

KANT'S FOURTH ANTINOMY AND THE ODYSSEY OF LEVINAS'S SUBJECT

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Abstract

This article is focused on a problem of self-identity raised by Emmanuel Levinas. The author starts from assuming that Levinas created a new concept of identity not reducible to anything elaborated in Western thought. Nevertheless, Levinas uses Kant's fourth antinomy as a starting point. Kant, as well as Edmund Husserl, was concerned with a transcendental subject. Georg Hegel and Jean-Paul Sartre considered the problem of personal identity as the problem of self-consciousness, namely as the possibility of consciousness to return to itself (*pour soi*). Levinas on the other hand opposes a possibility of such a return. He invites his philosophical subject to leave itself for a permanent journey without a possibility of return. The article deals with an issue of how this new identity as substitution of oneself for the other (*autrui*), as a hostage to the other, could be theoretically related to Kant's fourth antinomy. The author comes to a conclusion that by the use of this antinomy, Levinas helped his philosophical subject to free itself from the bonds of sequence of time. This new subject, liberated from the dynamical sequence of time, needs the otherness of the other person because the otherness of a subsequent moment could not be included into the lonely subject. Thus Levinas supplemented the issue of time with the concept of sociability. He states that time is created socially. By this act of thought Levinas addresses his prephilosophical sources that can be found in the novels of Dostoyevsky. Such fundamental dimensions of this new Levinas's subject as vulnerability, passivity, submission to obsession and persecution by the other, could not be derived from the tradition of Western thought that deals with the issue of personal identity.

Keywords: Levinas, Dostoyevsky, Kant's fourth antinomy, identity of the subject, personal identity, the other.

Introduction

Kant's fourth antinomy considers the problem of the unconditionally necessary being. The thesis declares: the unconditionally necessary being belongs to the world either as its part or as its cause. The antithesis contradicts: no such unconditionally nec-

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essary being exists either inside or outside the world as its cause. The proof of both thesis and antithesis follows from an assumption that the sensually comprehensible world as an entirety of all phenomena also includes a sequence of changes. The antithesis states that the unconditionally necessary being would not itself have the beginning and thus would contradict the dynamical law of determination of all phenomena in time (Kant, 1982: 339). How to escape the dynamical law of condition always precedent in time, leading to the unavoidable postulate of unconditionally necessary being declared by the thesis?

This question is merely introductory. The central question of this investigation is different: why does Levinas yet twice turns to this fourth Kantian antinomy in his work *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (*Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, 1974)? And how come this antinomy serves for him as a springboard towards the problem of subject's identity? Intriguing indeed is another rather enigmatic phrase found in this work:

«Self-consciousness is a way to return. But Odyssey is also an adventure, a history of endless encounters. However in his native land, Ulysses disguised himself by false outside. His coherent speech concealed his distinguished identity but he could not escape an animal's sense of smell». (*La conscience de soi est un chemin du retour. Mais l'Odyssée a été aussi une aventure, une histoire de rencontres innombrables. Dans son pays natal Ulysse revient dissimulé sous des faux dehors. Les discours cohérents qu'il sait tenir dissimulent une identité qui s'en distingue, mais dont la signification échappe au flair animal.*) (Levinas, 1978: 129).

A dog recognised Ulysses upon his return. With this example Levinas illustrates the above mentioned point that his postulated ideal subject's vulnerability, susceptibility, nakedness, -cern and concern for the other is anyhow irreducible to or derivable from the appearance of the other. (*Elle est vulnérabilité, susceptibilité, dénudation, cernée et concernée par autrui, irréductible à l'apparaître d'autrui.*) (Levinas, 1978: 129). Does Ulysses' dog come to be a symbolic archetype of Levinas's subject? Why did this becoming of the subject require the antinomy questioning the dynamical sequence of time?

