

Exteriority and Interiority of Interpretation –

An analysis of the ethics of interpretation in relation to Emmanuel Levinas' ethics

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Emmanuel Levinas presents in *Totalité et infini* (1961) a very interesting conception for analysing the ethical relation between human beings. He has not himself presented any theory of interpretation and hardly mentions the notion of interpretation, but his descriptions of ethics and his notions of the Other, alterity, and the same provide an interesting perspective to consider the ethics of interpretation. Levinas argued that he did not present an ethics, rather, he was seeking for the meaning of ethics.¹ Similarly I try to rethink what is *the ethical meaning of interpretation*? How can interpretation be considered as an ethical act in the Levinasian sense? Even though Levinas does not present any normative ethics he values in his description the exteriority and otherness, and criticizes the tendency to reduce otherness to something that one already knows. I shall consider whether interpretation is a relation where otherness is reduced to the same that one already knows, or whether there is a possibility to preserve the otherness of the Other? And furthermore, what would it mean to preserve otherness in interpretation?

Martin Heidegger has argued in *Sein und Zeit* (1926) that understanding and interpretation have a circular nature, which means that any interpretation which is to contribute understanding must already have understood what is to be interpreted.² Heidegger's argument can be interpreted in terms of the Levinasian conception that all our understanding and interpretation is a reduction of otherness to the same. But is this always the case in interpretation? Is interpretation doomed always to happen within the circle of understanding, as Heidegger has suggested? Or is there any possibility to understand Other and exteriority in their alterity? Is it possible to get out of the circle of understanding?

LEVINAS' IDEA OF ETHICS

Levinas' motif in *Totalité et infini* is to establish the primacy of the ethical upon which the other structures rest, for example ontological and aesthetical

structures.³ In his analysis the central concepts are Other (*l'Autrui*), other (*l'autre*), otherness (*l'alterité*), same (*le même*) and the notion of ethics. By the Other with a capital Levinas means another person and with the notion of other impersonal other.⁴ The impersonal other would express the idea of the other as an object. The notion of otherness signifies the strangeness and foreignness that cannot be mastered. With the notion of the *same*⁵ Levinas describes the egocentric tendency to possess, that everything belongs to me and everything is found in me.

Levinas criticizes the tendency, especially in the philosophical tradition, to reduce everything to the same, where the difference and strangeness of the Other is effaced.⁶ Levinas finds this primacy of the same in Socrates' thinking, in which the central principle is according to Levinas: "to receive nothing of the Other but what is in me."⁷ This idea is later manifest in René Descartes' method and Edmund Husserl's phenomenological method in the ideal of intuitive knowledge.⁸ But the main target of Levinas' critique is Martin Heidegger's notion of ontology, which he considers as subordinating the relationship with the Other to the relation with Being in general, and therefore it remains a totalitarian philosophy, where there is no place for ethics.⁹

Levinas defines ethics as a "*calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other.*"¹⁰ The Other for Levinas is always more than I can comprehend or master. He emphasizes the asymmetrical relation between the same and the Other: the Other is superior in respect to me and this superiority comes from the Other's transcendence. I cannot have any power over the Other, because he overflows every idea I can have of him.¹¹ The strangeness of the Other is irreducible to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, and therefore what I permit myself to demand of myself is not comparable with what I have the right to demand of the other.¹²

Levinas' main question in *Totalité et infini* is how can I coexist with the Other and still leave his otherness intact. How can the same enter into relationship with the Other without immediately divesting it of its alterity? Levinas' answer is that through language we can enter to an ethical relation with the Other that does not reduce the otherness of the Other. *Conversation (la parole)* and *discourse (le discours)* especially are an ethical way of being with others. Hence by speaking to the Other I enter into a relation with him and the other expresses his otherness through speaking that is addressed to me. According to Levinas, "[t]o approach

the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it."¹³ In conversation the I receives from the Other beyond the capacity of the I.

