989; Van Kaam, 1959, 1966; von Eckartsberg, 1971, 1986; Wertz, 1982; Wertz & Aanstoos, 1999.

University of Dallas.[3] Thus our use of the term "existential phenomenological (EP) research" should be understood as encompassing not only experiential research as pioneered by Giorgi (1985), but all models of phenomenological research that aim to illuminate lived meaning and experience. This includes not only archival/historical research, attitude research and intentional ethnography (Garza, 2007), but also any research that meets Giorgi's defining characteristics of a phenomenological method as encompassing: description, use of the phenomenological reduction, consideration of intentionality, disclosure of essences or structures as results, and the necessity that the researcher hold a "psychological perspective" in reference to the data (1985; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

As mentioned above, the epistemology of EP research has traditionally been rooted in Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty within the "Duquesne School" and at the University of Dallas. As our point of departure, we will invoke the ontology of Heidegger's *Being and Time* as the epistemological foundation of EP research. We will focus upon this Heideggerian foundation on the basis that Levinas's philosophy can be seen as a direct and explicit counterpoint to Heidegger's fundamental ontology.[4] The Heideggerian framework, as a juxtaposition to Levinas, will situate our inclusion of Levinas as an alternative foundation to phenomenological research that, following Levinas, is no longer "existential". We will begin by discussing Heidegger's exclusion and Levinas's inclusion of ethics in their philosophical writings. Using their divergent views in this regard as a starting point, we will discuss how and to what extent the ethical demands of Levinas's phenomenology apply to phenomenological research. We will discuss the distinguished place of the research participant and the attitude of empathic presence for the researcher, and address the concerns of violence and thematization inherent in research.

Heidegger's and Levinas's Treatment of Ethics

In his seminal work *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger does not address ethics in his attempt to "destroy the history of ontology". Absent in this seminal work, ethics is not a topic that Heidegger sets out to discuss in his primary concern with ontology.

Heidegger states that "only as phenomenology is ontology possible" (1927/1962, p. 61) as Dasein is the clearing or light wherein Being shows itself. Levinas, however, takes Heidegger to task for leaving out what he takes to be the most fundamental and primordial foundation of all of philosophy. Levinas proposes a counter position to Heidegger's Dasein-centric Being-in-the-world, positing that the "Other is the principle of phenomena" (1961/1969, p. 92).

Ethics as First Philosophy

Levinas posits ethics as first philosophy as the "vigilant passivity to the call of the other which precedes our interest in Being" (Kearney & Levinas, 1984, p. 65). "Man's ethical relationship to the other is ultimately prior to his ontological relation to himself (egology) or to the totality of things which we call the world (cosmology)" (Kearney & Levinas, 1984, p. 57). Levinas holds that, prior to the phenomenal realm, wherein Heidegger situates his ontology, rests the infinite alterity of the Other upon which subjectivity emerges. "I am defined as a subjectivity, as a singular person, as an 'I' precisely because I am exposed to the other" (Kearney & Levinas, 1984, p. 62). In this exposure, for Levinas, one is confronted by the Other, from above and beyond, approached outside of the plane of ontology. It is in this subjection to the Other that one finds ethics. Rather than first known in consciousness or thought, the Other is encountered as a face in the sensible approaching me from the outside, standing over and above me. Subordinate to the Other, I am always ethically responsible for the Other in an asymmetrical relationship in which "I" becomes a subject by taking on subjectivity, which is "being a hostage" (Levinas, 1974/1998, p. 127). Levinas states that, since we find ourselves in the world with others, we are already for-the-Other, indicating that the ethical responsibility to answer the Other is prior to any choice or decision on my part. "Responsibility for another … precedes essence in [a subject] .... . The word *I* means … answering for everything and for everyone" (Levinas, 1974/1998, p. 114). Subjectivity, according to Levinas, is a subjection to the Other who demands a response prior to my freedom and reason. Preceding any theoretical construct, the encounter with the Other is situated in ethics, whereby any thoughts or intentions concerning the Other arise only by virtue of having already welcomed the Other. Ethics and sociality go hand in hand for Levinas; the Other for whom I am responsible is also the Other to whom I respond.[5]

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[3] For examples of research conducted at the University of Dallas, see Garza, 2004, 2007; and Landrum, 2008.