Time and subject's liberation

It would seem that the first thesis Levinas seeks to prove in the text of *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* while turning to Kant is this: by his fourth antinomy, Kant had proven the impossibility to connect being with the sequence of time. (*Kant en a montré l'impossibilité dans l'antithèse de la 4ème Antinomie.*) (Levinas, 1978: 22) Kant's fourth antinomy allows Levinas to explain the fundamental concepts, which meet a reader in the title of the book. What does 'otherwise than being' mean (*Autrement qu'être*)? What does 'beyond essence' (*au-delà de l'essence*) mean? Levinas formulates the question in a different way: how come space and time turn to ruins in order to free the subjectivity from its

essence? When time is temporalized (*la temporalisation du temps*) depending on whether it signifies being or nothing, life or death, it also signifies the beyond being (*au-delà de l'être*) and non-being (*ne-pas-être*). The difference of identity (*la différence de l'identique*) is also the appearance of difference. However, time is also a reward for all mistakes and steps: through return, through remembrance, through history. Nothing is lost in the sequence of time through return, remembrance, history; everything is in the present, everything is represented, everything is denoted and inscribed, or synthesized or conjoined; everything is crystalized into some kind of substance. Levinas notes that such returning of time when no time being lost or left out, signals a certain transcendental diachrony (*une diachronie transcendente*). Levinas raises a question of meaning of this diachrony. According to Levinas, this beginning of pre-original past (*passé pré-originel*) manifests itself in the presence.

The relationship of the present, and also of time in general, with subject's identity, with the establishing of I, is consistently discussed by Levinas in his early work *Existence and Existents* (*De l'existence à l'existant*, 1947).

The present is a the disregard towards history. In it the infinity of time or eternity breaks and then regenerates. He states that the presence always emerges only from itself and maintains the relationship only with itself. According to Levinas, time itself denies the images of flow and stream, which are usually used in attempts to explain it. These images are applicable only to the entities in time, but not to time itself. Time is not flowing the way a river does. However, the present moment as a certain standstill of a blink enables the establishment of subject. The blink is a realization of existence and at the same time – a realization of subject. Every blink is a beginning and birth. It is in no way related either to the past or to the future. It is related only to being. Precisely such phenomenological analysis of the blink allowed Levinas to pull it out from the usual sequence of time dialectics. Philosophical analysis has always inevitably associated the problem of emergence in time with the cause. However, in Levinas's analysis, the blink itself conceals the mystery of created time. It emerges from itself. However, the present in Levinas's analysis falls into its own trap, although it becomes free from the past. It becomes subordinated to being, and the subject – along with it. «I» is stuck in the present, as it always inevitably has to return into itself. The endlessness of existence included in the blink turns into condemnation, when freedom freezes as if in a winter landscape. «I» can forget itself only in a dream. A dream is a modality of being, when being steps out of itself and frees itself from its own influence. But the awakening though is inevitable. The return of the present «I» to itself is a manifestation of «I» that is already chained to itself, doubled by itself. Therefore, the subject left on its own in the present and detected by Levinas who called it an identical subject, frees itself from the past and the future yet remains dependant on itself. To be «I», says Levinas, means not just to be for oneself but also to be with oneself. Levinas recalls the mythical character Orestes, who claimed being repeatedly saved from himself (see:

Левинас, 2000: 55). The Odyssey of the subject contrived by Levinas is also a certain attempt of «I» to be saved from itself. Instead of «I», which moves in time, Levinas proposes «I» as a ferment of the present time. Levinas speaks about the time, which is not a dialectically consequential motion, which is neither ecstasy nor duration. The time of «I», says Levinas, doesn't require the permanence of being but the disentanglement of the knot. In his book *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas also speaks about the knot. The subjectivity is namely the knot (*le noeud*) as well as the dénouement (*le denouement*) – knot or dénouement – essence as well as otherness of essence (*de l'autre de l'essence*). However, according to Levinas, the subject in its loneliness can not provide the time with dialectic. It can not disentangle this knot. Traditional philosophy, Bergson and Heidegger included, spoke of time either as of purely external to the subject (time – object) or as of fully belonging to the subject. However, the discussion was about a lonely subject. Completely lonely «I» monad already contained time. The subject had been experiencing its freedom in the indeterminacy of being, which ends the blink denying itself as another blink approaches. But Levinas sends his subject off in another direction.

Tracking Levinas' thought, it is most unclear for some time how he will leap from the problem of dynamical time consequence to the issue of subject's identity as its sociability. These seem to be the registers of the different modes of philosophical thinking. Levinas performs the move of thought along the following lines. Time, Levinas says, can not emerge within the lonely subject. It cannot deny itself, it lacks nothingness. The absolute otherness of another moment cannot be contained in the subject itself. The otherness calls for the other subject.

