

<sup>1</sup> E. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), hereafter cited as *OB*.

<sup>2</sup> S. Freud, "Project for a Scientific Psychology" (1895), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, Anna Freud, et. al. (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute for Psycho-Analysis, 1966), 1:353-56 (hereafter cited as *SE* followed by volume and page); "The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena", in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), in *SE* 2:8-11; *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1917), in *SE* 16:275-85 and 358-77; *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), in *SE* 18:29-33.

<sup>3</sup> "Project for a Scientific Psychology" (op. cit.), 353-56.

<sup>4</sup> J. Lacan, *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 384-93; hereafter cited as *E*; *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-54*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 188-91; hereafter cited as *SI*.

<sup>5</sup> J. Lacan, *E*, 385 ff; S. Freud, *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, in *SE* 17:1-22 (the account of the hallucination is to be found on page 85).

<sup>6</sup> E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), passim, hereafter cited as *TI*; *OB*, 87.

<sup>7</sup> S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), in *SE* 18:24-33; hereafter cited as *BPP*.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. R. Bernet, "Encounter with the Stranger: Two Interpretations of the Vulnerability of the Skin" in *Phenomenology of Interculturality and Life-world*, ed. Ernst Wolfgang Orth & Chan-Fai Cheung (Freiburg/München: Alber, 1998), 89-111.

<sup>9</sup> Levinas, *OB*, 72. Cf. *ibid.*, 81: "Pleasure, that is, the complacency in itself of life loving itself." Cf. also *TI*, 112: "Life is love of life."

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Levinas, *TI*, 164: "To be a body is on one hand to stand [se tenir], to be master of oneself, and, on the other hand, to stand on the earth, to be in the other, and thus to be encumbered by one's body."

<sup>11</sup> Cf. R. Bernet, "L'autre du temps," in E. Levinas, *Positivité et transcendance; suivi de Levinas et la phénoménologie, sous la direction de J.-L. Marion* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 143-163.

## Lecture 2 (1999)

### From Intentionality to Responsivity

Bernhard Waldenfels

What I am going to discuss in terms of response and responsivity is not just a special kind of behavior with respect to the Other. Responding has rather to be understood as the genuine way in which we encounter the alien as alien. It will be shown that the experience of the Other, i.e., what Husserl calls *Fremderfahrung*, requires a new sort of responsive phenomenology. This kind of responsive phenomenology goes beyond the traditional form of intentional phenomenology just as much as it leaves behind every sort of hermeneutics. Responding means more than intending or understanding.<sup>1</sup>

In what follows I shall unfold some of the main features to be ascribed to responsive phenomenology, and in doing so I shall proceed in the following way. After having made some general remarks about the actual and the historical background of the alien, I shall first say something about the different meanings of the alien (*Fremde*) and about the place of the alien in our experience. The second part leads us to a turning-point where responsivity diverges from the basic underlying presuppositions to the phenomenology of intentional acts and to the hermeneutic interpretation of texts. In a third step I shall outline the key concepts of demand and response. I shall conclude by presenting some features of what I call logic of response.

Obviously the phenomenon of the alien belongs to the highly actual conditions of our modern, post- or hypermodern lifeworlds; and this is not only due to the mixing of the cultures in countries like North America or to the opening of national borders on the European continent. The alien is more than the mere symptom of a growing multiculturalism on the background of a globalization process. Phenomenologists could argue that the experience of the alien is one of the basic issues of phenomenological thought, and this being the case for a long time: from Husserl, Scheler, Heidegger and Schutz through Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas and Derrida up to the present. Words like "interaction," "intersubjectivity," "intercorporeity" or "interculturality" are mere words

as long as the “inter” is not specified and extended into an intermediary sphere of *Zwischenreich* which undermines every sort of centrism. Finally, when the Japanese phenomenologist and psychiatrist Ben Kimura connects the Western motive of “between” with the Eastern motive of *ki* the “between” takes on inter-cultural colors.<sup>2</sup>