[4] While Levinas's philosophy can be seen as a reaction to Heidegger, there are striking similarities between Levinas and the later Heideddegger, despite Levinas seemingly not having read Heidegger's later works (Alfonso Lingis, personal communication, March 27, 2009). The possible confluence of these two thinkers, however, remains beyond the scope of this article.

[5] Levinas is not without his critics on this view. Slavoj Žižek, in particular, has been harshly critical of Levinasian ethics in its supposed inability to deal with the "inhuman" Other. Žižek (2005) argues powerfully that Levinasian ethics only "works" to the extent that one's

Perhaps ethics enters through a back door in Heidegger's *Being and Time* in his treatment of how Dasein encounters others, "dasein like myself". Gleaning from the six pages Heidegger devotes to this topic, one will find three different ways that Dasein can encounter another like itself. The first way involves treating the other with *besorgen* rather than *sorge*. This amounts to treating the other like a thing, akin to the treatment of tools in accordance with one's projects. In contrast, Heidegger identifies solicitude, which "corresponds to our use of 'concern' as a term for an *existentiale*" (1927/1962, p. 158) as the mode of care proper to an encounter with another Dasein like oneself. Heidegger specifies two kinds of solicitude: solicitude that "leaps in" for the other and takes away his or her freedom, or solicitude that "leaps ahead" of the other and frees the other for his or her freedom. While only the latter form of solicitude is authentic, for Heidegger "ethical" treatment of the other rests upon the other's kind of "to be"; one encounters another Dasein in accordance with the kind of being that Dasein is, namely a being whose essence is is-ing. Dasein is the entity that has as its essence its existence; it is the clearing or light where Being shows itself. For Heidegger, Dasein, as the entity that "theres", bestows existence upon things that appear to its consciousness – it "is-es". For Levinas, "the illeity of this *He* is not the *it* of things which are at our disposal" (1963/1986, p. 359). In his view, thus, Heidegger's fundamental ontology reduces the Other to the same by admitting nothing outside of itself; "within being, a transcendence revealed is inverted into immanence" (1963/1986, p. 355). The other Dasein in Heidegger is encountered only as a phenomenon, in the plane of ontology, and encountered only out my concernful involvement within this totality. And, since authenticity is not equated with good and inauthenticity with evil, ethics, on which to formulate a notion of good and evil, remains absent in Heidegger. Levinas harkens us to the possibility that, without an ethics, the potential for the Holocaust emerges: "The source stems from the essential possibility of elemental Evil … inscribed within the ontology of a being concerned with being" and thus free of any ethical bond to the Other as other (Levinas, 1989/1990, p. 63).

Dasein remains an insular being that remains self-referential in all its projects, an insular totality of intention and phenomenon, being as being for me.

Levinas alerts us to the perhaps obvious observation that speech is always spoken to. "We will also put into question the thesis according to which the ultimate essence of man and of truth is the *comprehension of the being of beings,* a thesis to which, we must agree, theory, experience, and discourse seem to lead" (1963/1986, p. 348). While experience would seem to affirm Heidegger's Dasein-centric beginning, as we never escape our own perspective, Levinas also points out that the Other, the *not me*, that which is separate from me, is the precondition for the possibility of experience. My human condition situates me before what is not me, as things have an alterity of their own apart from me. "The epiphany of the other involves a signifyingness of its own, independently of this signification received from the world" (Levinas, 1963/1986, p. 351). For Heidegger, a thing only exists insofar as I have experience of it, always in reference to the same, within a totality. Things appear in reference to their usefulness to me out of my concern with the world. However, "communication would be impossible if it should have to begin in the ego", for there would be no experience if there were not others, the not me (Levinas, 1974/1998, p. 119).

Violence Inherent in Thematization

Every encounter with the Other is possible only as a thematization and is thus a violation of the Other's infinity. "In relating to a being in the opening of being, comprehension locates a signification on the basis of being. In this sense, it does not invoke a being, but only names it, thus accomplishing a violence and a negation; a partial negation which is violence" (Levinas, 1951/1989, p. 127). But is there any way of encountering the Other that is not violent for Levinas? Levinas recognizes the conundrum of the Other being beyond Being: "the beyond being does and does not revert to ontology; the statement, the beyond, the infinite, becomes and does not become a meaning of being" (1974/1998, p. 19). He addresses this paradox in several ways, including the necessity of thematization and his distinction between *saying* and *said*.

