NOTES

Introduction

1. Translations of works by Plato and Aristotle are my own. Translations of all other
texts are by the cited translator. Page references separated by a slash are first to the En-
glish, then to the French text. The Socrates referred to throughout is the Platonic Socrates
of the dialogues not the historical Socrates. As a result, some views that originated with
Plato will be referred to as Socrates’s views since they are views attributed to Socrates in
the dialogues.

2. Compare Matthew Abbott, “Epistemological Humility: Knowledge After Levinas’s
Radical Separation.”

3. For similar treatments of the history of Levinas’s references to Plato, see Adriaan

4. For discussion of the summary, see Peperzak’s, “Platonism of Emmanuel Levinas.”

5. For external support for this interpretation, see Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics
1.6, where, after a short discussion of metaphysics—about the equivocity of the good—
Aristotle similarly does not go to the most fundamental metaphysical level. He states
that further precision on the topic belongs to another part of philosophy (1096b30–31).
I argue the other part of philosophy is the discussion of being as potentiality and actuality


Chapter 1

1. I was fortunate to hear Stewart Umphrey discuss the Symposium in 1980 and was in-
fluenced by his approach and ideas. My approach to the Phaedrus shares a stress on human
vulnerability with Martha Nussbaum’s interpretation of them in The Fragility of Goodness.

2. That this vulnerability, figuratively understood as violence, is not violence in an ordi-
nary, concrete sense, is clarified by a comment Levinas makes to an audience member
during an interchange at the University of Leyden in 1975: “By vulnerability, I am at-
tempts to describe the subject as passivity” (OG 133/83).

3. The view that Levinas thinks openness brings something good to the one who is
open is counter to the more common assumption that, for Levinas, my responsible rela-
tion to the other fundamentally does violence to me. It is my view, counter to this, that
for Levinas, though my relation to the other is all about the other, nonetheless it brings a
good also for me. This view of his is more evident in Totality and Infinity, with terms like
marvel, new dimension, and teaching, but also found in Otherwise Than Being, specifically
in the concept of glory, despite the later work’s greater emphasis on responsibility and its
backgrounding of desire, a term central to Totality and Infinity. The concept of glory, in
a Hebraic register, denotes a type of immanent good. Why Levinas emphasizes respon-
sibility and backgrounds glory is one of the main topics of chapter 7, “Glory and Shine.”
The chapter also discusses a parallel foregrounding and backgrounding found in Levinas’s
“Loving the Torah More Than God,” where acceptance of the withdrawn God is in the foreground but gives one the standing to ask for a little of God’s presence, and maintains that a similar pattern is found in one interpretive strain in Jewish thought, a strain in which the holy is emphasized and glory mentioned in hushed tones to de-emphasize it.

4. There are other frames. One of Derrida’s ways of expanding Levinas’s legacy is by utilizing many frames. I shall leave delineation of that extraordinary set of expansions to other discussions.

5. This chapter refers to Levinas’s treatment of ideas in Totality and Infinity, the earlier of his two major works.

6. Hybris has a variety of meanings all suggesting a disposition to overstep limits: wantonness, arrogance, insolence, insult, violation, assault. The verbal form, hybrizein, can mean to rape someone.

7. At 246b1–2, Socrates refers to the charioteer as the ruler of the soul: “the ruler holds the reins of the pair [ho archōn synóridos hēniochei].” At 247c7–8, he calls nous the soul’s governor or helmsman: “really existing being, visible alone to reason, governor of the soul [psychēs kybernētēi monōi theatē nōi].”

8. Since I see Socrates making one-to-one comparisons—moderation and shame to hybris, genuine reputation to boasting, driven by commands and speech alone to deaf and barely yielding to whip and goads—I translate alēthinēs doxēs (253d7) as “of true reputation.” Love of honor (philotimia) is left out of the comparison due to the fact that Socrates is describing the virtue of the good and bad horses so that the sense is: though he is a lover of honor, nonetheless he has moderation and shame.

9. Though this comes from a slightly earlier part of his speech, in it, Socrates is talking about a lover (249e4).

10. Regarding the boy, Socrates refers to “the flow of beauty going back into the beautiful one through the eyes” (255c4).

11. In chapter A.2, Lingis translates rupture as breach (TI 35/5) while in the second reference given here, he translates it as rupture (TI 278/255).

12. See also TI 197/171.

13. As noted before, Levinasian absolute transcendence is distinct from Plato’s transcendence of a whole over its parts.

14. The French “le creuse” could have a stronger meaning than “deepens it” such as “hollows it out” or “excavates it.”

15. This calls to mind the other who threatens my integrity in Sartre’s Being and Nothingness and in the lordship and bondage section of Hegel’s Phenomenology.