But on the other hand, the phenomenon of the alien by no means belongs to the fundamental equipment of Occidental thought. The fact that the alien, after all, really crossed the threshold of the problematic is something that goes back to a double mutation in Western thought concerning modern rationality on the one hand, and the role of the modern subject on the other hand. As to the first aspect, it becomes more and more clear that all kinds of orders run up against certain boundaries. These boundaries, imposed on our seeing, feeling or speaking, cannot be infinitely broadened leading to an all-encompassing cosmos or to an all-encompassing world history wherein everything and everybody would find their own place. There is still meaning, but no reign of reason; there is still freedom, but no reign of freedom. Every order which lets and makes things appear in this way instead of another proves to be exclusive and selective. Such orders make many things possible while making other things impossible. The vision of “everything at once” (ομοῦ πάντα) gives way to an unavoidable impossibility. Conflicts, called *Widerstreit* in the German tradition, which occur on the level of experience, reach for something deeper than every sort of contradiction. *Widerspruch* actually opposes different positions. On the edges and in the gaps of such limited orders arises the alien in form of something extra-ordinary. As to the second moment, the so-called subject pretending to be the center of the world, it becomes deprived of its ruling position. The subject, which considered itself as the basis of everything and as the genuine place or vehicle of reason, is suffering from a self-withdrawal which resists any reflexive return. In short, there is no world in which we will ever be completely at home, and there is no subject which will ever be the master of its own house. This kind of twilight of the idols confronts us with a radical sort of alien that precedes all efforts of appropriation – like the Other’s gaze which meets us before we become aware of it.

## 1. The Place of the Alien within Our Experience

The alien emerges as a peculiar phenomenon which does not simply yield to the general logos of the phenomena. Linguistic observations already show that the alien is a highly complex phenomenon. In the well-known classical and modern languages of our Western culture the German word *fremd* has to be conveyed with different words. *Fremd* means first that which lies out of one’s own domain (see ξενον, *externum*, *foreign*, *stranger*, *étranger*); it means secondly that which belongs to others (see αλλοτριον, *alienum*, *alien*, *ajeno*); and it means thirdly that which strikes us as heterogeneous (see ξενον, *strange*, *étrange*). Among these three aspects of *place*, *property* and *manner* the first aspect prevails; it seems to be decisive in order to grasp the total phenomenon.

This becomes clear as soon as we confront the phenomenon of the *alien* with the category of the *other* which belongs to the more traditional forms of ontology. What we encounter as alien is not simply something other or different. Otherness, first analyzed in Plato’s *Sophist*, comes about through a process of delimitation (*Abgrenzung*) which opposes the same (ταυτον, *idem*) to the other (ετερον, *aliud*). When distinguishing between apple and pear, between table and bed nobody would claim that the other is alien or foreign to the other. The one is simply different from the other, being what the other is not. Instead, the alien does not arise from a mere process of delimitation, it emerges from a process which is simultaneously realized as inclusion (*Eingrenzung*) and exclusion (*Ausgrenzung*). The alien is not simply different, it arises from elsewhere. It is separated from the sphere of ownness by a threshold, as in the case of sleep and wakefulness, of health and sickness, of age and youth; and none of us ever stands on both sides of the threshold at the same time. This holds, too, for the difference between human beings and animals as well as for the difference between genders and cultures. There is no “third man,” able to differentiate the male and the female, since male beings distinguish *themselves* from female beings, and female beings do so vice versa. There is neither a cultural arbitrator able to divide European and Far Eastern cultures from the outside, since Europeans must have distinguished *themselves* from Asians before such a division or comparison was achieved. Besides, distinguishing oneself from the other shows many historical and cultural variants. For example, for Homer, the Trojans are not yet “barbarians” stammering incomprehensible words; Hector finds his place of honor next to Achilles. Seeing things in black and white only occurs in fifth century

