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"I Hope, Therefore I Will Be": On the Concept of Time in the Philosophy of Lévinás, Bloch, and Bachelard

> *If this story means nothing, as the storytellers in Africa say, it belongs to the one who told it, and if it means something, it belongs to all of us*[1].
>
> Ernst Bloch

St. Augustine used to say that he knows what time is, but only until someone asks him about it[2]. He noted that alongside objective time, there is also subjective time, internally experienced, and there exists a relativity of experiencing time. This is not a trivial observation, although even today, it sometimes seems too simple to recognise its philosophical significance. For a person, the past, present, and future do not occur in a linear order, as is the case in the physical world, because memory is the present of the past, whereas dreams, imagination, and expectation are the present of the future. Often, we are more entangled in the memory of the past or in the imagination and dreams of the future than in the present, which slips through our fingers. In a sense, we are woven from time. We initiate and realise time – as one of the dimensions of our hope.

[1] Ernst Bloch, *Ślady*, trans. Anna Czajka (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2012), 113.

[2] "Czymże więc jest czas? Jeśli nikt mnie o to nie pyta, wiem. Jeśli pytającemu usiłuję wytłumaczyć, nie wiem". Św. Augustyn, *Wyznania*, trans. Zbigniew Kubiak (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1997), 332.

Flowing with the current of mundane events, surrendering to the pragmatics of daily activities, or laboriously trudging toward a goal we have set for ourselves, we suddenly stumble upon a thought torn from its context, a feeling for which we find no clear cause, a troubling question demanding an answer. And suddenly, the linearity of ordinary time is suspended. Delving into a moment of doubt, as if into a metaphysical instant, we begin to exist in the vertical time of our reflection or experience. Human time carves its own corridors deep into moments, or alternatively rises to reach their peaks.

In human life, there are events that disrupt the order of time, intruding upon it with something new and unexpected. This newness, the otherness it brings, shatters the established order of things. It is akin to a leap that alters the rhythm of temporality. Time – this real time, tied to our human existence – either suspends or accelerates, instantaneously giving rise to an unforeseen future or retreating deep into, as Emmanuel Lévinas would say, an "anarchic" past. It is as if a person, in their inner experience of time, could leap into the future beyond their own death, into time after their time, or could reach back into the past before their own birth.

It is undoubtedly true, as the historian states, that objective time is an undeniable fact (although even a historian does not divide time completely objectively, acknowledging, for example, that the 20th century began in 1918 and ended in 1989, when it should actually span 100 years). However, in addition to this, there is also existential truth, the truth of experience, or otherwise known as the truth of human experience.

For a philosopher, time is not an unequivocal concept. There certainly exists calendar time, which is measurable. However, beyond this, there is also subjective, existential time, internally experienced, and lived through by individuals. In this dimension, we can speak of the relativity of experiencing time. Borys Pasternak poetically expressed this philosophical thought: "That moment lasted a second, yet it could overshadow eternity"[3]. Although it may seem that these words do not contribute to the rationality of our discourse; they nonetheless enable an existential deepening of it.

Evidently, time is not uniform but has various levels. It is worth contemplating the question: what is authentic time? What are the sources of time, and is there such a thing as original time?

Lévinas was convinced that there are different levels of time, that behind and beyond the physical time associated with motion – the kind that we

[3] Borys Pasternak, "Wariacje," trans. Włodzimierz Słobodnik, in *Pięciu poetów. Aleksander Błok, Anna Achmatowa, Borys Pasternak, Włodzimierz Majakowski, Sergiusz Jesienin*, ed. Zbigniew Kowalewski, prep. Seweryn Pollak and Ziemowit Fedecki (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975), 258.

typically think of as uniform, monotonous, and measurable – there exists a deeper, originary time. This time possesses a different meaning than linear time. This originary time is not the same as existence enduring through time. Lévinas is not referring to clock time, which can be quantified. This is not the subject of his contemplation.

The philosopher inquires about the primary source of time, from which the traditionally conceived time emerges or is born, simultaneously obscuring its origin. 'It is not the world, Lévi-Strauss seems to be saying, but time that is primordial'[4], notes Barbara Skarga. This time is distant from commonplace experience. It is not the time of physics or the variability of the seasons, but rather a structural element of human existence and the human world.

It is worth mentioning that in his search for the sources of time, Lévinas embarks on an ontological-metaphysical path derived from Plato and Plotinus. In the *Timaeus*, Plato asserts that time is the "moving image of eternity"[5], emphasising the tension between the eternal and unchanging (that which endures eternally) and the mutable and temporal (that which passes away). Plotinus, also following Plato, highlights the inseparable relationship between time and the soul, recognising that time is not something external to the soul, but exists within the world created by it, and thus within each of us. However, unlike Plato, Plotinus claims that the soul does not confine itself; time brings it only what is other. It moves towards the other, for only the other can fill its own deficiencies. In Plotinus's dynamic concept, emphasis is placed on change, which allows for continuous self-improvement. There appears a "restless" soul that "did not wish to have everything all at once in the present"[6]. In her pursuit of perfection, time proves to be creative, as it offers the possibility of achieving what is better, rejecting errors, and consequently purifying. Time in Plotinus does not bring destruction; on the contrary, it creates hope. It facilitates the realisation of that Platonic ascent toward the world of ideas, whose ethical aspect is even more strongly emphasised. Of course, it should be noted that Lévi-Strauss's thought is rooted not only in the ancient times of the Greeks but also in the Hebrew Bible, with its focus on salvation and eternity.

[4] Barbara Skarga, "W poszukiwaniu źródłowego czasu," in *Kwintet metafizyczny*, by Barbara Skarga (Kraków: Universitas, 2005), 57.

[5] Platon, *Timajos*, trans. Władysław Witwicki (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1960), 37.

[6] Barbara Skarga, "W poszukiwaniu," 57.

1. The Dialectics of Vertical Time – Realising the Present

In *From Existence to the Existent*, Lévinas presents a dialectical concept of discontinuous time. He immediately clarifies that he is not referring to 'clock time, conceptualised in relation to the sun and with trains in mind', a time that can be measured and which constitutes a 'sin against the spirit, a sin of reification'[7]. The philosopher from the very beginning 'tries to approach time differently than through what measures it'[8] – as defined in the book *God, Death, and Time*.

This concerns the time realised by man. According to the mentioned philosopher, it is man who realises the moment, the present moment, and he does so through his own actions, which necessarily involve effort, exhaustion (*la lassitude*), laziness (*la paresse*), and fatigue (*la fatigue*). I believe Lévinas would agree with the statement made by M. Merleau-Ponty: 'The essence of time is that it arises, and is not, that it is never completely constituted. [...] There must exist another time, a true time, in which I learn what transience itself or the mere occurrence of events is'[9].

Lévinas first highlights several moments inherently accompanying human action, which actually serve as an attempt to reject time.

Weariness, which can pertain to everything and everyone, but above all is weariness of oneself, concerns existence itself. Under its influence, we sometimes even feel the urge to escape from ourselves, to slip away from existence, which obviously proves impossible, as in any voyage, no matter how far, we bring ourselves and the solitude of our existence along. Weariness results in our losing the strength to endure in time.

Laziness, which is essentially a form of anxiety and a struggle against one's own impotence. Nothing is more unsettling than a prolonged state of laziness, creative impotence, and the inability to initiate anything, which in turn reflects upon oneself. A person fears that by starting something new, they will lose what they already possess. Every act of laziness proves, in essence, to be a reluctance to exist, for at the core of 'one must be' lies 'one must act'[10]. J.-P. Sartre also wrote about this laziness of existence in *Nausea* in a similar tone: 'to do anything is to create existence – and there is already

[7] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Istniejący i istnienie*, trans. Janusz Margański (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Homini, 2006), 158.