16. Fecundity can be read as Levinas’s response to Heidegger’s being toward death and can instructively be read together with natality in Hannah Arendt’s The Human Condition as another such response and with Derrida’s survival (survivre) or legacy.

17. For ecstasy, see also TI 48/18 where Levinas states that metaphysics “excludes the implantation of the knowing being in the known being, the entering into the Beyond by ecstasy.” In a similar vein, Levinas rejects apostasy of the self: “But faced with this alterity the I is the same, merges with itself, is incapable of apostasy with regard to this surprising ‘self’” (TI 36/6).

18. The contrast is with Hegel’s universal identity that negates the heterogeneous. Levinas quotes Hegel: “but this which is distinguished, which is set up as unlike me, is immediately on its being distinguished no distinction for me” (TI 36–37/6–7). In “Love and Filiation,” Levinas says that in contrast to “knowledge which is suppression of alterity and
which, in the ‘absolute knowledge’ of Hegel, celebrates ‘the identity of the identical and the non-identical,’ alterity and duality do not disappear in the loving relationship” (LF 66).

19. As we will see in chapter 6, in Otherwise Than Being, Levinas refers to a “good violence” (OB 43/56).

20. As Sartre would maintain who, according to Levinas in his interview with Richard Kearney, interprets the other fundamentally as a threat. Levinas, “Ethics of the Infinite,” 182.

21. In Otherwise Than Being, being is adverbial.

22. Thanks to Antonio Calcagno for helpful comments on a previous version of this chapter.

Chapter 2

1. Gorgias states that rhetoric is the greatest good for human beings because it brings freedom and the power to rule over others in one’s own city (Grg. 452d5–8).

2. When Socrates directs the slave to draw an additional figure inside the original one, all the slave has to do to solve the geometrical problem of finding the double square is see that the new figure drawn is, in fact, the double square. Seeing that could, however, be understood to be an example of recollection as described in the Phaedrus where, as we have seen, it is defined as understanding what is said according to form, moving from multiple perceptions to what is gathered into one by reasoning (logismōi) (Phdr. 249b6–c4). Recollection, in other words, is, roughly, movement from perception to the conception or idea that is implicit in it. That is all the slave needs to do, make explicit what is implicit in what he sees.

3. When the topic of the sophists comes up, Meno begins to express some personal questions about which he would like to inquire: he admires Gorgias for not claiming to teach virtue but simply to make people clever speakers; he cannot tell whether the sophists are true teachers; and he wonders how good men ever come to be and whether there really are any. Meno’s genuine questioning about what really matters to him—how to get virtue—enables Socrates to argue that knowledge, since it is more lasting, is superior to true opinion (97c11–98a4). The discussion then devolves into a mush of statements, some of which contradict claims they have made before that pass Meno by without notice, for example, the claim that if virtue is wisdom, then it can be taught (98d10), and the claim that since virtue cannot be taught, it is not knowledge (99a7–8), when they had agreed that knowledge was achieved through recollection. Just about nothing of the argument has stayed, in a lasting form, in Meno’s mind. Meno remains the same. So the dialogue ends with the conclusion that virtue is true opinion and must come by divine allotment or fate, since it cannot come by knowledge. This parallels what Socrates probably thinks at the end of the dialogue about Meno himself, that if he is to achieve virtue, he would get it as a kind of divine gift and not through achieving knowledge, since he remains averse to or by disposition incapable of thinking for himself, that is, of recollecting.

4. Plato, like Homer, is fond of puns and wordplay. In the Meno, he plays on the similarity between the sound of Meno’s name and the word for remembering (mnēmōn, Menōn) to make fun of the fact that Meno is someone who remembers what he has heard rather than thinking. The title of the Meno means remaining, which is what Meno does—remain the same, not change at all in his tendency to say what he has heard rather than thinking for himself—as pointed out by Jacob Klein, A Commentary, 44, 186. The title of the dialogue on friendship, a kind of relationship, is “breaking up” or “dissolution” (Lysis).
5. More specifically, one would suppose, the form of the good, since if virtue is knowledge of forms, it would have to be knowledge of evaluative forms not just of any kind of form since Socrates makes it clear at 88a–b that he distinguishes the type of knowledge that virtue is, wisdom (*phronēsis*), from intelligence or quick thought (*eumathia*). Virtue, for Socrates then, is wisdom not mere intelligence or intellectual ability.

6. The claim that virtue is the ability to get good things is refuted by the claim that it would only be the ability to get good things justly, moderately, or piously. But Socrates says to Meno about the definition, “perhaps you speak well” (78c3–4), suggesting the definition is correct. What ability would be the ability to get good things? The answer would be knowledge or wisdom. The passage, thus, indicates Socrates’s own answer to the question, what is virtue.