The conception of the Other as beyond Being rests upon Levinas's distinction between totality and infinity. When one totalizes the Other, one reduces the Other to the same by likening the Other to oneself in describing him or her in relation to being. To comprehend the Other as the same, the Other is understood in relation to being as though an object of consciousness. Totality describes the theoretical realm in which the Other can only be conceived in light of being, as is the circumstance in Heidegger's existential ontology where the Other's relation to oneself, or to the same, is not called into question. Levinas notes that "the comprehension of Being is

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"neighbours" are not evil, but that in the face of an evil neighbour, such passivity is an invitation to be destroyed. We would argue that what Žižek fails to comprehend is how, even in abject submission, one confronts us with a face as accusation. This insinuates a further line of questioning regarding whether Levinas's Other and the obligations to it are metaphysical or concrete (see Bernasconi, 1989; Burns, 2008).

said to the existent, who again arises behind the theme in which he is presented" (1961/1969, pp. 47-48). Understanding the Other's being within such a totality fails to take into account the relationship with the Other that precedes the ontological, phenomenal and theoretical realm. Levinas turns to the notion of infinity which encompasses the ethical realm where this relationship with the Other arises from the Other who comes from beyond as irreducible to an intention of thought or will. The Other "at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me" (1961/1969, p. 51). The question of the Other is not an either/or but rather a both/and in which the Other, as beyond being, is at the same time both a totality *and* an infinity.

Thematization and totalization both partake in a relation of knowing where the Other is rendered as same – that is, as a phenomenon. In totalization, one reduces the Other to the same such that the Other's alterity is not taken account of, whereas thematization "does not exhaust the meaning of the relationship with exteriority" (Levinas, 1961/1969, p. 301). Thematization is the way in which any *thing* appears as a phenomenon. Experientially, thematization is unavoidable. Metaphysically, however, this encounter is inherently violent, as it delimits the Other's alterity. The practical implication of thematization would perhaps amount to mindfulness of the Other's alterity. Levinas describes the relation with the Other as one of desire, stating that "the desirable does not fill up my desire but hollows it out, nourishing me as it were with new hungers" (1963/1986, p. 351). As opposed to needing the Other, Levinas states that we desire the Other, and this desire for another is "our very sociality" (1963/1986, p. 350). Arising out of him who has no needs, desire is the relationship with the Other who calls me into question. This relationship of desire is what we are called to remain mindful of.

Saying What Cannot Be Said

According to Levinas, it is through language that signification arises and meaning emerges, because, when one speaks, one addresses an Other. Discerning between two parts of speech, Levinas distinguishes between the *said*, as a disclosing, and the *saying*, as a revealing. The words form the content of one's speech which comprise the *said* or the "what" of speech. However, before language is about something (the *said)* it is first spoken to someone (the *saying*). The impossibility of encountering the Other without speaking or *saying* anything attests to the primacy of the ethical. In other words, the "who" is prior to the "what" in discourse. The *saying* manifests that the Other comes from beyond being, as the face *reveals* through expression, speech, discourse. Expression is thus inseparable from the face that speaks. It is in the *saying* to someone that the Other is uncovered and

becomes defenceless, vulnerable, and naked. "The responsibility for another is precisely a saying prior to anything said" (Levinas, 1974/1998, p. 43). The responsibility arises on the part of the hearer to the *saying*, as the possibility for violence and the injustice of totalization occur through the reduction of the Other to the *said* when the Other's speech is seen as a disclosure. For Levinas, one is always *saying* more than one says (in the sense of the *said*), and it is an ethical responsibility not to approach the Other as a phenomenon through the *said*, through disclosure.

Levinas's phenomenology prioritizes the Other, who alone manifests him or herself as beyond the capacity to be contained in a totality. For Levinas, the Other is the starting point of all meaning and all signification. "One has to go back to that hither side, starting from the trace retained by the said, in which everything shows itself. The movement back to the saying is the phenomenological reduction" (Levinas, 1974/1998, p. 53). Levinas's interpersonal phenomenology entails that being, existence and experience are always in light of the Other. If the subject matter of phenomenological research is the world as it is experienced by the Other, Levinas's phenomenology shows that this world only emerges by virtue of discourse: "the world is offered in the language of the Other" (1961/1969, p. 92).