[8] Emmanuel Lévinas, "Śmierć i czas," in *Bóg, śmierć i czas*, by Emmanuel Lévinas (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2008), 35.

[9] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Czasowość," in *Fenomenologia percepcji*, by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, trans. Małgorzata Kowalska and Jacek Migasiński (Warszawa: Fundacja Aletheia, 2001), 436.

[10] Lévinas, *Istniejący i istnienie*, 40.

so much existence'[11]. According to Lévinas, laziness is a fear of life, a fear of oneself, and an attempt to deny the future.

Another moment indicated by the author of Being and Existence is fatigue as both a consequence and a condition of the effort in which a person actualises time. Lévinas analyses effort together with the problem of time in which the subject operates. Weariness, laziness, and fatigue accompany human action, but it is only by overcoming them that we actualise time. In light of this concept, by acting, for example, by writing these words, I assume the present time, I take on this very moment, interrupting anonymous time.

It is worth noting that a similar concept of discontinuous time appears in the works of another French thinker, Gaston Bachelard. In his philosophy of creative imagination, he described a peculiar dialectic of poetic time as "vertical time". According to Bachelard, poetic time is discontinuous. We read in "The Intuition of the Moment": "Time has only one reality, the reality of the moment. In other words, time is a reality concentrated in the moment and suspended between two voids. Time can undoubtedly be reborn, but it must first die. It cannot transfer its existence from one moment to another to create duration"[12]. According to Bachelard, time does not exist beyond the reality of the present moment of consciousness and action. The awareness of one's own existence and the existence of the world is limited to the current moment, during which I become conscious of life. Time is not a continuous collection of moments; rather, it is essentially a single moment of reality between two voids. It exists at the instant when I penetrate it with my own awareness, fragmented into utilised moments and discarded pauses. The boredom, laziness, or fatigue that Lévinas speaks of, therefore, constitutes the rejection of time. By renouncing existence, I live in rejected time. It is only when I act, and as long as I act, that I persist in the reality of time; thus, my activity defines time. If being is a moment of utilised time, then nothingness is the continuous possibility of being. Such poetic discontinuous time does not construct a continuous history but is composed of separate phenomena.

In his analyses of time, Bachelard focuses on the creative act that intertwines consciousness, will, and choice, focusing on the moment of decision as a volitional act of consciousness. He concludes that in poetic time, moments are connected by nothingness; beyond moments of inspiration, there is no time. Poetic time exists only when it is being created. Furthermore,

[11] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Mdłości*, trans. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1974), 236.

[12] Gaston Bachelard, *Intuicja chwili*, cited in Henryk Chudak, "«Lautréamont» Bachelarda," *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, no. 4 (1969), 55.

in *The Dialectic of Duration*, Bachelard observes that the "time of thought differs from the time of dreaming"[13]. Therefore, the philosopher considers many dimensions of duration and various temporal planes, a temporal pluralism whose original idea – interestingly – was found in the theory of relativity. A scholar of Bachelard's philosophy, Damian Leszczyński, noted that Bachelardian multiplication of times is a "variation on the theme of the theory of relativity"[14]. Considering science and literature, Bachelard states that one cannot speak of a single absolute time. The 'experienced time' (the chronology of the heart) is not synchronous with the 'thought time' (the mathematised time, the time of concepts and theories, the logical time).

The development of ideas contained in *The Intuition of the Moment* is represented in the article *Poetic Moment and Metaphysical Moment*, in which Bachelard states that poetry exists in vertical time. "Only in the vertical time of the immobilised moment does poetry find its specific dynamism. Here we have the pure dynamism of pure poetry. A dynamism that ascends vertically in the time of forms and personalities"[15]. As follows, in the individual psyche of the creator, poetry is formed anew in that very second when the subjective act of temporalisation occurs. It emerges through a sudden illumination, in which the poet focuses on their own experience thereby immobilises life, creating their moment by tearing it from the continuity of events. In this sense, the poetic moment does not belong to the passing time; it breaks away from linear existence. Poetry is an immersion into the metaphysical moment. "Poetry is momentary metaphysics"[16] – as Bachelard describes. In other words, poetry does not unfold in objective time, but rather becomes concentrated at a single moment, encircling it. It does not develop, but rather coalesces. The time of poetry shatters the frameworks of duration; it does not flow, but 'erupts'. This Bachelardian 'vertical time' can ascend to reach the heights of the moment or descend toward its profound depths.

Similarly, according to Lévinas: human effort is the fulfillment of the moment. "Effort is the self-actualization of the moment"[17], "The present is constituted by taking it upon oneself"[18]. In this moment of the present,

[13] Gaston Bachelard, *La Dialectique de la durée* (Paris: Boivin, 1936), 98.

[14] Damian Leszczyński, "Filozofia nauki Gastona Bachelarda," in *Kształtowanie się umysłu naukowego*, by Gaston Bachelard, trans. Damian Leszczyński (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria, 2002), 365.

[15] Gaston Bachelard, "Chwila poetycka i chwila metafizyczna," trans. Mirosława Goszczyńska, *Literatura na Świecie*, no. 3–4 (1982): 63.

[16] *Ibidem*, 57.

[17] Lévinas, *Istniejący i istnienie*, 46.

[18] *Ibidem*, 47.

a person manifests as a subject. In realising my work, I take on my own existence, committing myself to it. "The effort is therefore a punishment precisely because it accepts the moment as the inevitable present"[19]. In the moment of effort, I condemn myself to the present. Indeed, the object of my fatigue is my being – it is this very being that exhausts me as I write these words. It means that the present begins to exist when I embrace it; it is an event shaped by my ontological sensitivity. "In duration, effort engages the moment, intertwining and untangling the nothingness of time. It lingers behind the moment it must embrace; thus, it does not resemble a melody liberated from the present, through which it lives, and which carries and sweeps it away"[20]. Therefore, in Lévinas, as in Bachelard, there is no such thing as empty time, for time is nothing if nothing happens. One might say: if you want to have no time, do nothing. For time exists only when a person fills it with their own activity. Being is a moment of time utilized. The event of time is the moment of the emergence of "being, for which to be means to take on being"[21] – we read in Lévinas.

In *De l'existence a l'existant* the philosopher focuses on the present moment, where effort is fulfilled, and through this, engagement in existence occurs. In this moment, man becomes sensitive to time. One cannot possess a double present. "The way of being of the moment is the present. [...] In the moment, there is a break, and at the same time, an acceptance of the infinity of time or eternity"[22]. The present does not possess continuity, as the "essence of the concept of the present includes fading and diminishing"[23]. Diminution is the price we pay for subjectivity, for what Lévinas calls the event of hypostasis. Time, by its very nature, eludes all hypostasis, which means it does not flow like Bergsonian rivers. The only and unique situation is precisely the event of the present, which interrupts and intertwines duration, creating knots of time.

Lévinas does not speak of abstract time. Rather, he immediately links time to human existence, considering moments as the realisation of human existence. For him, a moment is a relationship with being, an initiation into it. In this sense, it is also a form of suspension. It is a paradoxical relationship, a continuous beginning, the actualisation of the present, its creation, the acquisition of, and taking upon oneself the moment, an engagement in being. As the author of *The Existing and Existence* defines:

[19] *Ibidem*.
[20] *Ibidem*, 46.
[21] *Ibidem*, 49.
[22] *Ibidem*, 118.
[23] *Ibidem*.