The leap has been performed. Now it has to be solidified. Levinas performs this move very bravely. Is sociability not only the source of our images of time but also time itself, asks Levinas rhetorically. The time gets created, it is created precisely by my relation with the other. Therefore it does not become an object of observation. Dialectics of time becomes a dialectic link with the other, i. e. a dialogue that cannot be comprehended in terms of the lonely subject. In order to create time, the other person becomes simply necessary for Levinas's subject. The other is not just my alter ego. «It is what I am not: it is weak if I am strong; it is poor, it is "a widow and an orphan"» (Левинас, 2000: 60). Thus in his work *Existence and Existents*, Levinas gradually shifts from the time problem and approaches the outskirts of personal identity and otherness of the other as well as his created utopia of sociability. But here he halts. In the text of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, he more thoroughly discusses the question, which path does the subject take seeking its identity. Precisely here the concept of subject's identity as substitution (*la substitution*) emerges. Yet the fundamental Levinas' investigation – *Totality and Infinity* (*Totalité et infini*, 1961) – steps in between them. The concept of personal identity presented by Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* is akin to Martin Heidegger's concept of the subject thrown into the world as existence (Dasein):

«I is me myself, me here, through me, my habitation, my immanence to the world. My sensibility is here» (*Je suis moi-même, je suis ici, chez moi, habitation, immanence au monde. Ma sensibilité est ici.*) (Levinas, 1971:146).

The subject experiences its identity as joy (*jouissance*) of being in the world. Life is the love for life, says Levinas.

New structure of the subject's self-consciousness

However in the book *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, phenomenology of love for life gives place to the primal and initial responsibility. The perspective of subject's identity also changes. Here Levinas included a chapter called Substitution (*La Substitution*), a text published six years earlier in 1968. In this chapter, Levinas disputes with the presuppositions of Georg Hegel's and Jean-Paul Sartre's conception of personal identity as identity of consciousness to itself (*pour soi*). Levinas names this identification of subject with consciousness, which was favoured by classical idealism, the phenomenon of subject's reoccurrence (*la récurrence*). «I» in itself (*moi en soi-même*) is compared by Levinas to a sound brought back by its own echo (Levinas, 1978: 162). In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas's subject has a home where it can open the door for the other. It can close the door for the other but it can also hospitably welcome the other, and yet still return back after leaving for the otherness of the other. However we could say that in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* he sends his subject out into eternal journey. Levinas allows his subject to return back only for a short while, having returned to itself it can not stay here. One could say that such a subject is Odysseus who lost his Ithaca as a point stabilizing his journey. He is without fatherland (*sans patrie*), says Levinas. On the other hand, he had also lost the time when he escaped the dynamical sequence of time that enchained him. The journey of this subject also becomes super-temporal. What chases the subject off to the eternal voyage? Levinas replies: responsibility for the other preceding every action or move of consciousness. Therefore, the structure of this responsibility bears no resemblance to the structure of subject's self-consciousness (*conscience de soi*) described within classical identity of the subject. Here Levinas's subject doesn't form itself. He is already formed by its absolute passivity.

In order to describe this identity of the subject as passivity, Levinas invokes the concept of obsession, irreducible to consciousness. This obsession always transcends consciousness, even if the consciousness is penetrated by it. The obsession is always alien to consciousness, as disequilibrium, as delirium (*comme déséquilibre, comme délire*) (Levinas, 1978: 159). Doesn't it happen that Levinas's subject is simply chased away from home by its obsessive feverish consciousness and is unable to return back because it is unable to find the way home? Therefore the subject can never after become identical to itself in a classical sense of this word. It can never be at ease in itself and rest when being identical

to itself. But Levinas does not describe this new unclosed inner anarchy of the subject in terms of intentionality of consciousness. The consciousness of Levinas's subject consents to the influence of responsibility for the other prior to emergence of any image, regardless of itself. It consents to persecution. And one could say that this very other sends Levinas's subject out into a journey of no return. Yet according to Levinas, this very obsession, this very submission to persecution by the other is a real solidarity with the other.

It is very hard to theoretically unfold this Odyssey of the subject exposed by Levinas in terms of Western rationalistic ethics. We will not find the concept of obsessive passivity as submission to persecution by the other in the works of Levinas's teachers – Edmund Husserl or Martin Heidegger. Its traces would be also hard to track in Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, although it can be strongly considered a source of the conception of responsibility as dialogicality. «All Israel are responsible for one another», wrote Buber. And Levinas repeated him. But after having repeated, he went further. One could say, he didn't even go further, he returned. He came back to the times of his early youth. These insights drift into his late works from the earliest prephilosophical impressions he mentions in his interview book *Ethics and Infinity* (*Ethique et infini*, 1982), in particular from a classical Russian novel, especially from one phrase elaborated in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*:

«We all are guilty for everything, for everyone and against everyone, and I am guilty more than the others».