Greece, due to a certain monopolization of the “logos.” On a completely different page appears the isolation of Japanese culture from every foreign influence, which lasted two centuries up through the modernization efforts during the Meji period. On yet another page appears life under Turkish rule in the southeastern part of Europe, which has had its effects until the recent war in the Balkans. There is nothing like “the alien,” there are rather different styles of alienness or otherness. Otherness has an occasional character, as Husserl would say, related to changing standpoints. A placeless “alien in general” would resemble a “left side in general” – a monstrous idea, confusing place indications with conceptual determinations.

Moreover, the alien’s place is a peculiar place. It resists any attempt to insert it into a local grid which would be accessible to everyone; it can only be reached, crossing a certain threshold. Accordingly, Husserl circumscribes the alien as “a verifiable accessibility of what is inaccessible originally” (*Hua I*, p. 144, Engl. p. 114).<sup>3</sup> This paradox, which combines possibility and impossibility in a remarkable way, points to the fact that the alien has nothing from a pure lack or deficiency – as if the alien were something not yet or no longer known, but able to be known, knowable in itself. On the contrary, absence, distance or inaccessibility is inherent to the alienness or otherness as such. In this regard the alienness resembles the past which cannot be grasped anywhere else than in its after effects or by memory. The alien does not simply dwell elsewhere, it appears itself as an elsewhere, as a form of *atopia*, just as in the line of Plato who describes Socrates as *atopos*, as somebody strange, as placeless. Alienness entails something or someone never being completely in place.

At last, the alien does not remain outside myself, it begins within ourselves in terms of an intrasubjective and intracultural otherness. There is not just another or a second I, an *alter ego*, but following Rimbaud we should claim: “I is another” (*Je est un autre*). The Ego is not simply a first person, a person coming first as a speaking subject. Rather I am speaking and spoken to at once, just as the agrammatical style of Rimbaud’s saying indicates. Let us give some examples. As a being that is born I find myself living in a world that I did not create. I carry a name that I received from others. I discover myself in the Other’s eyes as in a looking-glass, a glass looking back to me. In such a way I discover myself marked by a chasm, by a fissure which prevents the person who says *I* or *je* from ever coinciding with the spoken *me* or *moi*. The contextuality of the I, which is never fully individualized and always shows features of a nameless no one,<sup>4</sup> comes to light better in the Japanese language where personal pronouns show a greater variability

than our Western languages and where sentences are less personalized. In our languages, which are much more person-centered, it would be hard to find equivalents for a Japanese sequence such as: *nani shiteruno* (i.e., literally: “What doing?”) – *ongaku o kiiterundayo* (literally: “Listening to music.”).<sup>5</sup> As Nietzsche warns us in his mocking way, we are inclined to assume all too quickly that where ever there is a deed there must be a doer too. But are we in these and similar cases really dealing with a deed as the grammatical form of active verbs suggests? When Lichtenberg advises us to say “it thinks” (*es denkt*) as one says “it is lightening,” he means something similar. He puts into question the assumption that everything is occurring *to me*, is caused *by me* – as if we were the master of every idea which comes to our mind. The otherness originates from ourselves, it comes upon us at home.

This may be illustrated by a famous haiku written by Basho: “Living in Kyoto / at the call of the cuckoo / I long for Kyoto.”<sup>6</sup> The call of the bird may be very familiar, nevertheless it can startle us out of what is common or ordinary; it may do so time after time, as long as we are ready to be surprised, listening to the echo of absent sounds or voices in what is present. If one disregards one’s own otherness, one finds everywhere only the same and oneself, no matter how many countries and seas are crossed.