"The present is a pure beginning", the "event of the beginning"[24]. In a sense, at this moment, the infinity and inevitability of existence is fulfilled. "«Present», «I», and «moment» are facets of one and the same event"[25]. As mentioned, Lévinas links the present with hypostasis, which is the transformation of an event into being, constituting the identity of the 'I' through the movement of self-reference. Hypostasis is precisely the event of the present, the subjectivity of one's own becoming. The present is my relationship with myself, the event of the subject identifying itself.

The paradox of time as a relation to being lies in the fact that having time and history is equivalent to having a future and a past. The present eludes possession, slipping through our fingers. Meanwhile, it is only in the present that we find ourselves, and it is in this present that we hold both past and future. However, this future is contingent upon time.

2. Death as a relation to the mystery of the future

Human existence is temporal. As Seneca writes, "we are born without a pardon"[26], "Life has indeed been given on the condition of death"[27]. Mortality is not only a limitation of human existence in terms of time, but also a manner of experiencing one's own life.

One could say that a human's life has its own time, distinct from the entirety of events. This own time, as Lévinas notes, separates us from our own death. However, it flows against it, approaching through resistance. "Time is precisely the fact that the entire – subjected to violence – existence of a mortal being is not oriented towards death, but rather that «not yet» which signifies a way of being against death, a way of evading death in the very heart of its relentless proximity"[28]. A person knows that their life is subject to the inevitable violence of death. However, in contrast to Heidegger, who emphasised that the human being is a being-toward-death, Lévinas powerfully underscores that it is "not-yet". *Tant que l'homme vit, il a encore du temps* – As long as a person lives, they still have time. The notion of "not yet" serves as a means of resisting death. "To be a temporal being is simultaneously to be towards death and yet to have time, to stand against

[24] *Ibidem*, 128.

[25] *Ibidem*, 130.

[26] Lucjusz Anneusz Seneka, *Myśli*, trans. Stanisław Stabryła (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Zielona Sowa, 2006), 215.

[27] *Ibidem*, 211.

[28] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność. Esej o zewnętrzności*, trans. M. Kowalska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2002), 267.

death"[29]. Lévinas refers here to the well-known, although often trivialised and thus insufficiently understood statement by Epicurus: "death, the most terrible of misfortunes, does not concern us at all, because while we exist, death is absent, and when death appears, we no longer exist"[30]. Lévinas emphasises that the reality and mode of existence of human being is the postponement of death. In the weakening of the will to live, "futurition and the postponement of decline"[31] take place. The point is that the human being lives not only in fear and despair but also in hope. For this reason, the human relationship with time is paradoxical and ambivalent. "My time" is a "rebellious time".

In *Le temps et l'autre* Lévinas emphasises that one cannot have control over one's own death, as it is an event of the future. The reality of death is the impossibility of the future existing in the present, the inability to govern the future – one that does not yet exist. To live is to have time before oneself (*savoir du temps devant soi*). "Death is never now"[32] – the philosopher emphasises, "What is the bond between two moments that have an entire interval, a vast chasm, separating the present from death, a margin that is both insignificant and yet infinite, where there is always sufficient space for hope? It is certainly not a relationship of pure adjacency that would transform time into space, nor is it merely the drive of dynamism and continuity, for this possibility of being outside oneself and interlocking with the future seems to be excluded precisely by the mystery of death"[33]. The present is separated from death, that is, from the mystery of the future, by an abyss – an infinite moment of hope. The time of death is not the time of man, and the time of man is not the time of death. It comes from another time. A person lives as long as they have their own time ahead of them. However, this time continuously shrinks, until it is surpassed by her – flowing against the current of human time to erase us with her will. Death is no longer an experience of human freedom. It always lies in the future and defines not only the "possibility of impossibility" but also the "impossibility of all possibility". However, it must be added that this submission also requires something that does not flow from without, but from within.

[29] *Ibidem*, 283.

[30] Epikur z Samos, "List do Menoikeusa," in *Żywoty i poglądy słynnych filozofów*, by Diogenes Laertios, trans. Kazimierz Leśniak (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1982), 645.

[31] Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność*, 285.

[32] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Czas i to, co inne*, trans. Jacek Migasiński (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR, 1999), 72.

[33] *Ibidem*, 85–86.

Lévinas writes: "To die is to return to that state of irresponsibility, to be a spasm of childish weeping"[34]. This would suggest that dying leads to a beginning; death is a journey backward, toward one's own birth, or perhaps even to a time before birth. The philosopher indeed states that "death, which for the living is an end, cannot be merely such an end; dying must have some other direction than that which leads to an end as to a sudden chasm amidst the existence of those who survive"[35]. Or perhaps within a person, time is reversed, as in the poems of Jan Twardowski, where death "leads one through the grave, as through a stone, for when there is no longer meaning, meaning begins"[36]?

What is particularly intriguing is that Lévinas describes death as a relationship with otherness, with mystery. This mystery of otherness is analysed by the philosopher not only through suffering but also through pleasure – comparing the relationship with death to the erotic relationship with the mystery of femininity. This could even suggest that the relationship with death is erotic. In any case, according to Lévinas, death contains something positive. It represents the possibility of an event. "In death, we encounter the temptation of nothingness and the desire for eternity. We want both to die and to be. The challenge lies in enabling the acceptance of eternity alongside death, in preserving eternity within me, amidst the existence in which the event approaches. It is about overcoming death, where the subject exposes itself to the impending event, yet does not accept it as an object. It is a dialectical situation. The same dialectic manifests itself in the relationship with another person"[37]. As we can see, for Lévinas, death serves as a model of the relationship with the future, with otherness, and thereby with other human beings. It is this relationship with the enigma of the future that establishes time. "The future is what is other. The relationship with the future is fundamentally a relationship with what is other"[38].

In addition, Lévinas acknowledges that death is a "pure moment of questioning". According to him, the moment of death has two aspects: an end ("death is a phenomenon of termination, while simultaneously being the termination of a phenomenon")[39] and the question (distinguished from the problem) is simultaneously a request, a plea, and a prayer. Concern for

[34] Lévinas, *Czas i to, co inne*, 73.

[35] Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność*, 48.

[36] Jan Twardowski, "Jesteś," in *„Trzeba iść dalej, czyli spacer biedronki". Wiersze wszystkie 1981–1993*, by Jan Twardowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Warszawskiej, 1995), 122.

[37] Lévinas, *Czas i to, co inne*, 83.

[38] *Ibidem*, 80.

[39] Lévinas, *Bóg, śmierć i czas*, 60.

death is a fright without measure, "taking hold of the present through non-presentness". It should be noted that for Lévinas, the relationship with death is not a vision of being or non-being, but rather "pure selflessness and *adieu*". The question referred to in connection with death, a paradoxical question, is precisely a relation to infinity (a relationship with the Infinite). This is not about an answer, as there is none at all, but about the "responsibility of questioning"[40]. We read in the book *God, Death, and Time*: "Time is not a limitation of being, but its relation to infinity. Death is not annihilation, but a necessary question in order for this relation with infinity or time to be established"[41]. Therefore, death severs the thread of my existence, yet simultaneously it ties a knot, binding me to infinity.

For Lévinas, the duration of time is a relation to the infinite, to the incomprehensible, to the Other. "Time is that Other-in-the-Same, and at the same time that Other which cannot exist simultaneously with the Same, it cannot be synchronous. Time would therefore be the disturbance of the Same by the Other, in which the Same can never comprehend the Other, encompass it"[42]. Lévinas opens up to that which is impossible to conceive, unpredictable. He states that the possibility of nonsense is a submission to death, which is not meaning. Infinity can never be comprehended or encapsulated, and that 'never' is always only a temporal duration of time.

As we can see, Lévinas, in contrast to Heidegger, does not consider time based on death, but rather attempts to rethink death based on time. As he himself acknowledges, his inspiration for such reflections was drawn from the utopianism of Ernst Bloch – to which we will return at the end of the article.