But can Levinas' idea of ethics and the relation between the same and the Other be applied to understanding the ethics of interpretation? For Levinas ethics can be accomplished in conversation, where there is a possibility to address my words to someone who can respond. But how is the ethicality preserved if there is no possibility for conversation with the Other? How can I interpret the other person and leave his otherness intact? For example, to whom we are responsible when we interpret Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*? What does responsibility for a dead person mean?

It seems on the surface that Levinas' notion of ethics concerns only active human relations with each other, but his idea of ethics can also be interpreted in a wider sense. Then Levinas' idea of ethics as a first philosophy reaches its radical meaning. Thus his notion of ethics does not only concern our relation to other people, but rather our relation to exteriority in general. Our epistemological relation to the outside is always already a relation where we are responsible for the outside. Our knowledge is a response to the outside that has affected us. Hence subject is in the service of the outside and not someone who actively molds it. This sort of description can be regarded as a description of an epistemological relation to exteriority. Why then does Levinas call this sort of relation ethical? Probably because he emphasizes the idea of boundless responsibility. Responsibility is enclosed in all our being and activities, even cognitive relations.¹⁴

J. Hillis Miller has considered ethicality in a similar way not only as a relation between human beings, but also as a relation to "things" and "matters". For example, in his book *The Ethics of Reading* Miller rejects the idea that interpretation is a reconstruction of the intended meaning of the author. Rather he argues that the reader's "*primary responsibility is entire fidelity to the text*"¹⁵, which means to read the thing and matter that is latent in the text. One can, however, question Miller's new critical formulation in a similar way as the claim for intended meaning has been criticized. How can we know in the strictest sense what the thing or matter latent in the text is? What are our possibilities and means for achieving such a knowledge?

These questions have been posed from a point of view, which implies that

there is a possibility to compare the original claim and the interpretation of it. However, Levinas' philosophy would suggest a different point of view to consider ethicality, which does not imply the traditional notion of truth, as an equivalence, but rather ethicality and metaphysics that is based on incommensurability and non-equivalence. There is no way to compare, because there is no absolute space where different meanings could be fixed. The starting point in Levinas' metaphysics is the otherness that cannot be calculated or understood totally. I would have no means for it, because it overwhelms every sense that I could give or have of it. It can be said that Miller's conception, in spite of his effort to get out of the difficulties inherent in achieving the knowledge of the intended meaning, is still cleaving to the same problem as traditional hermeneutics. The quest for authentic and original meaning of the text haunts both of them. From Levinas' idea of ethics it can be argued that the ethics of interpretation would mean to *have a sense of something*, it does not aim at *giving* a sense, that would be a projection, but rather *receiving* it from the outside. It would not, however, imply to have meaning equivalent to the meaning of the writer or speaker, because there is no access to the original one¹⁶. Knowing the context where the other had claimed something helps to discover the meaning, and this is especially obvious in the interpretation of modern art. If the interpreter knows some conceptual ideas that the artist had in mind it will help in gaining a sense for the painting, but one can receive or have a sense of the painting without the artist's explanations of it.

INTERPRETATION AS A RELATION TO THE OTHER

The relation to the other and otherness is already etymologically implied by the word 'interpretation'. The Latin word for interpretator *interpres*¹⁷ means among other things an intermediary, a go-between and a spokesman. In the Levinasian terminology one can say that the task of interpretation is to be an *intermediary* between the other and the same. It aims at translating the *significance of the otherness* to the same. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer:

*It [interpretation] is a word that originally arose out of the mediating relationship, the function of the intermediary between speakers of different languages; that is, it originally concerned the translator and was then transferred to the deciphering of texts that are difficult to understand.*¹⁸

In Gadamer's description we can find one of the essential features of interpretation, that interpretation is needed when there are *difficulties in understanding*, when confronting otherness. But it has been claimed that all our understanding and even perception implies interpretation. For example, Martin Heidegger has been elaborating the idea that all our understanding has an interpretative structure. According to him, everything which is explicitly understood has the structure of *something as something*.¹⁹ It implies that our pre-predicative perceptions are already interpretative, that they are interpreted for such and such purposes, for example, chair is perceived *as* something on which one can sit. According to Heidegger, we do not give a signification to some isolated thing, rather it is understood in terms of totality of involvements.²⁰ This sort of interpretation I shall call unreflected interpretation. It describes our unconscious way of interpreting our perceptions. This kind of unconscious interpretation can easily be understood as a neutralization of the alterity and reduction to the same. Everything that is understood is understood for my purposes and enterprises.