Levinas has already demonstrated the impossibility of totalizing the Other, since the Other is beyond being. However, the beyond does not mean that one can get outside of being and existence. In his essay entitled "On Escape" (1982/2003), Levinas informs us that the need to escape being arises from the need to escape oneself. This need to get beyond being is accomplished, albeit in a paradoxical solution, by exploring being – the only way out is in. Levinas himself cannot escape this paradox, nor does he attempt to hide from it. His conundrum rests with the impossibility of saying the unsayable. In fact, his writings are testaments to the impossibility of accomplishing this task. It is neither his goal nor his project to deny that being, knowledge and experience exist, but rather to return to the pre-condition for these totalities. Levinas's phenomenology seeks to determine the conditions of possibilities for truth, language, being and existence.

"The idea of infinity is desire" (Levinas, 1963/1986, p. 353). Through desire, the Other awakens in me new hungers by opening me up to that which is outside of me. It is the Other, as infinite, that comes to me from beyond being, whose face speaks to me about the world. "Being is a world in which one speaks and of which one speaks" (1961/1969, p. 181). Recall that language is already for the Other; Levinas alerts us to the obvious fact that speaking always addresses someone. The Other, for him, is the only

"object" which cannot be rendered as a phenomenon. The face of the Other signifies that which itself cannot be reduced to a theme. The Other comes from beyond, rupturing the continuity of the same, as "[t]he relationship with the Other is not produced outside of the world, but puts in question the world possessed" (Levinas, 1961/1969, p. 173). My solitary possession of the world is ruptured by the Other's face which speaks to me. "The relationship with the Other, trans-cendence, consists in speaking the world to the Other" (Levinas, 1961/1969, p. 173). The Other presents the world to me, and it is through speaking, through saying, that I invite the Other who ruptures my world to now share and partake in *our* world. In a Levinasian approach to phenomenological research, the face-to-face relationship between the researcher and the research participant, now understood as Levinasian "interlocutor", provides the grounds upon which the Other's world comes to be as the interlocutor speaks to the researcher about the phenomenal world of meaning. For it is only in speaking to someone that a world as a community of discourse can come to be shared. "To speak is to make the world common, to create commonplaces" (Levinas, 1961/1969, p. 76). Only when ethics is first philosophy can the Other's alterity fully emerge. The ethical dimension of phenomenological research would thus consist of the researcher always remaining mindful of the interlocutor's alterity and infinity. Through the very act of research, the researcher enacts the relationship to the Other of a hunger that is not sated but rather exposes ever new hungers.

The Other ruptures my world by presenting him- or herself as a face, as everything I am not, by calling into question my freedom and spontaneity of the same, of the totality. It is the presence of the Other that brings about "the primordial event of signification" (Levinas, 1961/1969, p. 92). This does not mean, however, that my existence is predicated upon the thought of the Other, but rather that, in approaching the Other, I pass from a phenomenon to possessing the idea of infinity in which the Other overflows my capacity to contain him or her. "The relation with the Other, or Conversation, is … an ethical relation … is a teaching" (1961/1969, p. 51). The relationship with the Other means precisely to be taught as one receives something wholly new from the Other's discourse.

Implications for Research

Levinas's attention to the pre-ontological and pre-theoretical ethical realm raises the question whether the very notion of Levinasian "phenomenological" research is something of an oxymoron. Kunz (2006) suggests as much in making a distinction between the natural science, phenomenological and "psychology for the Other" models of psychology. When the goal

of phenomenological research is ultimately the production of knowledge regarding the Other's life-world, which is inherently ontological in a Heideggerian phenomenology, focus on the pre-ontological would seem to place Levinas fundamentally at odds with this pursuit. At the same time, however, his oscillation between the *said* and *saying*, between the phenomenological and the ethical, points to the paradoxical relationship between the transcendental and existential aspects of being in the service of reaching the ethical dimension. This might be taken to suggest that, since it is only in the phenomenological realm that anything becomes perceptible at all, the only way to "escape" the phenomenological realm (see Levinas, 1982/2003) is to enter into it in a renewed way. Taking this as a point of departure, let us now examine what Levinas's phenomenology of the Other might mean in the practice of EP research in terms of the participant as interlocutor, the data as work, and the topic of such research as not the Other, but the world offered up by and in the language of the Other.