3. Time as a human relationship. A dialogical conception of time

One could say that Lévinas does not ask *what* time is, but *who* time is. For him, time is not a relationship with an end, but with the Other (the person), and through that, also with the Other (the Absolute). "It seems impossible for us to speak of time within a solitary subject, to speak of a purely personal duration"[43] – Lévinas writes. What is important and characteristic of Lévinas's philosophy is that the condition of time is intersubjective relationships. According to the philosopher, time actualises itself in the face-to-face

[40] *Ibidem*, 24.

[41] *Ibidem*, 26.

[42] *Ibidem*, 26–27.

[43] Lévinas, *Czas i to, co inne*, 80.

situation with another person. "The intrusion of the present into the future is not a fact in the sphere of the solitary subject, but rather an intersubjective relationship. The condition of time lies in the relationship between people or in history"[44].

Lévinas tries to capture time through intersubjective relations. Therefore, he states that loneliness is exclusion from time, a constant present, consisting of a sequence of fleeting "nows". He reiterates that the time of clocks measuring movement, common-sense time, ordinary, authentic time, is something superficial. He seeks the sources of time in a uniquely understood transcendence. This is neither about the consciousness of time, nor its subjective interpretation, nor its objective conception. Barbara Skarga explains this aptly:

> Time is the essence of intersubjective relations. Outside such relations, it does not exist. This statement may at first glance seem to contradict human experience. However, let us imagine that we live in a closed sphere, without others, without our own death, as if stuck in a world of pure Platonic forms. Already Bergson knew that in such a world there is no movement, no change, and therefore no time. [...] What lies at the source of all experiences is the encounter with the Other. Heidegger is correct when he states that the characteristic of human existence is that it «was, is, and will be, because time temporalizes itself only because there is a human being». Undoubtedly, the abode of time is humanity, but solely when it encounters the Other, whom it does not comprehend but seeks to establish a connection with. This connection is, *par excellence*, ethical rather than cognitive. Therefore, there is no time where there is no pluralism of independent existences, where there exists the Same[45].

We thus have a dialogical concept of time: time is an intersubjective relationship. "Time is not a matter of a separate and solitary subject, but is the relationship of the subject to another human being"[46] – Lévinas states that time is not continuous here either. The philosopher acknowledges that the 'habitat of time' is the interpersonal relationship, thus, the dialectic of time is a dialogue. He attributes a new meaning to the ethical relationship, emphasising that it cannot be confined to the present, to the 'here and now'. This 'other' exists outside my time, opening up new unpredictable

[44] *Ibidem*, 86.

[45] Barbara Skarga, "Czas i inne," in *Tożsamość i różnica*, by Barbara Skarga (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1997), 130–131.

[46] Lévinas, *Czas i to, co inne*, 19.

perspectives. I reach out to him in my desire, but he escapes beyond the present, eluding either into the future or into the past, never allowing himself to be entirely confined to the present. The relationship with him opens up time, that parallel, disproportionate time in relation to the objective time of clocks, introducing a different order of time, indeed opening up Infinity itself, which I grasp intuitively, long for, and cannot cease to desire.

Through this concept of time, Lévinas aims to reveal a deeper meaning of intersubjective relations and the formation of community. He wonders whether community arises and is maintained through the limitation of hostile and destructive impulses, which is characterised by the principle: man is a wolf to man, or conversely, from the desire to live for others and for the Other. "Does what is social, and thus all institutions, emerge as a result of placing a muzzle on individual freedoms and tendencies toward conflict and violence, or from the experience of infinity that awakens in an ethical relationship. [...] Hope does not make us immortal, but it explodes human time, revealing the possibility of its ethical fulfillment"[47]. By constructing such a concept of time, the philosopher creates a vision of a society in which the subject, establishing a relationship with others, would understand the responsibility they bear for them, while simultaneously retaining their own independence and dignity, thus not being trampled by others. Such relationships are not possible where the subject is absorbed in themselves, their own existence, or where the community aims toward the unification of all that is different. For time to begin to flow, there must be a transcending of the closed circle of immanence, that is, an encounter with the other. With otherness invades our existence what is to come, what is unexpected, what is unknown.

Lévinas seeks the sources of time in transcendence. He aims to delve deep, so to speak, underneath the surface of physical time. He believes that human existence does not run parallel to physical or historical time. The birth of a human being is a historically absurd event, as it marks a new beginning within the continuity of historical time. The experienced time and the measured time of clocks do not coincide with each other. However, this does not change the fact that this clock time, unidirectional, relentless, irreversible, independent of existence, and passing beyond it, dictates the course of human life. Although it often diverges from internal time, it is also a measure of social existence, of being with others; it is not only mine, but it is the time of the world in which I live.

Lévinas contemplates how to transcend the finitude of human time. He concludes that it is possible in at least three ways: through creation,

[47] Barbara Skarga, "Wstęp," in Emmanuel Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność. Esej o zewnętrzności*, trans. M. Kowalska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2002), XV–XVI.

procreation, or dying for the other. According to the philosopher, creativity does not entail creating for oneself, but is always directed towards the other and offered to them. Thus, all these means of overcoming death in Lévinas's philosophy essentially reduce to one, which is the possibility of doing good for the other, extending to the possibility of dying for them and on their behalf.

a) Creativity and hope as a means of transcending the finitude of time

We mentioned the work in the context of Bachelard's 'vertical time'. However, let us return to the issue of creation, this time as a means of overcoming the finitude of one's own time.

For Lévinas, creativity is an opening to mystery, and although it occurs in the present – and, as we have said, in a certain sense, it actualises it – it is a relation with the future. The creator, in a certain sense, immortalises themselves in their works. In studying Bloch's philosophy, Lévinas noted: "We must die. But there is much to be done – a lot needs to be done – to free death from fear – without resorting to diversion – to leave death with nothing but an empty shell. For in a totally humanized world, our existence entirely passes into our works. According to Bloch, the fear of death is merely the melancholy stemming from unfinished work. The sadness that we must leave a world we could not change"[48]. Thus, one of the ways to overcome the fear of death is by creating a human world. It can be said that art exists to prevent one from dying from the truth. To quote Chekhov: "Where there is art, where there is talent, there is neither old age, nor solitude, nor sickness, and even death itself is not so frightening"[49]. For Camus, creativity is also a form of rebellion against death, a kind of absurd joy. "In this world, a work is the only chance to preserve consciousness and to immortalize the adventure. To create is to live doubly. [...] An artist, just like a thinker, becomes engaged in their work and becomes that work"[50] – we read in the *Myth of Sisyphus*.

Creativity requires boldness and critical thinking, resistance to widely accepted ideas and theses, as well as the ability to marvel at oneself and the world. In the book *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, in the chapter *On Death in the*

[48] Emmanuel Lévinas, *O Bogu, który nawiedza myśl*, trans. Małgorzata Kowalska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1994), 167.

[49] Antoni Czechow, *Aforyzmy*, sel. & trans. René Śliwowski (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975), 59.

[50] Albert Camus, *Mit Syzyfa i inne eseje*, trans. Joanna Guze (Warszawa: Muza SA, 2004), 114, 146.