## 2. Intentionality, Regularity and Responsivity

A phenomenon like the alien, which shows itself only by eluding us, could be characterized as a *hyperphenomenon*. This does not only mean that something which appears as this or that – as chair or locomotive, as moon or cherry blossom, as boy or girl, as an act of respect or an act of violence – is always something more or other than what it seems to be, thus being endowed with horizons of sense and being symbolically undetermined. It is precisely the “itself” of showing itself, the *Sich* of the *Sichzeigen*, that does not appear in what shows itself. Painting that tries to make visible the event of something showing itself, turns to an “indirect painting,” as evoked by Merleau-Ponty in his essay *Eye and Mind*. Such a painting makes visible what is invisible without depriving it of its invisibility. This reminds us again of a Japanese author. In his *Praise of the Shadows* Junichiro Tanizaki describes how the indirect illumination, so popular in Japanese everyday culture, allows things the distance they need to appear. We may wonder how phenomenology looks when trying to show what does not appear

itself. How might phenomenology proceed when confronted with an incarnate absence, a *leibhaftige Gegenwart*?

It seems to me beyond any doubt that intentionality, as introduced into contemporary philosophy by Brentano, as belonging to the main features of phenomenology and even as animating hermeneutical and analytical philosophy, is not enough. By itself it does not leave sufficient room for the alien as alien. Intentionality means that *something* is intended or understood *as something*, that it is taken in a certain sense. Whatever may be alien is already preconceived in such a way that it becomes reduced to a *part of a sense-whole*, even if it reveals itself only bit by bit and never completely. Understanding turns out to be a special kind of appropriation, trying to overcome alienness by understanding, as Hans-Georg Gadamer explicitly claims in his great work *Wahrheit und Methode*. Understanding is a peculiarly sublime way of appropriation; it is supposed to be able to let everything appear as itself by overcoming its alienness or otherness, by familiarizing it, i.e., by receiving it, so to speak, in the bosom of one's own family. In opposition to this, whoever insists upon something alien which evades understanding, seems to fall into the trap of performative self-contradiction, trying to make understandable what is frankly stated as ununderstandable. However, this rather poor argument betrays itself; it reveals how the absence of what is alien turns into the negativity of what is without sense, as long as the alien gets incorporated into the reign of sense.

Alienness does not fare better when it gets caught in the machinery of regularity, served by the different theories of communication and corroborated by linguistic analysis. Measured against rules to which all speech and action complies, the Other's statement appears as a *case of a rule system* which regulates the Other's statement as well as my own. We pass beyond the own and the alien. The leveling of the difference between the own and the alien does not stop when – as it usually happens – one grants an open and variable form of rule following. Even deviations from rules do not suffice; they relate to a virtual compliance to rules if nothing more is looked for than the mere deviation from rules. From this perspective the strange seems to be nothing more than tomorrow's familiar.

Nevertheless, even if Husserl's dealing with the phenomenon of alien remains highly ambiguous, his work opens certain ways beyond the pure sphere of sense, based on my own intentions or on common rules. In this context I am especially interested in Husserl's theory of affection.<sup>7</sup> This theory consists of heterogeneous elements that are derived from various traditions: the Aristotelian, the Kantian and even the Fichtean