Levinas quotes it in *Ethics and Infinity* (Levinas, 1994: 204–205). In chapter called «Phenomenology and Transcendence» from his book *Of God Who Comes to Mind* (1982), Levinas continues to develop his fundamental presuppositions about the subject's identity comprehended through the responsibility of the subject becoming a hostage of the other, replacing the other by itself as a reply to a call of the other.

«Irreplaceable in responsibility, I cannot hide from the face of the neighbour without failing, guilt or without complexes: here I am devoted to the other without a possibility of retreat» (Levinas, 2001: 188).

Levinas's expression «here I am» (*me voici*) repeatedly mentioned in this text, attracted the attention of Jacques Derrida (see: Levinas, 2001: 188a). Resounding Levinas, Derrida wrote a text where he contemplates on the grammatical presence of the expression *me voici*, which manifests itself not only during the moment of pronunciation but also during the moment of reading (*voici en ce moment*). Derrida associates this expression with another Levinas's conceptually important phrase *il aura obligé*, i. e. «one shall be obliged». Derrida notes that Levinas doesn't say «here I am» himself but quotes it and therefore thematizes what cannot be thematized. On the other hand, neither the grammar nor the language nor the context is sufficient in order to define this ex-

pression. Impossible to replace by any other, the expression «here I am» is always used in the present. However, a person who says «here I am», ceases to be presented to itself as the subject that presents itself. In such expression «I» does not meet with «self» anymore (Derrida, 1991: 18). Derrida associates his further deconstruction of this phrase with the extracts from Biblical «Song of Songs» where «I» becomes a woman, as well as with his previously favourite theme of gift. Our attention is drawn to how Levinas himself develops and accentuates his thought in the above mentioned text. He not only recalls Moses asking «And who are we?» and Abraham answering «I am dust and ashes» but also raises a rhetorical question himself:

«What does this call mean, during which the core of the subject is resolved and it is not provided with any form that could embrace it?» (Levinas, 2001: 189).

The not indicated «I», repeats Levinas, says «here I am». Right below Levinas once again quotes his favourite phrase from Dostoyevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*:

«We all are guilty for everything, for everyone and against everyone, and I am guilty more than the others» (Levinas, 2001:190).

Would it be reasonable to reproach Derrida that he, being very attentive towards the read and deconstructed text, had never noticed any references to Dostoyevsky in Levinas's texts? In our opinion, Dostoyevskian allusions of Levinas are hard to comprehend for the Western interpreters of Levinas. This would require to have this purely Russian godsearch peripeteia embedded in bones and brain, what, in our view, had happened to Levinas. Precisely these prephilosophical senses are structuring his entire ethical system. Robert Bernasconi in his book *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas* mentions the fact that Levinas likes to quote Dostoyevsky, yet carefully raises another hypothesis that perhaps the notion of persecution hailed into Levinas's conception of the identity of subject from his extratextual personal experience of being a persecuted Jew (Bernasconi, 2002: 245). The book is indeed dedicated to millions of people of different confessions and nations, who fell victims to anti-Semitism. The source is really prephilosophical, however it is slightly different. The focus should be slightly different. It is not the other who persecutes me as an aggressor persecuting a helpless fugitive. It is me who says «here I am» and unconditionally permits to be persecuted and obsessed. Permission to be persecuted and obsessed by the other is a basic posture of Sonechka Marmeladova (from *Crime and Punishment*) and Count Myshkin (from *Idiot*), Levinas's favourite characters of Dostoyevsky's novels. This is better perceived by Levinas's biographers. Salomon Malka notes that up till the end of his life, Levinas remained a faithful reader of Dostoyevsky's books (Malka, 2002: 27). Marie-Anne Lescouret discusses Levinas's sympathies with Russian literature – Tolstoy, Turgenev, Lermontov, Pushkin – and even accurately quotes Levinas's favourite expression of Dostoyevsky, contextually

noting that these Dostoyevskian insights that lead to a terrible responsibility (*la terrible responsabilité*) have little in common with a strict dialectics of Vilnius Jews and a sobriety of Lithuanian thinking (Lescourret, 1994: 43). In our opinion, Lescourret also correctly perceives that this interest of Levinas proclaims his openness not only to the Jewish tradition of dialogue but also to the Christianity, by comprehending it in a Dostoyevskian manner – radically and uncompromisingly. Interlinks between Dostoyevsky's characters and premises of attitude towards values in Levinas's philosophy were not yet widely analyzed in the philosophical critique.