7. “What is the subject most argued about by Chrysippus himself and Antipater in their disputes with the Academics? The doctrine that without assent there is neither action nor impulse, and that they are talking nonsense and empty assumptions who claim that, when an appropriate appearance occurs, impulse ensues at once without people first having yielded or given their assent.” Plutarch, *Self-Contradictions* 1057A, in Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 317.

8. In *Otherwise Than Being*, I become a hostage to the other (6/6), substitute myself for the other (6/6), am wounded by the other (15/18), am penetrated by the other (49/64), etc.


10. More literally, no longer inside the things of himself.

11. See chapter 1, note 7 in this volume.

12. Socrates does say that all nature is akin (*Meno* 81c9–d1).


15. He goes on in the passage to say that freedom is courage—a difference from Socrates according to whom it more centrally is wisdom.

16. Socrates’s point is similar to the views of Anglo-American philosophers who associate freedom not simply with the ability to act on our desires or evaluations but on our decisive commitments (Frankfurt) or strong evaluations (Taylor). See Stalley, “Plato’s Doctrine,” 149–51.

17. The phrase is preceded by an *if*, but the affirmation of the antecedent is assumed.

18. Translation mine.

19. Punctuation mine.

**Chapter 3**

1. See also *TI* 292/268; GP 67–68/112; EI 188.

2. Another answer, not discussed in this chapter, is found in Levinas’s critique of what he takes to be Plato’s understanding of need as mere lack.

3. The idea of creation is discussed also in *Otherwise Than Being* where it is connected to a variety of central concepts taken up and developed in that book such as absolute passivity. In that work, Levinas draws a contrast between the Aristotelian idea of prime matter as pure potentiality and Levinas’s idea of absolute passivity that, according to him, is related to the idea of creation (*OB* 110/140). This contrast between prime matter and absolute passivity is relevantly similar to the one stressed in this chapter between the eternal and the new.
4. In Totality and Infinity, Levinas speaks of openness—for example, of transcendence as “openness par excellence” (TI 193/167, my translation)—while in Otherwise Than Being he speaks of anarchy. The resonances of openness that are missing in anarchy (a term with its own resonances that openness lacks) are a good example of the benefits of not passing too quickly beyond Totality and Infinity in discussions of central Levinasian ideas.

5. For pregnancy, see Halperin, “Diotima a Woman,” 117, 137–42.

6. In the Phaedo, Apollodorus’s weeping at Socrates’s death causes everyone present but Socrates to break down (117d3–5).


11. A similar distinction is made by Renaissance Jewish philosopher Leone Ebreo (Judah Abravanel), who in his Dialogues on Love has Philo argue that truer and more unalloyed desire and love does not involve lack and gives as among his examples God’s love for his creatures and a father’s love for his child. Ebreo, Philosophy of Love, 180, 250–52. See also the new translation by Rossella Pescatori, forthcoming.

12. The interpretation I give of the good beyond being is my own. It is influenced by Klein’s discussion of the divided line (A Commentary) and by Seth Benardete’s discussion of the beautiful (“Introduction”).

13. To associate form only with eidos, the fourth level of the divided line, though useful for making verbal distinctions in this essay, is somewhat misleading since the mathematicals (third level), the eidoi or forms (fourth level), and the idea of the good (beyond the line) are all broadly speaking formal for Plato.


16. The interpretation of the Hippias Major that I give here is my own and has not been published elsewhere. Some other important recent interpretations are Paul Woodruff’s in his translation and commentary, Plato: Hippias Major (1982); David Sweet’s “Introduction to the Greater Hippias” (1987); Drew Hyland’s “The Question of Beauty in the Hippias Major” (2008); and Seth Benardete’s interpretation in the introduction to his book The Being of the Beautiful (1984). I read a version of Benardete’s interpretation before the book was published and am influenced by Benardete’s interpretation. I believe my interpretation is compatible with his though it develops most of the key ideas differently than he does. Woodruff’s and Sweet’s interpretations contain important ideas from which I have benefited, though my particular discussion of the dialogue’s drama is not found in their work. My interpretation importantly differs from Hyland’s about the role of definition in the dialogue. I see the dialogue as having an answer to the question, what is the beautiful. Hyland, to the contrary, doubts that Socrates “has as his serious goal in these dialogues to succeed in discovering an unimpeachable definition” (7–8) and thinks the Hippias Major, Symposium, and Phaedrus “give us good reasons to conclude that there cannot be an adequate articulation of the ‘essence’ of beauty itself” (17). Where Hyland maintains that there are difficulties in finding a comprehensive definition of beauty and so Socrates does not define it, I would say that Socrates has a definition that includes the central difficulty
about beauty—the central *aporía*—within it. There is something fundamentally puzzling about Platonic transcategorials, but the *aporía* does not make giving a definition impossible. Hyland also says that Plato’s topics are occasioned by an existential situation. I agree, but I think that is compatible with giving actual definitions. As stated in the introduction to this book, I take the dialogues to be combinations of *logos* and *ergon*—argument and action—and see no reason why drama precludes successful definition. That is not to say, of course, that every dialogue that attempts to give definitions is successful, but I do think that some of them are, for example, the *Meno* on virtue, the *Phaedrus* on eros, and the *Republic* on justice.