Thought of Ernst Bloch, Lévinas analyses the way in which Bloch describes astonishment. The astonishment that "falls like rain" carries within it the seed of an indeterminate question – the formulation of questions and answers drowns out the astonishment from which they arise, as Heidegger has already noted. Astonishment is the source of all philosophical and scientific questions. Such a conception of astonishment does not reside in the object, but in the subject. It is a way of our relations with things, a relationship to the world around us. "It may be provoked by the way the wind moves a leaf; but what we understand by astonishment can also be filled with more familiar and more significant content. It may be a child's smile, the glance of a young girl, the beauty of a melody emerging from an inconspicuous sound, the contemptuous gleam of a rare word that does not refer to anything in a definite way"[51]. Importantly, the deepest astonishment is a premonition of victory over death and simultaneously the beginning of philosophy. For the fullness of astonishment, apart from the question, also contains the answer: the "question will be encompassed entirely in astonishment and will ultimately become happiness: a being that will be happiness"[52]. Lévinas writes, quoting Bloch: "The sensitivity that enables creativity arises from the pain in which we experience our own mortality, but through it, we transcend our own mortality in a certain sense".

Inspired by Bloch's thought, Lévinas asserts that "time is pure hope. It is even the birthplace of hope. Hope for a fulfilled world, where man and his labor will not be commodities. Hope and utopia, without which action realised in being – that is, humanity – could neither begin nor continue in the enduring patience of learning and effort"[53]. However naive or utopian it may seem (especially to those who, accustomed to comfortable and cowardly conformity, readily dismiss independent, creative effort by labeling it as 'naive', 'unscientific', 'too simple', 'obvious', etc.), Lévinas shares Bloch's thought that the world is not completed because human creative work has not been finished. In the creation of a universal culture, humanity always stands in opposition to the already existing world to some extent. Creating culture is a premonition of a fulfilled world that will come to fruition in the future, perhaps after our time, but is now a potentiality and a creative, albeit possibly utopian, hope. "If something can be saved, then death loses its sting. [...] Time as utopian hope is no longer time considered on the basis of death"[54]. It was Bloch who inspired Lévinas to assert that time should not be considered based on death, but rather

[51] Lévinas, *O Bogu*, 95.

[52] Ernst Bloch, "Spuren," in Emmanuel Lévinas, *O Bogu, który nawiedza myśl*, trans. Małgorzata Kowalska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1994), 96.

[53] Lévinas, *Bóg, śmierć i czas*, 113.

[54] *Ibidem*, 115.

the other way around: death should be understood in light of time. This does not diminish the inevitability of death in any way, but rather strips it of the privilege of being the source of all meaning.

b) Parenting as Resurrection of Time

As we have already stated, Lévinas acknowledges that time is a relationship with the Other, and in this encounter, the future is born. Such a structure of time reveals itself most strongly in relation to death, but also in relation to the other gender and in relation to one's own child. In the structure of human existence, identity merges with difference. This being transcends itself through generations, entering into a history that continually renews itself, yet is never closed. Lévinas states: "Being occurs as plural and divided into identity and otherness. This is its ultimate structure. It is a social relationship, and thereby – time"[55]. So, individuality doesn't oppose multiplicity, but gives birth to it, or maybe it would be better to say: it creates it.

Notably and particularly originally, Lévinas elevates procreation to the level of an ontological category, observing that it grants subjective identity a new structure and new meaning. He asserts that procreation "constitutes my own adventure, meaning it pertains to my future in a completely new sense, despite discontinuity"[56]. Transcendence is achieved through trans-substantialisation. It does not mean, of course, that my child is my work or possession. Through parenthood (let us use this term to avoid narrowing the issue solely to fatherhood – which, in a biblical tone, Lévi-Strauss does), I do not become my "future self" or my "other self"; I cannot be myself in another person. Parenthood is not a relationship with a stranger (the other, the different self), even though, in some way, I find myself in my child, in their gestures, in their smiles, in their dynamics, in their uniqueness. They are my and non-my future, the possibility of me and the other (the Beloved). Lévi-Strauss, being a man, writes about the Beloved, but as a woman, I can equally speak about the Beloved: that the encounter with the Other in the form of a man allows the future to arrive in the form of a child. In this sense, the calling to give life to a child is a relationship with the future, although it does not signify some new incarnation of myself. Despite the discontinuity of death, it concerns my future in a new sense. The dialectical structure of fertility ('begetting' – Lévinas would say) is that it is a gift of new possibilities of giving gifts. The relationship with a child, which is one of the forms of relationship with the

[55] Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność*, 325.

[56] *Ibidem*, 324.

Other, establishes a relation with absolute future or with infinite time. In this way, fertility continues a history that knows no old age. The subject is realised through the discontinuity of generations, in the rhythm of births, in the inexhaustible youth of the child. It can live on in the Other – in this way, time triumphs over old age and death. "To be infinite means to happen as I, which is always a beginning [...]. Thus, youth is defined as a philosophical concept"[57] – Lévinas writes in *Totality and Infinity*. The relationship with the child, permitted by fertility, expresses the time of the other, alters the very substance of being, and establishes a relationship with the future. In this sense, infinite being, transcending itself, projecting itself into the future through procreation/birth, is not a possibility contained within a separate being, but it requires the alterity of the Beloved. To be infinite means to exist as a source, as a beginning. This conception of transcendence signifies liberation from the unity of the existing. It is a possibility that encompasses multiplicity within its own dynamics.

It is difficult to assert that through parenthood a person can be 'their future self' and 'their other self', to be themselves in another person, so that parenthood becomes a relationship with a foreign (another, different) self. Nevertheless, it is a fact that with the birth of a child, we enter a completely new dimension of existence. One could indeed say that in some sense parents are in their child, and the child is in their parents, but in essence, each child is an independent being, a subject distinct by the mere fact of their existence. Lévinas states: "I do not have my child; in a certain way, I am my child"[58], through procreation, "I becomes different and younger"[59]. In essence, one cannot both have one's own child and be one's own child. Every individual exists on their own account. Lévinas himself emphasises that everything can be exchanged between beings except for existence. My child is not another or a new version of myself; rather, it is another 'I', another person, another subject, another existence. It is difficult to assert that a person could be contained within their child, within their new 'self', and that biological fertility could resolve the tragedy of solitude. It can be said that the relationship with a child binds my I to itself, which is not me, liberating me from myself, from my own identity. In this way, multiplicity and transcendence emerge within existence itself.

In *Time and the Other*, Lévinas reflects on how one can remain oneself in the other without dissolving into that other and losing oneself in it. How can the I remain itself in some other, yet not be that I as it exists in the present,

[57] *Ibidem*, 325.

[58] Lévinas, *Czas i to, co inne*, 106.

[59] Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność*, 324.

that is, inevitably reducing itself to itself? He concludes that this is possible through fatherhood, which constitutes a relationship with someone else who is simultaneously myself. It is a "relationship of I with myself, which is, however, foreign to the I"[60]. Continuing in a biblical tone of discourse, Lévinas speaks constantly of the son. However, we could equally speak of the daughter. The daughter is not my creation, like the book I write or the painting I create. She is not an object produced by me or even by both parents, nor is she property. The relationship with a child cannot be described in terms of possession or authority. It is probably for this reason that Lévinas asserts that he does not *have* a child, yet in a certain way, he is his child. He observes that the category of being is more appropriate than having for describing this relationship. But even within the word being/existence, he places multiplicity and transcendence. The child is not an event that befalls me like the experiences of fate. Parenthood does not rely on sympathy, through which I might enter into the child's situation. Not through sympathy, but through being a mother, I am my daughter – I can say, paraphrasing Lévinas, who persistently writes about father and son (despite having first become the father of a daughter himself). The relationship of Eros opens up the perspective of the future. Lévinas writes: 'Thus, it is not according to the categories of cause, but according to the category of the father that freedom is created and time is realised'[61]. But just as well, as a result of the father and son, time is realised through the mother and daughter – with which, I presume, departing from biblical pathos, Lévinas would agree. A child, both daughter and son, comes into the world through the mother and father. And parenthood is not the renewal of the father in the son (the father in the daughter, the mother in the daughter, or the mother in the son) and the merging of the parent with the child, but it also encompasses the exteriority of the parent in relation to the child, a dialectical existence in the plural form. Lévinas repeatedly emphasises that the "continuity of his discourse is the continuity of dialectics"[62] emerging from the identity of hypostasis, from the attachment of the Self to itself, and aimed at sustaining the identity of the existent, but through the liberation of the Self from itself – which is facilitated by death, sexuality, and fatherhood, and achieves this through the introduction of a dualism affecting every subject (thus both man and woman). 'Existence itself becomes dualistic'[63]. In this

[60] Lévinas, *Czas i to, co inne*, 105.