After an attentive review of a chapter in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* called *Substitution (La Substitution)*, aiming to find Levinas's theoretical allies or soul mates who helped him to withstand the conception of personal identity as identity of consciousness to itself (*pour soi*) developed by Hegel and Sartre, we find that Levinas mentioned phenomenologists Eugen Fink and Jeanne Delhomme, who considered that a necessary condition for the world is freedom without responsibility, freedom of play. On the other hand, Levinas immediately opposes this conception with the notion of responsibility without any prechoice, a priori with regard to freedom, with the notion of human fraternity. A unique passivity or even passion of a person is a constant event of submission to the other, the substitution of oneself for the other. According to Levinas, this submission is neither nothing nor a product of transcendental imagination. Substitution is not an act, it is passivity, which cannot be converted into an act of being oneself but rather into a being otherwise than being. To be otherwise than being means to be disinterested while taking responsibility for the collapse and destruction of the other: «to be oneself in a state of being a hostage is to always have one degree of responsibility more than the others, to take responsibility for the responsibility of the other».

The character of Count Myshkin portrayed in Dostoyevsky's novel *Idiot* with his intuitive sensibility bears a close resemblance to Ulysses' dog noticed by Levinas. He allows to be obsessed by the others. Neighbours do not consider this posture to be obvious. «Why are you humiliating yourself and putting yourself lower than the others? Why have you damaged everything inside you, why can't you have pride?» (Dostoyevskis, 1971: 29) – Aglaya zestfully tries to revert Myshkin back to himself. Why does she try to dissuade Myshkin from being who he is? Why does she denounce Myshkin and is ashamed of Myshkin's humility? She follows the concept of personal identity as identity with self-consciousness, which is traditional in Western culture. By the help of Myshkin's character, Dostoyevsky creates a symbolism of personal identity, different from traditional one. Myshkin embodies the stand that later Levinas will call an «infinite passion for responsibility» (*passion infinie de la responsabilité*) (Levinas, 1978: 179).

In the chapter *Substitution*, Levinas also discusses a possibility of substituting oneself for *the other*. The uniqueness of the subject, according to Levinas, is its ability to feel guilty for what others do or for the

suffering of the others, to feel responsible for what they do and for their suffering. The uniqueness of person is determined by the very fact of taking the blame for the other. It is passivity and vulnerability. Such responsibility witnesses not a concurrence with oneself, not a withdrawal into oneself but an ability to depart from oneself, an ability to meet the other and to feel persecuted and affected by this meeting upon returning back to oneself. After returning back to myself through this newly discovered identity, I find myself radically guilty. «The more just I am – the more guilty I am» (*plus je suis juste – plus je suis coupable*) (Levinas 1978: 178) – such is the formula of this new personal identity discovered by Levinas. I am I only through the others. I am I only after substituting myself for the others. This responsibility that establishes Levinasian personal identity is not an occurrence undergone by the subject. It precedes essence and freedom. I have committed no crime, yet I am always to blame – I am persecuted. It is a passive identity. On the other hand, it is manifested through the ability to say «here I am». Such responsibility for the others never permits a person to fully return to himself/herself. This return to myself establishes my identity only by affecting the principle of presence in me. Such personality becomes incapable of returning only to itself and showing interest only in itself. It realizes that it exists only because of the other and through the other. This new identity provides a possibility of sacrifice for the other (*sacrifice pour autrui*). It is a sacrifice without any mystique. In this sacrifice, passivity and activity coincide (Levinas, 1978: 182).