tradition. It is also noteworthy that these elements do not automatically harmonize. (1) Within the static perspective of *Ideas I* (see §§ 85-86), affection (in the Kantian sense) remains restricted to the task of providing material from which objects are built or constituted. From a dynamic point of view the materials enter into the teleology of the conscious life and contribute to the process of sense formation. Whatever is given is given as something. Not unlike the  $\pi\rho\omega\tau\eta\ \upsilon\lambda\eta$  in Aristotle where the pure *hyle* has to be understood as a function, not as a primary datum. (2) The form-giving, goal-orientated process in and by which something appears as something, appears to itself in a special sort of self-appearance, such as when our consciousness of something is accompanied by a special kind of self-awareness. Otherwise the appearance of something as something would fall back onto the status of something occurring in the world. There is no affection without self-affection. A stimulus which is "alien to me" (*ichfremd*)<sup>8</sup> presupposes a self to which it is alien. While being affected I co-affect myself. A certain kind of self-referentiality is already to be found in Aristotle's *philautia*, inherent to every form of *philia*, or in Rousseau's *amour de soi*, a self-feeling of living beings which has to be distinguished from the self-centered form of *amour propre*. This self-referentiality returns in phenomenological analyses and becomes deepened in different ways: in Husserl's doctrine of the primary impression (*Urimpression*) which is radicalized by Levinas, in the analysis of temporal self-affection which Heidegger carries out in his book on Kant, and in the hyletic phenomenology of Michel Henry which revolves around a pretended immanence of life, living and sensing itself by itself.<sup>9</sup> (3) The reversal of the reference to oneself is the reference to the alien. What is alien to me (*ichfremd*) presents itself simultaneously as *alien* to me (*ichfremd*). On this third level one gets a glimpse of some quasi-dialogical, or better said, responsive aspects. I prefer the second formulation. It seems to me more appropriate, because the hiatus between affection by the alien and affection by myself is not previously bridged by mutual understanding nor based on views and meanings we share. The pain which overcomes us has no meaning in itself, although it can be interpreted afterwards as a symptom of bodily disturbances or physical defects. Now, the affection by what is alien to me becomes crucial in Husserl's reflections on intersubjectivity. Husserl mentions something like doing to (*An-tun*), i.e., an af-fection in its literal sense, or being approached by the Other who concerns us (*An-gang*), and repeatedly he refers to this as an appeal (*An-ruf*).<sup>10</sup> What is at stake here as being "alien to me" is not a mute not-ego nor another ego; it is that whence I start when I experience something as something and myself as someone. Heidegger, who gives increasing

interest to the “call” of conscience and to the “call” of Being, circumscribes experience as “*das Zustoßende* (what happens to me), *Angehende*, *Affektion*.”<sup>11</sup>

These are traces of another phenomenology. They indicate a sort of responsivity which exceeds the sphere of the intentional or rule-dependent sense.<sup>12</sup> This excess animates the response to the Other’s demand which has neither meaning nor does it follow given rules – which on the contrary interrupts the familiar formations of sense and rule, thus provoking new ones. That *with which* I respond owes its meaning to the challenge *to which* I respond. The alien which hides itself in the Other’s demand loses its alienness if the *responsive difference* between that to which we respond and that to which we answer is leveled in favor of an intentional or rule-guided meaning process. The responsive difference disappears behind a *significative* or *hermeneutic difference* in which something is apprehended or understood as something, and it disappears behind a *regulative difference* in which something is treated according to a norm. Instead, the alien as alien requires a responsive form of phenomenology that begins beyond meaning and rule. It begins at the point where something challenges us and puts our own possibilities in question just before we get involved in a questioning that strives for knowledge and the will to know. This radical way of responding, inherent to whatever we are saying or doing, undermines the traditional priority of questioning. It is not the case that we replace the traditional priority with another one. Mere reversals never do lead much farther. What we need is a shifting of weight and a new orientation. In each speech-event lives a certain promise that escapes from the conformity to regular conduct. Hölderlin’s “conversation we are,” often invoked by the defenders of dialogue and communication, arises from the remoteness of the alien whose demands precede all partnership.

### 3. Demand and Response

Demand and response are the two key concepts I make use of in order to develop a responsive kind of phenomenology. In the demand of the Other which breaks the purposive circle of intentionality as much as the circle of regulation or of communication, the alien emerges *in actu*. This kind of demand or *Anspruch*, as I would say in German, means two things at once: an appeal directed *to someone* and a claim or pretension *to something*. Peculiar to the demand of the Other is the fact that both