[61] *Ibidem*, 107.

[62] *Ibidem*.

[63] *Ibidem*, 108.

way, Lévinas seeks a temporal transcending of a certain 'now' towards the mystery of the future.

However, what is perhaps most important is that the philosopher notes that this "forgiving future" does not necessarily have to pertain to one's biological child. It may signify that some other individual will connect to my past with the same desire for good that I have lived with, the same sensitivity to others that has infused my life.

> Moments do not indifferently adhere to one another, but rather stretch between the Other and myself. The future does not come to me from a swarm of indistinguishable possibilities, which flow towards my present and which I grasp; it comes to me through an absolute distance, the far shore of which can only be marked by someone absolutely different, another person – even my son – someone who, from that shore, connects with my past. And it is precisely because of this that another person can preserve the Desire that animated that past and which the otherness of each face further enhances and deepens. Time is neither the succession of moments that are indifferent to one another in mathematical time, nor a continuous duration of Bergson[64].

This means that in infinite existence after us, there may be the same sensitivity to another human being that was a reality of our existence. "Reality is what it is, but it will once again, once again, be referred to freely by someone and be granted forgiveness. Being infinite occurs as time, which means as a multiplicity of times intersected by dead time, which separates father from son"[65]. And the mother from the daughter – let us add. That other he in me may just as well mean other she in me.

Once again, we encounter the deeper dimension of discontinuous time, which is neither physical nor linear. In order for a gap to arise that liberates being from the constraints of its own fate, death is necessary – it is in this gap, in dead time, that infinity comes to pass. Resurrection is the fundamental moment of the unfolding of time. Time is discontinuous. "A moment endures, encountering death and being resurrected. Death and resurrection constitute time." This, according to Lévinas, is what constitutes the "mystery of time"[66].

Therefore, 'fatherhood' (as well as 'sonship') is not understood by Lévi-Strauss merely in a literal and empirical sense. It also has, and perhaps primarily has, a symbolic meaning. It is not only about bearing children

[64] Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność*, 342.

[65] *Ibidem*, 343.

[66] *Ibidem*.

(and especially not merely about begetting sons), but fundamentally about 'bringing forth good'. In this symbolic dimension, 'fatherhood' belongs to every individual regardless of whether they are a man, woman, son, or daughter. It is the responsibility for the other that makes me a "father". I then become the "father" of good. In *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* the philosopher ceases to use the metaphor of fatherhood altogether, replacing it with the metaphor of motherhood. In doing so, he emphasises that in order to avoid cruelty, violence, and war, one should "abandon masculine virtues"[67], to become weak, passive, and devoted to another, one should become the 'mother' of good. Through this good that a person 'gives birth' to, he can overcome his own death, as in it the dimension of God unfolds. By being good to another, I open myself to the action of external forces, independent of me, which are beyond my control, thus adopting a religious, liturgical, and servile attitude. This is indeed futile, Sisyphean. However, according to Lévinas, it is precisely this selfless act that allows for victory over death, as it directs itself towards what lies beyond my life and beyond my death, towards a time after my time, towards the time of another person and towards God Himself. Therefore, in a symbolic sense, begetting good signifies the possibility of doing good for another, even to the extent of offering one's own life to him. In this sense, to 'beget good' means to overcome death.

Lévinas emphasises that the metaphysical reality (*l'au-delà*) is separated from the temporal one (*l'en deça*), therefore man cannot move towards goodness except through evil, suffering, solitude, drama, and death. History breaks and destroys human goodness. The time of history does allow for the judgment of evil and the triumph of truth. However, it equally enables the questioning of that truth. Thus, as the philosopher asserts, a metaphysical point of reference is necessary, a conviction that not everything passes, that the all-consuming time must also have its limits, that what is most important endures, is always present, and will remain so. Merely the so-called "humorous eternity known as posterity"[68], as Camus somewhat sarcastically puts it, is insufficient for this.

Lévinas reflects on what death means for time. He acknowledges that the fundamental structure of time (distinct from economic time, external to the subject) is that the present is resurrected. The future is the resurrection of the present. Time is the resurrection of moments, and each successive moment is the resurrection of the 'self', yet in each following

[67] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Inaczej niż być lub ponad istotą*, trans. Piotr Mrówczyński (Warszawa: Fundacja Aletheia, 2000), 304.

[68] Camus, *Mit Syzyfa*, 120.

moment, the 'self' is not identical to itself. Its death in the empty interval is a condition for new births. It opens before it some "elsewhere" but this is "elsewhere than within itself". Time is a response to hope. And hope is a primary fact, without which the mystery of the workings of time cannot be understood. The agony of hope never becomes the past, for "when everything is lost, everything becomes possible"[69]. Lévinas writes: "Death: mortality as a requirement for the continuity of time"[70]. *Ergo*, time is possible through a certain relationship with death. Time exists precisely because of death, and it is through death that humanity arises. The occurrence of time is experienced more profoundly as the "resurrection of the indelible moment. [...] The «Personality» of being is defined by the necessity of time as the miraculous fertility of the moment, through which it begins anew as someone different"[71]. However, a person cannot ensure this otherness on their own; they cannot traverse time alone, nor redeem themselves. Salvation can only come from elsewhere, from the direction of another (second) person.

c) To die for another is to conquer death

However paradoxical it may sound, Lévinas acknowledges that a person overcomes death when they die for another person, that is, when their death is an act of responsibility. They transcend their own death through the desire for good for another. This desire places the will outside of oneself, thereby rendering it immortal, as goodness is not subject to death. However, Lévinas clearly emphasises that overcoming death does not involve entering into the reality of one's own immortality, nor moving towards eternal life and everlasting happiness. He asserts that the very idea of immortality is an expression of humanity's primordial selfishness, a selfishness of salvation. In his view, the only resistance that human mortal freedom can pose to death is a heroic awareness of it combined with hope, but not hope directed towards oneself, rather towards another person. "Patience emerges in a world where I can die for someone and because of someone. [...] In patience, the will pierces through the shell of its own selfishness and seemingly shifts the center of its own gravity outward, to desire as longings and goodness that are not limited by anything"[72]. In this understanding of patience, the will rises to life against death and for someone

[69] Lévinas, *Istniejący i istnienie*, 150.

[70] Lévinas, *Bóg, śmierć i czas*, 22.

[71] Lévinas, *Istniejący i istnienie*, 150–151.

[72] Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność*, 289.

else. When a person does not wish for themselves, their will is outside of them, and their own death no longer concerns them. Invoking the words of Twardowski that correspond with the thought of Lévinas, 'everything exists when it is not for oneself'[73]. In the kindness of being for another, human existence can transcend itself, beyond time. The desire for good for another allows for the transcendence of one's own death. Lévinas asserts that kindness is not subject to death, that the goodness we provide to alleviate another's suffering is immortal. If kindness is being for another, then in being for another, a person ceases to be oriented towards death. The philosopher thus claims that goodness is fruitful. Good begets good. By opting for self-sacrifice, the subject chooses a mature hope, participating in a meaning that death cannot eradicate. This is an attitude opposing despair, a fascination with self-destruction, akin to that which Gabriel Marcel described as "the memory of the future"[74]. It is religious in the sense that it exposes one to the influence of external forces, independent of human beings and beyond their control. However, the motivation for engaging in it does not necessarily (though it certainly may) have to be a conscious acknowledgment of a personal God.