19. Daniel Gebhardt suggested this idea to me.
20. The doubling here is important and gives the reader an indication of what makes the form of beauty different than some other forms. Hippias cannot simply say “a maiden is beautiful” because some maidens are not. Nor can he simply say that something beautiful is beautiful without a mere redundancy. The forced doubling implies that beauty is not identical to the properties of a maiden nor are those properties wholly irrelevant to beauty in this case. The beauty of a maiden is in and through the maiden’s properties, but it is not simply identical to those properties or reducible to them. Beauty is in and through those properties but surpasses them, we could say, foreshadowing a point Socrates will hint at later in the dialogue.
21. For Hippias, according to Sweet, “Beauty is any beautiful thing,” “Introduction,” 345.
22. This is exaggeration since a good cosmetician will bring out what is already there not just hide some of what is there, but I am following Socrates’s understanding of cosmetics in the *Gorgias*.
23. Thanks to Silvia Benso and James D. Hatley for reading and critiquing a draft of an earlier version of this chapter.

Chapter 4
1. See Kirk and Raven, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 269, for this translation of fragment 3.
2. Translation emended.

Chapter 5
1. Derrida famously writes difference with an *a*: différence.
2. For “epiphany of the face,” see *TI* 22/51, 48/75, 145/171.
3. See, for example, 1081a14, a23, b21, etc. For discussion of the indeterminate dyad, see Benardete, *Encounters and Reflections*, chapter 7; Klein, *Greek Mathematics*, 80–83.
4. Benardete used to say the most important word in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* was *pós* (somehow).
7. Uniqueness, as a translation of *unicité*, is meant to convey singularity not possession of a set of properties possessed by nothing else.
8. For dénudation, see *OB* 64/81, 141/180, 181/228.
9. See, for example, *TI* 43/13–14, “to receive nothing of the other but what is in me” (regarding Socrates); 43/13–14, “to receive nothing, or to be free” (regarding Socrates); 51/22, “to receive from the other beyond the capacity of the I.”
10. Translation emended.
11. For similar comments, see Lingis, introduction to Otherwise Than Being, xxxii.
12. Translation emended (substituting Lord for Eternal).
13. Translation emended.
14. This remark presages Levinas’s extended discussion of the glory of the infinite in chapter 5.
15. See, for contrast, Husserl on retention and protention in internal time-consciousness.

Chapter 6
1. For the proportion, see Klein, A Commentary, 118–19.
2. Chaining true opinions down by “reasoning about why they are true” is one way of interpreting “aitias logismoi” (Meno 98a3–4).
4. Aristotle’s use of phronēsis to mean practical wisdom is a later development, though it is foreshadowed by the use of it in the Republic to mean knowledge of the good.
5. Or, at least, as an Athens is to a Jerusalem, as I indicate in what follows.

Chapter 7
1. Translation emended.
2. Translation emended to follow the note and Holy Scriptures.
3. Steve Reich’s translation in “Tehillim, Three Movements” (liner notes).
5. Translation emended.
6. Translation emended.
7. Chananya ben Teradyon, second century C.E., was head of Sichnin yeshiva in the Galilee.
8. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, a student of Rabbi Akiva, lived in the second century C.E.
10. Malbim, Remzei Hamishkan, in Plaut, The Torah: A Modern Commentary, 614. Rabbi Meir Leib ben Yechiel Michael Weiser, called Malbim, was a nineteenth-century Volhynian rabbi.
11. For discussion of the Isaiah references, see Eisenstadt, Driven Back, chapter 2.
12. OB 199/186n11.
13. Hence Levinas, in Otherwise Than Being, can refer to the other interchangeably as near or far, hither or beyond. As mentioned in chapter 6, if to relate to the other as other is to relate to him or her without a mediating term, relating to the other as other is relating to an other who is far, because not connected to us by any term, and near, because not separated from us by any term.
14. Woodruff, Plato’s Hippias Major, 53n73.
16. Thanks to Christopher Anderson for discussion of the idea of the body as a covering.