But there is a more specific notion of interpretation that describes interpretation as a particular act. I shall call it a deliberate act of interpretation, because the interpreter is aware of the act of interpreting. This sort of interpretation arises from confrontation of the otherness of the other. It is needed when we are facing otherness that we do not have any means for possessing or mastering. For example, a deliberate act of interpretation is needed to decipher strange behaviour, foreign cultural phenomena, dreams, poetry, metaphors, allegories, affects or bodily symptoms.

The basic difference between unreflected and deliberate interpretation is that an unreflected interpretation happens without any premediated or conscious effort, while the deliberate act of interpretation requires conscious reflection on the situation, because it is needed whenever one does not know how to understand. The difference between these two notions is not ontological but rather functional: in the former the interpretation is automatic and unreflective, while in a deliberate act of interpretation the interpretator is aware that he is interpreting. A deliberate act of interpretation is needed when something is not understood immediately. It is needed whenever there is a conflict or resistance which prevents understanding.

The deliberate act of interpretation arises from an appeal or call from the

Other or otherness that is not comprehended under any category. Therefore, it aims at responding to the call of the Other and alterity in general. While in understanding one does not recognize any resistance or conflict of the otherness that would call the same into question. It happens according to old experience and knowledge of life and therefore it falls easily under the category of the same. But is the deliberate act of interpretation more ethical than the unreflected interpretation? Does it, however, preserve the alterity better than the unreflected interpretation or does it end up subordinating the alterity to the same as well?

THE PARADOX OF INTERPRETATION

There seems to lie a paradox in interpretation; while it aims at giving a sense to the otherness and Other it at the same time transfers the otherness to the same. Heidegger has already analysed the circular nature of understanding in *Sein und Zeit*. According to him “[a]ny interpretation which is to contribute understanding must already have understood what is to be interpreted.”²¹ Heidegger does not suggest getting out of this vicious circle, rather he recommends coming into it the right way. It will imply being aware of the pre-understanding and pre-interpretation of the things and testing them in accordance with the things themselves.²² Heidegger did not consider that we are enclosed in the circle of understanding, (tradition or what Levinas would call the order of the same), but rather that we can transform the circle and make it more accurate in accordance with the things by themselves by being critical about the circle. But this will still remain on the totality of the circle of the same.

Another problem of interpretation is the intertwining and fusion of the same and Other in the process of interpretation. The intertwining is so deceptive that one does not even notice when it happens. Gadamer has described this process of intertwining as a fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*). According to him, after the process of interpretation and understanding the tension between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader is dissolved and they merge with each other.²³ Hence, interpretation does not necessarily respect the otherness of the Other in the Levinasian sense, rather it aims at an appropriation of the Other. For example, in reading the fusion of horizons is very obvious, because in reading I am spoken by the Other in a manner where I cannot clearly distinguish where the line between my thought and the author's runs. I give the voice and

representations for the words of the Other.