The Data as a Levinasian Work

Levinas suggests that spoken language has preference over the written word, as the presence of the face in the former entails the overflowing infinity of the Other. He then goes on to say that "all signs can serve as language", implying that even written works contain within them the overflowing presence of the infinity of the *saying* which makes possible the *said* (1961/1969, p. 182). Not only experiential research (Garza, 2007), as has been favoured by the "Duquesne School", but also other varieties of phenomenological research, including historical and archival research (Garza, 2007), would be possible using a Levinasian approach, as all "works" (the *said*) contain within them the expression of the Other (the *saying*), even though the Other is absent from the work itself (the *said)*. The works themselves could be either written, an interview, archives, or behaviour (Garza, 2007), and need not be limited to written data. Within the work, a trace is left by the Other which signifies the Other's coming from beyond. "A trace is not a sign like any other. But every trace also plays the role of a sign; it can be taken for a sign" (Levinas, 1963/1986, p. 356). The trace remains in the work as an indelible mark of the Other having disturbed the order of the same. "Disclosure," Levinas writes, "is suppressed in traces" (1963/1986, p. 357). Within research, the researcher must remain mindful of the alterity of the Other and make explicitly clear that the works themselves do not contain the presence of the Other within the *said*. The thematization of the Other's world does not totalize the Other so long as the researcher remains mindful of the Other's alterity and explicitly states that the subject matter of such research is intentionally not the Other.

"A work is thus a relationship with the other who is reached without showing himself touched" (Levinas, 1963/1986, p. 349). Levinas's emphasis upon the alterity of the Other and the ultimate unknowability of the Other entails that the Other always rests outside of the researcher's ability to totalize the interlocutor and reduce him or her to the same. In the research situation, this fact does not imply that the world and the phenomenon cannot be studied even if thematization remains deficient. The interlocutor is viewed as the condition for the possibility of even having a world and a phenomenon to study. Phenomena are thus seen as arising out of the discourse between the researcher and the participant as interlocutor. The results of such research are thus the insertion of the dialogue between researcher and interlocutor into the phenomenal realm as themes.

From Co-Researcher to Participant Interlocutor as Other

While we do not dispute the value of Kunz's project of a "psychology for the Other", we hope to examine whether and to what extent something akin to the ethical relation is in play in EP research. Since its earliest incarnations (cf. Strasser, in Polkinghorne, 1989), the research participant has always been afforded special status in EP research, with research participants "not to be treated as experimental objects for the use of the researcher; the role and responsibility of the participants is to share their experiences with the researcher" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 47). Von Eckartsberg (1998) goes so far as to designate participants "co-researchers" (CRs) in light of their co-operative contribution. Since, in existential phenomenology, phenomena are always for someone, the CR's role is to be the someone for whom the phenomenon appears. Still, the attention given to the CR is in the service of revealing the phenomenal and the noetic horizons that constitute it as such. Polkinghorne concedes as much in saying that even dialogal interview techniques in EP research "[seek] descriptions of the experience itself without the subject's interpretation" (p. 47).

From a Levinasian perspective, one could say that EP research is susceptible to the danger of taking up the CR as a phenomenon in a totalizing way that would be at odds with Levinas's ethical relationship. This totalization would imply that the researcher has forgotten that the Other is "the stranger who visits me" (Peperzak, 1989, p. 17) from outside the pheno-menological realm of my concerns and projects. For Levinas, this would amount to forgetting the ethical responsibility I have for the Other.

An EP response to this charge might be to say that our concern is with phenomena and not with the Other as such. The phenomenological researcher "observes the lived world … looks over the shoulder of the Other to see the Other's psychologically lived conditions … the Other's … lived meanings" (Kunz, 2006, p. 255). Perhaps this raises the disturbing question of whether it is better to be treated badly or to be ignored. But further consideration of this question in light of actual praxis suggests that it presents a false choice for both Levinas and existential phenomenology. It is not a case of either/or. It is a case of both/and. In a Levinasian sense it would not be a choice, since attunement to the ethical would preclude treating someone unethically. However, Levinas himself seems to acknowledge that thematization of the Other is inescapable inasmuch as we live with Others in the phenomenal world. In EP research, the falseness of the choice resides in part in the fact that one could existentially choose to take the Other up either as a tool or thing or as Dasein like myself and, either way, still be ontologically "authentic". In short, there is a totality *and* infinity for research rooted in both Heideggerian and Levinasian philosophy. Heidegger begins in totality and places infinity "outside" of the scope of his inquiry in its very inception in light of his project of a phenomenological ontology, whereas Levinas starts at the basis of infinity as the possibility for totality.