forms of *Anspruch*, i.e., appeal and claim, are combined just as the German term suggests. In the appeal that I receive, there arise claims that demand something from me. Incorporated into the situation, such demands precede every moral or legal claim. The question of whether or not a demand is legitimated presupposes that it is has already been received as an appeal. Here we reach a point *on this side of good and evil, of right and wrong*; and where morality shows something like a blind spot.<sup>13</sup> All attempts to found morality presuppose factual demands which are more than mere facts. The simple occurrence of someone asking me for directions or asking for my name only becomes a fact when treated as a fact. This may happen along the lines of observing how someone asks me, stating that someone asks me or recounting that someone did so. But something which *becomes* a fact *is not* a fact. The factualization of the Other’s question cannot prevent me from being touched by the question. Besides, responding does not begin with talking about something, it does not begin with talking at all, but instead with a looking-at and a listening-to which to some extent is inevitable. So I cannot hear the imperative “Listen!” without listening to it. The order “Do not listen to me!” leads to the famous double-bind: however one reacts, one does it in the wrong way. Even attempting not to listen (*Weghören*) presupposes a certain listening, and attempting not to look (*Wegsehen*) presupposes a certain looking, just as Nietzsche’s disrespect (*Verachtung*) includes a certain respect or regard (*Achtung, Beachtung*).

If we now pass to the kind of responding which corresponds to the twofold demand, we notice that our responding likewise takes on a twofold form. The claim upon something corresponds to the answer I give. In terms of speech-act theory this has to do with the suitable *answer content* which is going to fill in the blank in the propositional content of questions or requests. Such an answer remedies a lack. But the very *event of responding* is in no way exhausted by this. The appeal directed to me corresponds to a response that fills no hole, but comes to meet the offers and demands of the Other. Responding in its full sense does not give what it has, but rather what it finds and invents in responding. Responding distinguishes itself from the given answer in a way similar to how the denial distinguishes itself from negative propositions. Refusing to respond occurs at the level of the enunciation (*énonciation*), not at the level of the enunciated (*énoncé*). Giving an answer is not exhausted by the answer given. The given answer might be taken over by an answering machine that appropriately reacts to a suitable inquiry. The same would not serve for giving an answer, or refusing it, except for the case of a prefabricated dialogue where answers are simply triggered or called up

like data. A machine that stops working is, however, not refusing to offer its service.

The doubling of the response into responding event and responsive content is clearly illustrated by the fact that I can quite respond to a question with a counter-question, i.e., with a response which is no answer in the sense of furnishing the information that another person is asking for. *Keine Antwort ist auch eine Antwort* as we say in German, or in English: no answer is also a response.

Finally, responding that comes to meet the Other's demand in no way coincides with spoken utterances. During the fulfillment of a request, the Other's speech and one's own action often turn into each other, for example, when I do what I am requested to do. Furthermore, one can provoke with a glance and a reply to glances. Clashing gazes are part of everyday life in large cities. Responding embodies an ethos of the senses that extends from great ceremonies down to lovers' play. In the end, the old sentence "The human being is an animal which disposes of discourse or speech" can be reformulated in the sentence "The human being is an animal which responds." Thereby the difference between human and animal, as well as that between human and machine, needs to be rethought.

#### 4. Moments of a Logic of Response

Responsivity as a main feature of human behavior calls for a special logic of response that differs considerably from the logic of intentional acts, from the logic of comprehension or from the logic of communicative action. It leads to a proper form of rationality, namely a rationality which arises from responsivity itself. In conclusion, I would like to sketch four moments of this peculiar logic, and simultaneously I want to show how traditional themes begin to shimmer in the light of responding.