This substitution of the other makes the subject a hostage, constantly responding to the call of the other. Levinas calls this turn an awakening. My responsibility against my will is a way for the other to fall on me (or to discomfort me). Proximity of the neighbour is my responsibility for him; to get closer means to be my brother's keeper and to be my brother's keeper means to be his hostage. Identity is obtained only by substituting the other, only by being able to say in the way Rimbaud said: «I is another» (*J'est un autre*). One of the last scenes of Dostoyevsky's *Idiot* in a particularly suggestive way demonstrates the notion that Levinas could have had in mind. Count Myshkin turns himself into Rogozhyn's hostage, identifies himself with his murderer's guilt and covers his face with tears before going mad together with him. When creating Count Myshkin's character, Dostoyevsky endowed him with even more power of forgiveness than was intended in the Gospel. The Gospel encourages forgiveness if a sinner repents. Count Myshkin was eager to forgive Rogozhyn who attempted to kill him even before Rogozhyn asked him for forgiveness. Even without making sure that he will ask. Even without waiting for apology. Even knowing that he will not hear any apology. He was eager to protect his neighbour with his fraternal love from suffering afflicted by the painful awareness of the act. Count Myshkin tries to take Rogozhyn out of a gloomy state of hostility. He seeks to restore and retain a warm fraternal relationship. He soothes his adversary consistently and tenderly: «So why our mutual anger has to remain?» (Dostojevskis, 1971: 58–59).

Count Myshkin's posture witnesses what Levinas in his texts referred to as asymmetry of responsibility. Such responsibility precedes any act in respect of the other as well as any action. It means devotion to the other preceding devotion to oneself. It is as if I was responsible for the other person's death. This responsibility witnesses my guilt without any alibi. It emerges prior to my freedom and prior to any present state. In *Ethics as First Philosophy*, Levinas states: «It is a fraternity that is evidenced through a total isolation» (Levinas, 1998: 98). It is a responsibility for the neighbour, for another human, for a stranger, for a drifter, to whom I am in no way related ontologically. It is a love without eros, emerging from a bad conscience (*mauvaise conscience*) able to be afraid of injustice more than of death. Such love prefers to assume suffering rather than inflict injustice (Levinas, 1998: 105–106).

The purpose of this article was to try to disprove the assumption raised by Bernasconi that the concept of persecution might have come into Levinas's texts from real historic experience of Jewish persecution by showing that there is a fundamental difference between persecutions (whether the other is persecuting me as a helpless victim or whether I allow to be persecuted by the other). It is obvious, however, that another problem arises here: whether by allowing the other to persecute me, allowing to be obsessed by the other, I do not become a silent accomplice of his aggression? After all, Levinas's favourite characters Sonechka and Count Myshkin felt unconditional responsibility for the murderers (Raskolnikov and Rogozhyn), who did not grieve for their guilt as much as they did, even losing themselves (Count Myshkin finally relapses into illness). In the utopian ethical vision of Levinas, this question remains beyond time. He emphasized the very model of sacred ideal, the very structure of this posture that does not conform to the questions «wherefore?» and «why?». Such questions and answers would require returning to the chain of causes and effects in the dynamical sequence of time. And Kant – we quote Levinas once again – had demonstrated the impossibility to relate being with the sequence of time (*Kant en a montré l'impossibilité dans l'antithèse de la 4ème Antinomie*) (Levinas, 1978: 22). After the disengagement from the bonds of time, Levinas's obsessed philosophical subject becomes an eternal wanderer, which would not even try to return to itself.

Conclusions

1. Levinas has further developed a possibility to question the dynamical sequence of time from the theoretical corollaries of Kant's fourth antinomy seeking to free his philosophical subject from the causal bonds postulated by time.

2. By postulating that time cannot appear inside the lonely subject as it cannot deny itself and as it lacks nothingness, Levinas seeks to prove that the absolute otherness of another moment cannot lie within the subject itself. The otherness calls for another subject. Thus Levinas steps from the problem of time to the conception of subject's sociability.

3. In our opinion, the establishment of identity of Levinas's subject was mostly influenced by the concept of human fraternity, formulated in Dostoyevsky's novels. Levinas endowed it with a philosophical significance by naming this move a «substitution». The unique passivity or even passion of the subject is a constant event of submission to the other, of substituting oneself for the other. According to Levinas, this submission is neither nothing nor a product of transcendental imagination. The substitution is not an act, it is passivity, which cannot be converted into an act of being oneself but rather into a being otherwise than being. This subject, passive and obsessed by the other is an eternal Odysseus never returning back to oneself and inconcurrent with oneself. It frees itself not only from the oppression of dynamical sequence of time detected in Kant's fourth antinomy but also from the concurrence with itself. Therefore the assumption of possible personal identity revealed by Levinas contradicts to Hegel's and Sartre's concept of self-consciousness and has no sources and analogues in Western philosophical tradition.

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