Levinas admonishes us against the totalization of the Other as a phenomenon, but also acknowledges that phenomena are rooted in the ethical dimension of otherness. EP research engages in the thematization of the Other and his or her world while remaining mindful of Strasser's claim "that the meaning and contents of experience are not *within* but *between* persons" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 47). Levinas urges us to surpass the level of phenomena (the *said*) to reach the level of the ethical (*saying*). At the same time, he acknowledges that the *saying* cannot be *said*, that it is the foundation of discourse but cannot itself enter into discourse. EP research focuses on the *said*, the individual thematic rendering of phenomena as "for someone", while trying to remain mindful of the otherness of both the CR and the world. Giorgi and Giorgi's (2003) example of a meal rendered alternately as salty (in itself) versus salty *for me* illustrates how, through the epoché, the transcendence of the world and the Other who render it are preserved even as the immanent experience is described. Ultimately, Levinas's conundrum is the question of how one *says* the unsayable. EP research's conundrum is how to unsay the *said*.

Phenomenology, in its explicit orientation to the phenomenal, might be accused of neglecting *saying*. Levinas might be accused of neglecting the *said*. But careful examination reveals that the situation is not as simple as this. *Saying* and *said*, transcendent and existential, are mutually implicit in both views. "In becoming a theme, [an entity] does indeed retain a

foreignness with respect to the thinker that embraces it" (Levinas, 1963/1986, p. 345). In Levinas, *saying* is focal and the *said* is always in the service of pointing us towards *saying*. EP research focuses on the *said*, but leaves an opening for the nascent emergence of the Other, although perhaps still within the constraints of my own projects and concerns. For example, Churchill and Wertz (2002) describe how it is through a "resonating attunement" to the phenomenal object of inquiry that "one begins to understand the other's position and the rich meanings described" (p. 252). It is when the researcher (R) "trades places" (Husserl, cited in Churchill & Wertz, 2002) with the CR that he or she "can begin to acquaint himself or herself with the essential meanings and organization of the experience" (p. 252). Similarly, the first step of Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method (1985) emphasizes that our initial presence to the data as text must refrain from interpretation so as to guard against the imposition of the R's meanings onto the experience of the CR. In an analogous way, Levinas points to how it is through the phenomenal, being, the *said*, that one arrives at the transcendent, the ethical, the *saying* (Peperzak, 1989). In the data as work, we encounter the absent Other as trace (Levinas, 1961/1969, 1963/1986). As absolute absence, this Other always eludes our thematization, remains infinite.

A final concern regarding the totalization of the CR in EP research rests in the misconception that the goal of such research is somehow to "reproduce the consciousness" of the CR as its result (see, for example, Kendler, 2005). EP research seems to acknowledge that the CR also remains mysterious, beyond me, "infinite". It is an epistemological necessity of EP research that Rs limit themselves to speaking about the world of the particular CR, rendered through his or her disclosive interpretative presence to it. But "to attend to experience as experienced does not mean to somehow enter the mind of the other and 'reproduce' his or her conscious experience as a sort of 'content'" (Garza, 2006, p. 256). Even so, EP research remains stridently focused on experience. "Reproduction of the other's consciousness as content is not the goal of phenomenological inquiry in psychology so much as developing an illuminative understanding of an experience" (Garza, 2006, p. 256). In this way, EP research acknowledges the alterity of the world and the Other and makes its focus upon phenomena not an error but an explicit choice.

This choice in EP research imposes restrictions on our ability to encounter the Other as other. Similarly, in Levinas, inasmuch as one is always "I", it seems that in praxis the radical alterity of the Other persistently eludes us. *Phenomenological* research of necessity encounters the CR as a phenomenon in the service of revealing phenomena. While Levinas might assert

that this means that we totalize the Other in EP research (or at the very least thematize him or her, violating the radicality of his or her alterity), it falls to such research to be mindful that this is so. As EP researchers we are not claiming to have encountered the Other in his or her infinity. Levinas's admonition is to attend to the Other in his or her totality *and* infinity. Yet this admonition confronts us with a conundrum – how does one remain mindful of the *saying* without reducing it to the *said*? Levinas deals with the conundrum of saying (in the sense of the *said*) "the *saying*" through "the *said*". This is inescapably so. How else would it become an object of inquiry except by his speaking of it (the *said*)? This means he must remain mindful that such saying (*said*) entails some violation of the essence of "*saying*". Likewise, EP research faces the task of saying (in the sense of the *said*) "the *saying*" of the CR while recognizing that both the CR and his or her world are not totalized in such saying (as *said*).