According to Lévinas, the act of complete dedication to another causes resurrection to begin with death itself. He points to the existence of some order that negates what the philosopher calls the "insane meaning of death" or the "meaninglessness of death"[75]. He even asks: "Is it not necessary to die in order to transcend against nature and existence?"[76]. This question perfectly corresponds with Tolstoy's reflections found in the novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. Its main character, upon dying, "heard that word once more and repeated it in his soul: «Death has ceased, it is no more»"[77]. This would mean that human time is not fulfilled in death, but in eternity. Thus, when we die, death will come to an end and will no longer exist. Therefore, Twardowski is correct when he writes: "Love does not die in death"[78].

[73] Jan Twardowski, "Untitled," from *Sumienie ruszyło i nowe wiersze*, in Jan Twardowski, *„Trzeba iść dalej, czyli spacer biedronki". Wiersze wszystkie 1981–1993* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Warszawskiej, 1995), 149.

[74] Gabriel Marcel, "Zarys fenomenologii i metafizyki nadziei," in *Homo viator. Wstęp do metafizyki nadziei*, by Gabriel Marcel, trans. Piotr Lubicz (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1984), 55.

[75] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Imiona własne*, trans. Janusz Margański (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR, 2000), 20.

[76] *Ibidem*, 51.

[77] Lew Tołstoj, *Śmierć Iwana Iljicza*, trans. Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1960), 118.

[78] Jan Twardowski, "Takie proste," in Twardowski, *„Trzeba iść dalej, czyli spacer biedronki"*, 195.

Let us summarise: According to Lévinas, overcoming death does not imply one's own immortality. The only resistance we can offer is hope. However, it makes sense only when directed towards another person. It then becomes a desire for their good. To conquer the fear of death, one must realize that it primarily threatens them; thus, transforming self-concern into a responsibility for them. A person can die for another person, and this possibility transcends their existence. I can surpass Heidegger's 'being-towards-death' in the direction of another time, but that will be a time without me.

As we can see, Lévinas considers time as a relationship with the Infinite. Temporality, for him, is the Infinite in the finite: "the teleology of time is what is infinite"[79]. The philosopher defines time as à-Dieu, towards God. Time is a relationship of respect towards that which cannot be indifferent to humans, a relationship of non-indifference, restlessness, searching, patience, and the Desire for Infinity. "Time would thus be an explosion of the proper Infinite «more in less» – that which Descartes referred to as the idea of the Infinite"[80]. This relationship with the Infinite transforms into a responsibility for the other person in Lévinas's thought. "The relationship with the Infinite is the responsibility of a mortal being for another mortal being"[81].

4. Differently than it is – a past that cannot be regained

In *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* Lévinas acknowledges that the 'face' is the discovery within oneself of the responsibility for the other. However, this responsibility does not begin in the present. In a certain sense, the 'face of the neighbour' is already present within the subject before the neighbor appears.

The subject of Lévinas carries within itself the suffering of the Other. In *Autrement qu'être*... the philosopher no longer refers to the other person as the "Other" or the "Second", but calls them the "Neighbor" He writes that the suffering of the Neighbor reveals itself in the subject as a trace of an irretrievable past. Their "face" is a "trace of itself" a lost past, a forsaking of self. "In proximity, one hears a commandment that seems to come from an unmemorable past, which has never been present and whose beginning was not any freedom. This way of the Neighbor's coming is the face"[82].

[79] Lévinas, *Bóg, śmierć i czas*, 130.

[80] *Ibidem*, 135.

[81] *Ibidem*, 137.

[82] Lévinas, *Inaczej niż być*, 149.

In relation to the 'face of the neighbour', the subject is late, and this lateness is irreparable. "I am accused of being late"[83] – says Lévinas. In the "face" the neighbor does not appear as an entity. "Proximity is not part of the shared time of the clocks that makes meetings possible. It is a disruption"[84]. In the later works of Lévinas, diachrony occur not only between the subject and God, but also between the subject and another human being. The presence of the other leaves only a trace. Not only God, but also the neighbour is an irretrievable past, a remnant of their presence that has been preserved within the subject. The Lévinasian subject cannot catch up with the presence of the neighbour, for they are already late in relation to them, as that neighbour is no longer there. It is similar to someone who comprehends another's gesture or statement only after the situation has passed and the conversation has ended. Someone who has received a letter from a person who is no longer alive. As Kazimierz Wóycicki states: "Someone left a message at my door, but they had left before I could open it"[85]. The Lévinasian subject no longer meets the 'other' in the traditional sense, but rather encounters him within himself, or more accurately, he discovers the trace that the other has left behind. When he becomes aware of the call to responsibility that has shaken him, his consciousness finds itself confronted only with that trace. In attempting to comprehend these enigmatic thoughts, Lev Shestov may provide assistance by noting: "In our lives, there are such shocks that cause the durable and strong bonds between phenomena to fracture. The celestial vault above us ceases to be uniform and no longer obscures infinity"[86]. Let us imagine a situation of helpless despair and unwarranted guilt due to the death of a loved one, who is now only a memory, a trace left within us. One feels guilty for being alive, for having survived; their own existence becomes a burden. They feel morally obligated to take on the suffering of the one who is no longer here. They sense that it is actually they who should have died. "The face as a trace of itself, entrusted to my responsibility, which I cannot bear, as if I were responsible for its mortality and guilty for having survived"[87] – Lévinas states that there occurs something akin to a fragmentation of time, which the philosopher refers to as the diachrony of non-historical, unwritten time. The present becomes merely a trace of an irretrievable past.

[83] *Ibidem*.

[84] *Ibidem*, 150.

[85] Kazimierz Wóycicki, "Inny i Bóg. Nad książkami Emmanuela Lévinasa," *Więź*, no. 5 (1983): 24.

[86] Lew Szestow, *Sola fide. Tylko przez wiarę*, trans. Cezary Wodziński (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1995), 60.

[87] Lévinas, *Inaczej niż być*, 153.

The fact that the twin exists within me already, while at the same time, I am inherently late in relation to him, causes a fragmentation of my subjective identity: "my openness to him, before he even appears, my tardiness in relation to him, my submission disrupts the core of my identity"[88] – states Lévinas. "The 'face' is like an 'abyss'"[89] tearing apart the essence of being. When the subject approaches her, her corporeal form disappears, retreating into the past. The 'face' is clothed in skin, but it predates the skin – this is emphasized by the philosopher. This is because within it, "in a mysterious manner, like a blinking light'"[90] God manifests itself. One cannot help a person who is no longer alive. He is already within me as my suffering for him. However, this suffering should not numb me to the 'faces' I encounter beside me, to the life that still exists and is passing before my eyes.

Summary

In his reflections on time, Lévinas aims to demonstrate that time is not homogeneous, but rather consists of different levels. Certainly, the philosopher does not investigate objective, physical, measurable time, but rather the typically human time, which is complex, uneven, and dialectical. This 'source time' signifies for Lévinas "the Infinite in the finite", resurrection through dying.

First, he defines time as the realisation of the present through human effort, then as the human relationship with an event of the future, even in the form of death (which opens up to the mystery of the future precisely), and finally as an interpersonal relationship. The philosopher contends that time is a subjective relationship to another person: through the creation and nurturing of the human world, through begetting and giving birth to goodness, through the selfless sacrifices made throughout one's life (sacrifices that, let us clearly emphasise, do not signify a singular, dramatic act before death that would negate or justify the evil done to others over the course of a lifetime). Time, as an interpersonal relationship, ultimately transforms in Lévinas' view into a relationship with the Infinite.