First, the demand of the Other, which is more than the part of a whole or a case of law, obtains a specific form of *singularity*. This singularity indeed appears in the plural,<sup>14</sup> but in such a way that it eludes the distinction between the particular and the universal. Such a singularity does not mean that something occurs only once, such as for instance a sound or a crime. Also, singularity does not just mean that something is classified as one case among others. We are not dealing with the individual that, according to the traditional view, is unsayable

(*ineffabile*) because it appears on the inferior margin of an all-covering universality. We have rather to do with a singularity of events which appears as such while deviating from familiar events and inaugurating another seeing, thinking and acting. In the life of individuals, as well as in the life of whole peoples and cultures, there are crucial events (*Schlüsselereignisse*) "which one does not forget" (à la Kant with regard to the French revolution). They are not forgotten because they introduce symbolic orders, establish meanings and create new obligations, i.e., they belong to what we are and have to be. In this regard the French revolution was, at least for participating Europeans like Kant, not one revolution among others; since, from out of this uniqueness it became the speed crystal for various myths and rites. Only when considered through the eyes of a third party does the French revolution appear along side the American, the Russian or the Chinese revolution as one among others. Just as a child, once it has grown, learns to consider its mother as a woman among others and its birth place as a place among other places.

Likewise, the Other's demand does not fall under the disjunction between facts and norms, between is and ought, that being so since Hume's and Kant's dominance in the field of practical philosophy. The demand that gives something to see, to hear, to think, to feel appears with a sort of *inevitability*, a *ne-cessitudo* in its literal sense, which is not derived from universal laws, but – as a practical necessity – belongs to the essential presuppositions of our common existence in the world. This inevitability means that I cannot not respond to the Other's demand once I am touched by it – just as, according to P. Watzlawick – I cannot not communicate. Not-responding would be as well a sort of responding. The double negation that lies in the fact that I cannot not respond is known from modal logic's determination of necessity.<sup>15</sup> It refers to requirements which are grasped only indirectly, namely as presuppositions not to be passed which are implied in given experiences without being derived in a positive way. Along similar lines, Kant spoke of a "fact of reason," Husserl of the "necessity of a fact"<sup>16</sup> or of an "absolute fact" and Sartre of a "*nécessité de fait*." In its radicality the demand of the Other reminds us of similar examples taken from great traditions, such as the striving for happiness, the drive of self-preservation, the Categorical Imperative and human freedom. In Plato's view it is not in our hands to strive for happiness, just as for Kant it is not up to our discretion whether we hear the voice of the moral law or not. That from which our discourse and speech begins, and has always begun, cannot be observed, judged or managed as something lying before our eyes or in our hands. It only comes to light *while* we say and do something. It is dependent upon an indirect manner of speaking and communicating which remains

connected to silence. This also holds true for the sanction that radiates from the alien and especially from an alien culture. Certainly, there are learning processes taking place between cultures as soon as the stage of an "intercultural dialogue" is reached. However, one has as little control over such sanctions as one has over wonder, madness or love. As to such upheavals, one can only yield to them or withdraw from them.

Singular events do not arise only from an inevitable demand, but they also appear with an unreachable (*Nachträglichkeit*), as *deferred actions* that undermine the primacy of an originary presence. The presence is not nothing – as a good many postmodern total dissipaters believe – but it is not satisfied with itself. Responding takes place here and now, but it begins elsewhere. According to Derrida, the *Nachträglichkeit* of what we become aware only *après coup* leads to the fact that the originary appears only "by a replacement," namely supported by supplements that drag an endless series of "originary repetitions" behind them. The same *Nachträglichkeit* has to be attributed to those traumatic accidents that are only graspable in their after-effects as Freud shows in the Wolfman's childhood story. If one would speak, as Habermas does,<sup>17</sup> of a mere communicative distortion, one would be playing down the importance of what is at stake here. One would be overlooking the fact that the establishment of a communicative field takes place just as little by communicative arrangement – as the constitution of a country is itself introduced conforming to the constitution and as its compliance is integrated into the sections of the constitution. The foundation of an order is an event that does not function as a part of the order it makes possible. In this respect each birth which opens a new world has something of a rebirth, since it is only apprehensible in retrospect. Thus freedom means the ability to begin not absolutely with oneself but somewhere else. Whoever believes she is to be able to begin with herself only repeats what already exists; thus one does exactly not begin. Responding means to renounce a first – and consequently also a last – word.