The Research Situation and Alterity

Insofar as EP research explicitly focuses upon phenomena, the alterity of the Other remains at most an unspoken background. Making the lifeworld the subject matter of EP research imposes constraints not only on its ability to discern the otherness of the CR, but on its ability to see meaning originating outside of a totality. A telling example is van Kaam's (1959) prototypic study of feeling understood. In this study, van Kaam recasts the implicitly interpersonal phenomenon of being understood in subjectivist terms of "feeling understood" revelatory of arguably only one half of the experience. In essence, the constituents of the experience he describes are perceptions of the understanding Other by the understood, or feelings of the understood regarding the relationship to the understanding one. The Other is thus acknowledged only through the perspective of the CR.

A similar study (DeAses, cited in Garza, 2007) sought to examine the phenomenon of interpersonal missing manifest in a married couple separated by military deployment. Early in the research process it became apparent that the "phenomenon" was not disclosively realized from a singular perspective. The Heideggerian model for a singular Dasein could not hold sway here. The co-missing of this couple was made manifest dialogally through their correspondence, and revealed as a dimension of a shared world of meaning neither reducible to the perspective of either member of the couple nor merely the sum or adumbration of those perspectives. The study shows that, at the very least, some realms of lived meaning are constituted interpersonally as pre-thematic understanding. It also suggests, in line with thinkers like Strasser (cited in Polkinghorne, 1989) and Halling, Kunz, and Rowe (1994), that meaning emerges not just *within* persons

but also *between* them. What are the implications of this for EP research?

One implication would be the need to make adjustments at the level of methodology. Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (1997) describe the inclusion of an interview wherein the CR examines and validates the R's analysis of the data. While this is an admirable overture to preserving the alterity of the CR, it is not without its dangers. For example, following Merleau-Ponty's (1942/1963) recognition that some intentions are lived but not known and Churchill's (2000) description of the prevalence of self-deception in narrative data, the CR cannot become the final arbiter of the reality of his or her experience. One might say in this light that Polio et al. (1997) see the CR as Other to the R while running the risk of neglecting how the R, in serving as the Other for the CR, helps to ground the reality of the CR's experience.

Another example of methodological adjustment is Halling et al.'s (1994) adoption of a dialogal procedure for gathering data. They describe a technique of reflective conversation or dialogue out of which comes a knowledge "that both creates community and is grounded in community" (p. 111). In this model, data analysis is also collaborative, emphasizing their view that "what is known grows out of the interaction between people that, in turn, leads to a deepening of community based on shared understanding" (p. 111). Meanings are discerned and interpretations of data are accomplished "through the process of dialogue rather than following predefined procedures or steps" (p. 111). Kunz (cited in Halling et al., 1994) himself cites a Levinasian basis for this, asserting that "the other person challenges each one of us to become aware of and bracket our assumptions" (p. 126).

Inversely to Pollio et al.'s technique where the CR serves as Other to the R, in Halling et al. the R, or rather the research group, serves as Other for the CR, grounding his or her experience in the transpersonal structure of the research situation. Again, this is an admirable acknowledgement of the transpersonal character of phenomena and knowledge, but it too is not without its difficulties. For example, the communal character of both data gathering and analysis raises the question of the CRs' accommodation of what they take to be the R's expectations, and hence of the possible "loss" of the Other's particular and idiosyncratic meanings in the process of dialogue. The knowledge produced in such research is indeed communal, as Halling et al. (1994) describe. But it may also have been transformed in the research process from its original meaning for the CR. Of course, the taking up of a CR's expression by any R will of necessity be transformative. But it

seems that, whereas Pollio et al.'s method might give the CR too much centrality as author of the meaning of experience and neglect the otherness of the R, Halling et al. might be said to risk not giving the CR enough centrality, and also perhaps to risk subsuming the particular otherness of the CR into the more general otherness of the research group. Finally, while Halling et al.'s decision not to adopt prescriptive steps in a methodological process seems an admirable nod to the Other-ed character of knowledge, in the research context it ultimately raises the possibility that the desire to uphold the community of the *saying* makes it difficult to communicate the method through the *said*. It is important to note that these comments are not meant to suggest fault with either of these research models. They are meant to note the vulnerabilities that may inhere in each and to point to where practitioners may need to be especially mindful of their duties to the ethical relationship.