We began with St. Augustine, and now this final thought leads us back to him again. For it was indeed the bishop of Hippo who wrote that time could not pass until it was created by God. It is He, "in the height of always present eternity, who is before all past and after all future"[91], He is the

[88] *Ibidem*, 150.

[89] *Ibidem*.

[90] *Ibidem*, 153.

[91] Św. Augustyn, *Wyznania*, 331.

source, the creator of all time. However, in St. Augustine, we also find the thought that it is man who measures time within his own mind, and perhaps time is indeed an extension of the mind itself[92]. This, in turn, would align with Kant's theses on *a priori* forms of sensory knowledge. In his philosophy, Lévinas also refers to Kant, particularly to his famous four questions. He acknowledges that while the question: *What can I know?* fundamentally leads to the finite world, the questions: *What should I do?* and *What can I expect?* reach further and to different realms. They cannot be reduced to the understanding of finite being, as they pertain to the duty and salvation of humanity. According to Lévinas, Kant's practical philosophy demonstrates that in the history of philosophy, there can be meanings other than finitude. The world accessible to hope is the genuine motivation for hope. Indeed, the great strength of Kant's practical philosophy lies in the capacity to think beyond time through hope.

For both Lévi-Strauss and Bachelard, time is one of the dimensions of hope. This hope occurs within time, yet simultaneously transcends it. It is a hope that unveils a dimension of originality within finite time. It represents a meaning that emerges from within hopelessness. A meaning that transcends death.

The original time referred to by Lévinas and Bachelard is hope. Both of them rely on it, even if it is utopian, counting on the realisation of what does not yet exist and it is uncertain whether it ever will. Similarly, in the philosophy of Bloch, who is frequently cited by Lévinas, he used to say: *spero ergo ero* – I hope, therefore I will be.

And since we are on the subject of Bloch, whose words we have cited as the motto of our reflections on time, one last thought to conclude. In the book *Traces*, Bloch reminds us that primordial wonder is the source of all philosophical questions: "In any case, in philosophy, this beginning has never been eradicated; it resonates significantly in all great systems, distinguishing metaphysics from mere accountants of explanations of the world. It is also a link between philosophy and youth: the wisdom of old age in the early, unbribed freshness of seventeen-year-old primal wonder"[93].

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[92] *Ibidem*, 334.

[93] Ernst Bloch, "Zdziwienie," in Ernst Bloch, *Ślady*, trans. Anna Czajka (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2012), 198.

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"I Hope, Therefore I Will Be": On the Concept of Time in the Philosophy of Lévinás, Bloch, and Bachelard

Abstract

The paper proposes an analysis of the philosophy of Lévinás, Bloch, and Bachelard in terms of their reflections on the non-homogeneity and dialectical nature of time.

The author seeks to demonstrate that alongside objective and measurable time, there exists a distinctly human time, which serves as a structural element of human existence and the human world. To this end, she analyses the thought of Lévinas, concluding that, in light of this philosophy, time is a subjective relationship to another person: through the creation and recreation of the human world, through the generation and birth of good, and through the selfless sacrifice that occurs throughout one's life.

The author notes that a similar concept of discontinuous time, time realised by humans, is also present in the works of Gaston Bachelard, who, in his philosophy of creative imagination, described the dialectic of poetic time as "vertical time".

In light of these analyses, it turns out that instead of asking what time is, one should rather ask who time is. It is not a relation with an end, but with another (human), and through this also with the Other (the Absolute).

In a basic understanding aligning with the philosophy of dialogue, the condition of time is intersubjective relations. Time comes to life in a face-to-face situation with another person. The author tries to capture time through intersubjective relations, noting that time is the very essence of these relationships. So, she presents a dialogic concept of time, where time is an intersubjective relation, and the dialectic of time is essentially a dialogue.

By examining the philosophy of Lévinas, the author concludes that a person overcomes death when they die for another person, meaning that their death is an act of responsibility. In this understanding, goodness is not subject to death, as the good with which we surround the suffering of another is immortal. If goodness is existence for the other, then by being for the other, a person ceases to be oriented

towards death. The only resistance we can put up against death is hope. However, hope only makes sense when directed towards another human being. The primordial time that Lévinas and Bachelard speak of is hope. Both emphasise it, even if it is utopian, relying on the realisation of what is not yet present and uncertain if it will ever be. This aligns with the philosophy of Ernst Bloch, who used to say: *spero ergo ero* – I hope, therefore I will be.

Keywords: time, hope, creativity, Lévinas, Bachelard, Bloch

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Mam nadzieję, więc będę, czyli o czasie w filozofii Lévinasa i Bachelarda

Streszczenie

Anna Kamińska-Malandain w swoim artykule zawarła analizę filozofii E. Lévinasa oraz G. Bachelarda pod kątem rozważań na temat niejednorodności i dialektyczności czasu. Autorka chce dowieść, że obok czasu obiektywnego i mierzalnego istnieje czas typowo ludzki, będący strukturalnym elementem istnienia człowieka i ludzkiego świata. W tym celu analizuje myśl Lévinasa. Dochodzi przy tym do wniosku, że w świetle tej filozofii czas to podmiotowa relacja do drugiego człowieka: poprzez tworzenie i stwarzanie ludzkiego świata, poprzez płodzenie i rodzenie dobra i poprzez bezinteresowne poświęcenie dokonujące się w ciągu całego życia. Autorka zauważa, że podobna koncepcja czasu nieciągłego, czasu urzeczywistnianego przez człowieka, występuje również u Gastona Bachelarda – w swojej filozofii wyobraźni twórczej opisał on dialektykę czasu poetyckiego jako „czasu pionowego". W świetle tych analiz okazuje się, że zamiast pytać *czym*, należałoby raczej zapytać *kim* jest czas. Nie jest on bowiem relacją z kresem, ale z innym (człowiekiem), a poprzez to także z Innym (Absolutem). W przyjętym rozumieniu, zasadniczo zgodnym z filozofią dialogu, warunkiem czasu są relacje międzypodmiotowe. Czas urzeczywistnia się w sytuacji stanięcia twarzą w twarz z innym człowiekiem. Autorka próbuje uchwycić czas poprzez relacje intersubiektywne, konstatując, iż stanowi on samą istotę tych relacji. Przedstawia więc dialogiczną koncepcję czasu, w której czas jest relacją intersubiektywną, a dialektyka czasu jest dialogiem. Badając filozofię Lévinasa, autorka dochodzi do wniosku, że człowiek pokonuje śmierć, gdy umiera dla innego człowieka: gdy jego śmierć jest aktem odpowiedzialności. W przyjętym rozumieniu dobroć nie podlega śmierci, gdyż dobro, którym otaczamy cierpienie drugiego, jest

nieśmiertelne. Jeżeli dobro jest byciem dla drugiego, to będąc dla drugiego, człowiek przestaje być ku śmierci. Jedynym oporem, jaki możemy postawić śmierci, jest nadzieja. Ma ona jednak sens tylko wtedy, gdy kieruje się ku innemu człowiekowi. Czas źródłowy, o którym mówią Lévinas i Bachelard, jest nadzieją. Obaj stawiają na nią; choćby była utopijna, licząca na urzeczywistnienie tego, czego jeszcze nie ma i wcale nie wiadomo, czy będzie. Podobnie jak w filozofii Ernsta Blocha, który mawiał: *spero ergo ero* – „mam nadzieję, więc będę".

Słowa kluczowe: czas, nadzieja, twórczość, Lévinas, Bachelard, Bloch

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