Going hand in hand with the temporal deferment of demand and response is an unavoidable *asymmetry* that throws out of balance the traditional dialogue orientated towards common goals and following common rules, and it also leaves behind moral demands for equality such as those found in the Golden Rule. As Levinas shows, this asymmetry does not depend upon the fact that in an ongoing dialogue rules are distributed unequally, rather the asymmetry depends upon the fact that demand and response do not converge. Between question and answer there is just as little consensus as between request and fulfillment. Both collide as do two glances that meet. Meeting the claim of the Other's

demand and giving the gift of an answer get on the track of mutual giving and taking only when one's own contribution and that of the Other are considered in the light of a Third who draws comparisons and equalizes what has become unequal. The viewpoint of the Third, which guarantees law and justice, is in a certain manner indispensable. Insofar as in discourse and action forms are repeated and rules or laws are applied, there is always some Third person or instance that transgresses individual standpoints and perspectives. However, by subjecting the Other's demand to a universal law and by thus *equalizing what is not equal*, justice always contains a moment of injustice. The attempt to produce a definitive symmetry between the proper and the alien, and to make both equal to each other, would be in the end similar to the attempt to balance present and past, waking and sleeping, or life and death – as if one could cross the threshold that separates one from the other in either direction just as one liked. But the alien does not allow this; it behaves like ideas that occur to us, like obsessions that haunt us, like dreams from which we never fully awake. It originates from an irrevocable once upon a time and from an irrevocable elsewhere.

Some last words about the creativity of our responding. Obviously there are answers at hand, embedded in the normality of customs and morals. But whenever and wherever the order of things and words is shaken, there opens a gap between the Other's provocation we are confronted with and the production we achieve ourselves. Here we run into the paradox of a *creative response* which resembles Merleau-Ponty's paradox of creative expression.<sup>18</sup> The response is creative as a response, i.e., as a form of saying and doing which begins elsewhere, yet without being grounded in a given sense or in existing rules. Creative responses are responses which are not pre-given, neither in the realm of things nor in the realm of words. Thus responding runs over a small ridge which separates bondage (*Hörigkeit*) from arbitrariness (*Beliebigkeit*). That means: while responding we do invent, to some extent, that *which* we respond, but we do not invent that *which* we are responding to.

# Phenomenology Today:

## The Schuwer SPEP Lectures 1998-2002

### Lectures by

**Rudolf Bernet**  
**Bernhard Waldenfels**  
**Dennis J. Schmidt**  
**Adriaan T. Peperzak**  
**David Farrell Krell**

### Preface by

**David L. Smith, C.S.Sp.**

### Edited by

**Daniel J. Martino**

**Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center**  
**Duquesne University - Gumberg Library**  
**Pittsburgh, PA - 2003**

Published by  
The Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh,  
PA

© 2003

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any  
manner whatsoever without written permission except in  
the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles  
and reviews.

For information, address Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, Gumberg  
Library, Duquesne University, 600 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15282

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Phenomenology today : the Schuwer Spep lectures, 1998-2002  
/ papers by Rudolf Bernet ... [et al.] ; edited by Daniel  
J. Martino.-- 1st American pbk. ed.  
p. cm.

"Revised papers from the Andre Schuwer Memorial Lectures  
presented at the annual meetings of the Society of  
Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (1998-2002)."  
Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-9706886-6-0 (pbk.)

1. Phenomenology--Congresses. I. Bernet, Rudolf. II.  
Martino, Daniel J. III. Society of Phenomenology and  
Existential Philosophy. B829.5 .P489 2003 142'.7--dc21

2003014161

040519

Cover Art: Roseanna Ward, [Rosie4art@yahoo.com](mailto:Rosie4art@yahoo.com)

Book Design and Layout: Christine DeJidas