The descriptions of the hermeneutical circle and the fusion of horizons seem to support that interpretation returns to the domain of the same. But one can always take a deliberate self-critical attitude where one is self-critical of the tendency of the same to intertwine with the Other. For example, modern and avantgarde art attack our habitual way of understanding and interpreting. Deconstructive reading also aims at being self-critical with the tendency in reading to reduce everything to the same. Jacques Derrida has claimed that deconstruction is in the Levinasian sense “*an openness towards the other*”.²⁴ One must, however, note that Derrida speaks about the loyalty to the other with a small letter, or more properly, it would be the otherness in the text. Derrida is not interested in the Other as an author of the text, because the author is absent. Rather he claims that he is discovering the alterities within the text and writing. Simon Critchley has claimed in *The Ethics of Deconstruction* that “*what takes place in deconstruction is a highly determinate form of double reading which pursues alterities within texts, primarily philosophical texts.*”²⁵ The first moment of reading is a rigorous and scholarly reconstruction of the dominant interpretation of the text and the second moment of reading is the destabilization of the dominant interpretation by locating an interruption or alterity in the text that was unnoticed in the dominant interpretation.²⁶ But it is doubtful whether deconstruction shows any ethical attitude towards the author of the text,²⁷ but it may challenge our non-reflective, automatic and habitual way of reading text according to previous understanding, that is according to the order of the same. But Derrida admits that deconstruction is just as well enclosed to the circle of tradition, which it can only transform from the inside.

Hermeneutics as a method for interpretation has also been very sensitive to the question of preserving the otherness of the text and preventing the assimilation of the Other to the same. According to Gadamer the task of interpretation is a matter of attaining the correct understanding to the extent that “*what is announced is led back to its original authenticity*”.²⁸ However it means not constituting what the speaker or writer originally said, but rather what she would have wanted to say to me if I had been her original interlocutor. Thus the hermeneutical method that Gadamer presents aims even to be self-critical of the language that we use for understanding the Other.

The difference between the hermeneutical and deconstructive notions of ethics of interpretation is that the Other and otherness are understood differently. For hermeneutics ethics means to respect the intentions of the Other person (writer or speaker) and to try to understand how he or she could possibly have understood. Deconstruction is not interested in the Other as a person, but in the radical otherness which neither the author nor the reader can master. But can there be established any meaning for radical otherness? It can be also claimed that radical otherness would have no meaning for us if we did not try to interpret it. The problem of applying Levinas' notion of ethics in the strictest sense for interpretation is that if we want to respect the otherness of the Other and refuse to reduce it to the field of same, we do not have any sense or understanding of the Other. Is there a way of understanding and interpreting the Other and otherness in its alterity that does not neutralize it to the same?

BEYOND DUALISM

Maintaining the contradiction between the Other and same would lead to these problems. The Levinasian idea of the radical otherness of the Other can be thought of as giving a direction to interpretation, but it must not be considered absolutely. It can give ethical self-criticality, but it cannot be applied as an absolute norm for interpretation. Otherness and same produce a dynamic process. They are two modes that work in interpretation, but they ought not to be considered as something separate from each other.

Levinas suggests in *Totalité et infini* that there is a mode of living that will maintain the exteriority of the Other. He calls this mode of relation to Other enjoyment (*jouissance*). Enjoyment is mainly a participation and “*living from...*” (*vivre de...*). For example, we live from food, air and sleep. These are not experienced as objects of representation, nor are they means of life. According to Levinas they fill and feed the life.²⁹ Sensibility is one mode of enjoyment. One does not *know* sensible qualities, rather one *lives* them. Levinas' notions of enjoyment and sensibility describe a pre-reflective relation to Other preceding ego's³⁰ relation to the Other. The idea of enjoyment can easily be understood as an intentionality. But Levinas rejects the idea of intentionality, because “*within the work of intentionality, representation occupies the place of a privileged event.*”³¹ The intentionality describes a process, where the exteriority is moulded into a

representation of a subject, which means that the same determines the other.

But is there on a reflective level a possibility to understand the otherness of the Other without turning the meaning of the Other to my purposes? Or is every act of understanding a moment of possession and reduction of the otherness to the same? According to Levinas knowing and understanding are not necessarily a reduction to the same, rather knowledge can be pure experience of other.³² Consequently, signification is not an ideal essence or a relation open to intellectual intuition, rather it is preeminently the presence of exteriority.³³ Levinas presents a different description of understanding than Heidegger by emphasising our pre-reflective being in the world he wants to introduce a way out of the circle of understanding and the domain of the same. He wants to give a philosophical description of knowledge and our being that permit an entry to the otherness. But what is the relation between interpretation and ethics if signification is already an experience of otherness? Can knowledge then be unethical?