Pollio et al. (1997) formulate the appeal to the Other as method, while Halling et al. (1994) seek to preserve the Other through methodological openness. We would like to suggest that the steps necessary to heed the Levinasian imperative of the primacy of the Other are not necessarily methodological, or at least not necessarily procedural. We suggest instead that the EP research process is itself inherently dialogal. We suggest that alterity is inherent in the research situation both in how the CR is the Other for the R and in how the R is the Other for the CR, regardless of the specific kinds of data interrogated or the concrete constitution of the data-gathering situation. This would even extend to situations where there is no CR proper, such as archival research (see Garza, 2007), inasmuch as writing, and even cultural artefacts, can be understood as forms of the *said*.[6]

Since "the Other is the principle of phenomena" (Levinas, 1961/1969, p. 92), this means that the R in EP research gives voice to the CR's world. It also means that, because the CR is Other to the R, the researcher is ethically bound to give voice to the CR's world and thus to usher it from the anonymity of the *il y a* by creating a co-constituted world of meaning on the basis of both what is unsaid and what is *said* in the CR's works. It is an ethical obligation to answer the call of the Other; the hearer has a responsibility to the speaker and the *saying*. But the ethical relationship is a two way street, in that, while we, as Rs, are bound to tell the CR's truth, the CR is bound to be truthful to us as our informant regarding his or

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[6] Levinas seems to posit a surplus of spoken language over written language owing to the presence of the interlocutor in the former, but also suggests that mindfulness of the "primordial manifestation of the Other" enables verbal and written signs to serve as language (Levinas, 1961/1969, p. 182).

her world of experience. The ethical obligations in the research situation, for both R and CR, are to the Other as constituting a relational origin of a world of meaning that they can come to share, given that "[s]ignification starts with the speech in which the world is at the same time thematized and interpreted" by the Other (Levinas, 1961/1969, p. 97).

In other words, the results of EP research are reducible neither to the CR nor the R, but rather emerge synthetically from the research process itself. The ethical obligation to the Other is not met by empathy, because empathy implies a phenomenal understanding of the Other and his or her world. The radical alterity of the Other means that the Other comes from beyond any understanding at the phenomenal level. Both the R and the CR rupture each other's autistic world. Each speaks the Other's relatedness to being in a necessarily thematizing way, but the ethical admonition against totalization, and the foreknowledge of the Other as other, remind us that the CR and his or her world always outstrip our ability to thematize them. In this we make it possible to catch glimpses of the Other's and the world's infinity. "It is in the trace of the Other that the face shines; what is presented there is absolving itself from my life and visits me as already absolute. Someone has already passed. His trace does not *signify* his past, as it does not *signify* his labour or his enjoyment in the world; it is a disturbance imprinting itself (we are tempted to say *engraving* itself) with an unexceptionable gravity" (Levinas, 1963/1986, p. 359). This may be difficult, since the responsibility is both pre-phenomenological and pre-ontological, but remaining mindful of this would constitute the ethical dimension of EP research.

Referencing Format

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Gilbert Garza is Associate Professor and Chair of Psychology at the University of Dallas. His interest in psychological research rooted in the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty was decisive in his pursuit of first his MA (1989) and ultimately his PhD (1996) in phenomenological psychology at Duquesne University. Professor Garza has authored several articles on phenomenological research methods in psychology, as well as on technology and its impacts on human experience. His recent research has centred on the role of the internet and social networking sites like Facebook in social experience. He has also written about and taught the ethical philosophy of Levinas and its practical and theoretical implications for phenomenological psychological research.
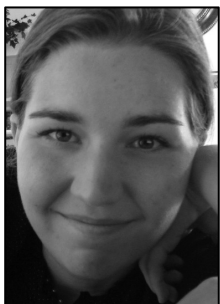
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