Probably knowledge can be unethical for Levinas if it is totally “*found in me*”, that is, if it is intuitive knowledge. But how can I distinguish what is found in me and what comes from outside? The distinction is no doubt vague and impossible to make unless the otherness is so striking that automatic interpretative schemas cannot be applied or there is no schema. This moment of collapse of automatic schemas calls for deliberate act of interpretation for bridging the gap between the same and other and therefore it also calls for ethics. However, the result of interpretation is not necessarily ethical, there is always a risk in interpretation that interpretation will end up in misunderstanding and reduction of the alterity to the same. Awareness of the hypothetical nature of interpretation prevents the mastering of the Other. It preserves the possibility that Other can always be interpreted differently and that there is always more to be interpreted.

CONCLUSIONS

Levinas’ idea of ethics presents an interesting view on analysing interpretation, because the question of the relation to the Other and exteriority is central for understanding the ethics of interpretation. Levinas has presented an extraordinary ethics in his persuasive valuation of otherness and exteriority and the value of Other (author, speaker, painter etc.) has also been primary in ethical considerations of interpretation in hermeneutics. But what makes Levinas’

analysis extraordinary is his emphasis of the asymmetrical relation to the Other: the Other is always more than I can comprehend or master. For him ethics is not an empathy, where I would understand the Other according to my experience of life, but rather the possibility for ethics appears when the same, the spontaneity of I, my thoughts and possession is questioned by the strangeness of the Other. This would have certain effects on the consideration of the ethics of interpretation. First of all interpretation must not reduce the otherness of the other to the same, but rather be sensitive to otherness. It is not an act where I try to master the Other, but rather where the Other dictates to me. Secondly, interpretation cannot be ever complete, because the Other overwhelms every idea I can have of him.

I have defined interpretation following Gadamer's determination of it as a *mediating act* between me and the Other or me and exteriority in general. There are, however, two modes of interpretation considering what kind of relation to the Other and exteriority the interpreter will have: is the otherness of the Other remarked or is it considered as the same. I have called a deliberate act of interpretation an interpretation when the otherness of the Other is so remarkable that it cannot be understood immediately applying some preunderstanding of the thing. I have called an unreflected act of interpretation an interpretation that is automatic and unpremeditated. This sort of interpretation is mainly subordination of the alterity to the same, because the interpreter is not even aware of the otherness of the Other.

There is a certain analogy between the notion of deliberate interpretation and Levinasian ethics. One becomes aware of ethics when one encounters the resistance of the Other and the same is questioned. The need for ethics is otherwise concealed, although all our being is thoroughly ethical. Similarly the resistance of the Other opens up the need for an interpretation. The need for ethics and interpretation appears when normal understanding is prevented. This moment is unique in an ethical sense because it is a moment when the otherness appears. It is this very moment that can be considered the authentic moment of ethics in the Levinasian sense, because otherness attacks and questions the unreflected and unconscious interpretative schemas and the tendencies to interpret under the category of the same. But the completed interpretation is not necessarily ethical, because it happens according to the former experience of life, amalgating the strangeness into something that is already familiar. Actually, there seems to

lie a paradox in interpretation that even a deliberate act of interpretation reduces otherness to the same.

But is interpretation always a reduction of the otherness to the same? Levinas suggests that there are two ways of getting out of the domain of the same: the sensual and the intellectual way. The sensual way would be in unreflected participation and living with otherness and Others, which would precede any conceptual appropriations. The intellectual way would mean to be self-critical of the tendency to reduce otherness to the same. Both Heidegger and Derrida have proposed a similar method of self-criticality, that dictates that we must be critical of our pre-understandings. Both of them have claimed that we can transform the circle in accordance to its outsides (Heidegger claims in accordance to things in the world and Derrida in accordance to structural ruptures and deaths within the text), but we cannot get out of this vicious circle. However, Levinas goes even further and argues that it is possible to *know* otherness, that actually knowledge is not enclosed in the same, but a pure experience of other being, and therefore signification is preeminently the presence of exteriority. From this argument it can be concluded that in the Levinasian perspective interpretation is also not enclosed in the circle of understanding, but rather interpretation itself is also a pure experience of other being and therefore it always already includes the presence of exteriority. There is always in our knowledge an element that does not return to the same, but is rather a trace of alterity, because our knowledge has come in contact with the Other or exteriority in general.

Levinas has brought forth the problem of appropriation and understanding under the category of the same and the implicit reduction of the otherness to the same in this process. However, one can question the assessment that Levinas makes in his work, that the otherness of the Other is considered as an absolute value and the practice of the same ethically inappropriate. There are also certain important values in the practice of the same. For example humanist ethics has always aimed at understanding the Other through empathy (*Einfühlung*), that is, through an act where one tries to understand the Other according to one's own experience of life. Hence humanist ethics aims at understanding the other as equal and similar to myself. In the Levinasian point of view humanist ethics can be criticized for reducing the Other to the same, such that one does not even recognize the otherness of the Other. I am satisfied with my understanding and I

believe that I have understood the Other as he or she is, while I have totally misunderstood him or her. Levinasian antihumanist ethics taken to extremes can also lead quite unethical consequences. If the Other is considered as an Other that we cannot even relate to, we cannot have any compassion or empathy for him. He becomes an object of which we have no understanding. In both humanist and antihumanist ethics there is a risk of not being ethical. The ethical relation to Others lies perhaps in somewhere between humanist and antihumanist ethics. Humanist ethics as a way of understanding Other as similar to myself, will bring the possibility of empathy and compassion to interpretation and the antihumanist ethics will prevent the mastering of the Other. The Levinasian ethics will bear witness to the incommensurable element of the Other and exteriority.

1 "Ma tâche ne consiste pas à construire l'éthique; j'essaie seulement d'en chercher le sens." Emmanuel Levinas, *Éthique et infini*, dialogues avec Philippe Nemo (Fayard et Radio-France, 1982), p. 85.

2 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Max Niemeyer Verlag Tübingen, 1979).

3 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité* (Kluwer Academic publishers, 1988), p. 51.

4 I shall follow the English translation of these words. Alphonso Lingis has translated in agreement with Levinas the notion of *Autrui* (a personal Other and the you) with the notion *Other* and the notion *autre* by *other*. Levinas though uses both words with a small and capital letter. [Preface in Emmanuel Levinas *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979), p. 24.]

5 Levinas's notion of the same is quite ambiguous, which provides possibilities to interpret it in several ways. I have found at least three different meanings for the notion in *Totalité et infini*: It can be interpreted 1) as an egocentric tendency that everything is translated into my experience, my possession or 2) as a notion describing intuitive and *a priori* knowledge. or 3) as a critique of reflective and representational knowledge. For example, Simon Critchley has interpreted it in *The Ethics of Deconstruction. Levinas and Derrida* (Basil Blackwell, 1992) as knowing subject and cognition and therefore he argues that Levinas's critique of the exercise of the same aims at criticizing the exercise of cognition (*Ibid.*, 4-6). I am using the notion of same in this article mainly as describing an egocentric tendency to understand everything according to the same, which means that everything is comprehended and categorized according to the previous experience of life. The I would have then an illusion of the mastery of the Other.

6 Levinas 1988, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

7 Levinas 1979, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

8 Levinas criticizes Edmund Husserl's idea of intentionality, in that the same is in relation with the other but in such a way that the other does not determine the same; it is always the same that determines the other (*ibid.*, p. 124).

9 Levinas 1988, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

10 Levinas 1979, *op.cit.*, 43. In Levinas 1988, *op.cit.*, p. 13: "On appelle cette mise en question de ma spontanéité par la présence d'Autrui, éthique."

11 Levinas 1988, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

13 Levinas 1979, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

14 In *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1974) Levinas elaborates an idea of all encompassing responsibility that is prior to freedom. It means according to Levinas that we are responsible over and above what we experience. We are responsible for even those we do not even know. (*Ibid.*, p. 93.)

15 J. Hillis Miller, *The Ethics of Reading: Kant, de Man, Eliot, Trollope, James and Benjamin* (Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 110.

16 Besides, the quest for equivalence loses its value if the value of the original and authentic meaning is questioned.

17 The Latin word *interpret* means: 1. An intermediary, agent, go-between. 2. A spokesman (a spokesman or messenger of god), ambassador. 3. One who explains or expounds, an interpreter (an interpreter of omens, oracles, dreams etc.), an expositor (of laws, etc.). 4. An interpreter of foreign language. The Latin word for interpretation is *interpretatio*, which means 1. the action of expounding, explaining, an explanatory account, exposition. 2. The explanation of one word by another, the use of synonyms. 3. A construction put upon an act or utterance a way of understanding, interpretation. 4. The signification, meaning (of a word or expression). 5. A translation, rendering. *The Oxford Latin Dictionary* (The Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 947.

18 Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation", in Dianne P. Michelfelder & Richard Palmer, eds., *Dialogue and Deconstruction*, translated by Dennis J. Schmidt & Richard Palmer (State University of New York Press, 1989).

19 Heidegger 1979, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 150.

21 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translation by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 194.

22 Heidegger 1979, *op.cit.*, p. 152.

23 Gadamer, *op.cit.*, p. 41.

24 Jacques Derrida, "Deconstruction and Other" in Richard Kearney, ed., *Dialogue with Contemporary Philosophers* (Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 124.

25 Critchley 1992, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 26. With the notion of the dominant interpretation Critchley means a commentary that reflects a minimal consensus concerning the intelligibility of texts, establishing what a given text means for community of readers. It implies a knowledge of texts in their original languages, knowledge of the corpus of an author as a whole, knowledge of the multiple contexts (political, literary, philosophical, historical etc.) which determines a given text. *Ibid.*, p.24.

27 Simon Critchley argues (*op.cit.*) that the ethicality of deconstructive reading can be understood through Emmanuel Levinas's work. He argues there that deconstruction shows respect for the otherness of the Other. I would see there differences, because Levinas is describing that the ethicality happens between I and the personal Other, Derrida instead is discovering the impersonal otherness in the text, otherness that even the Author cannot master.

28 Gadamer 1989, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

29 Levinas 1988, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

30 Jacques Lacan has suggested quite a similar conception of subjectivity than Levinas proposes in *Totalité et infini*. According to Lacan subject consists of *Desire* and *Ego*. *Desire* is a purely ecstatic level of being and *Ego* is an representational level of being, an image of our selves. Similarly Levinas describes the subject as consisting of two levels; the level of being oneself (*le soi*) and being of me (*le moi*), which Levinas also calls *Ego*. For Levinas *Ego* is also a level of representational being and being oneself is "living from..." and participation, where there is no representational image of me.

31 Levinas 1979, *op.cit.*, p. 124. In Levinas' idea of enjoyment there are similarities with zen Buddhist thought, in zen Buddhism there is a strong tendency to respect a unreflective way of being, because every representation is a false image of reality as it is. A classical example in zen poetry is a verse that says: "Rozan-mountain is famous for misty rainy days and the great Sekko-river of rising and low tides, that's all." [Own translation from Shunryu Suzuki's book *Zen-mieli, aloittelijan mieli* (Zen Mind, Beginner's mind)]. There are no attributes to transform the otherness to *my* experience. It has the similar attitude of refusing to give to anything in life a subjective meaning, it means refusing to make it my own. Owning would build a barrier between reality as such as it is, because then it would become my image of reality. Image and representation are always after the event, and therefore prevent the experience of actuality and presence.

32 Levinas 1988, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 38.