

Bonhoeffer's Ethically Oriented Self: Responsible 'As a Human Being'

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SHORT ABSTRACT

Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers a vibrant, theological depiction of the self constituted by and for the other in responsibility. The thesis argues that the concept of orientation is crucial for understanding this self; the self is a being oriented to, or away from, the other. To grasp the distinctiveness of Bonhoeffer's self this thesis aims to open up critical conversation with his historical contemporaries, Emmanuel Levinas and Simone Weil. Like Levinas, Bonhoeffer depicts the self as confronted by the other. Yet unlike Levinas, Bonhoeffer's other does not render the self a 'host-hostage'. An oriented self, grounded in Bonhoeffer's theology, is neither dominating nor other-dominated. Bringing Bonhoeffer and Weil into critical dialogue with one another helps to describe the precise way in which the self is responsible for the other. Conversation with Weil refines Bonhoeffer's account of responsibility by integrating her account of attention into his account of existing on behalf of another. It is also neither self-affirming nor self-negating.

The first chapter outlines two recent conceptions of the self as oriented; but each, as will be demonstrated, does not recognise fully the ethical contours of the oriented self. The second chapter examines in detail Bonhoeffer's contributions to a Christological account of the responsibly oriented self. Integral to this account are the images of 'the heart turned in on itself' (*cor curvum in se*) and

Christ who is fundamentally 'for' the other. The third chapter converses with Emmanuel Levinas, both constructively and critically. Of help is Levinas's reading of the other as a confrontation to the self. His rendering of the other as dominating, or holding hostage, the self is a serious issue. Such a construction resists positive elements of the self-other relation. The fourth chapter investigates what conversation with Simone Weil can offer to Bonhoeffer's framework. Her concept of attention helps to articulate how the self becomes a self through engagement with another. The fifth chapter presents Adolph Eichmann, as portrayed by Hannah Arendt, as the supreme and pivotal opposite of attentive responsibility. In Eichmann's irresponsibility and disunity [while doing his 'duties'] one finds justification for a fundamental re-working of ethics in a Bonhoefferian vein. The image of the ethically blind *cor curvum in se* exposes Eichmann's fundamental issue. In contrast, Bonhoeffer's ethically oriented self both perceives the other and gives of itself as for that other.

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LONG ABSTRACT

Introduction: *Orientation as an Ethical Concept*

In contrast to those who question the relation between the self and theological ethics, this thesis argues that a 'responsible self', drawing heavily from the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and informed by Simone Weil, best responds to theological questions about self-knowledge, transcendence/immanence and relationality. Two claims support this argument. First, Bonhoeffer, when placed in conversation with Levinas, presents a viable and a persuasive account of the theologically responsible self. Second, the thesis argues that Simone Weil fills out a theological account of a responsible self with her concept of attention. Both claims are theological insofar as they are Christological. But what is the content of this responsibility? It is being like Christ, 'the new man', who is 'both entirely for his human fellows and fully oriented without fail to the God he worships and serves'.¹

Read together, the two theologically significant conceptions of responsibility [Bonhoeffer] and attention [Weil] help to articulate a vision of the responsible

¹ Tanner, Kathryn, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 17.

self oriented towards the other. Weil's description of attending to the other gives to Bonhoeffer's responsible self the crucial distinction of being oriented to and being oriented for the other. The ethical power of Weil's account of attention, when integrated into an account of responsibility, manifests itself in a reading of Hannah Arendt's description of Adolph Eichmann. Eichmann exemplifies both the poverty of what Bonhoeffer calls 'ethical systems' [of duty, in Eichmann's case] and the importance of attention as the power to 'see' the other. Christine Schliesser notes that there are few gaps in Bonhoeffer scholarship left.² While this may be true, there is much more to be said by placing Bonhoeffer in conversation with his contemporaries in philosophical theology. Paul Ricoeur explicitly acknowledges the need for dialogue between Bonhoeffer and Weil.³

Chapter 1: *Considering Contemporary Selves: Two Approaches*

Before discussing the contours of a responsible self, the conversation between Bonhoeffer, Levinas and Weil needs to be situated. David Ford (1999) and Michael Purcell (2006) each provide a conception of the self as to some degree 'oriented'. In addition, both theologians locate this orientation in relation to Christ. Ford's reading of the self relies heavily on Jüngel and Levinas. Ford's project emphasises the theological promise of an ethic of orientation, while also noting the need for an account of responsibility within Christian ethics. Ford describes a self that, through liturgical practice of eucharist and worship, orients

² Schliesser, Christine, *Everyone Who Acts Responsibly Becomes Guilty: Bonhoeffer's Concept of Accepting Guilt* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 2.

³ Gregor, Brian, 'Bonhoeffer's "Christian Social Philosophy": Conscience, Alterity, and the Moment of Ethical Responsibility' in *Bonhoeffer and Continental Thought: Cruciform Philosophy* ed. Brian Gregor and Jens Zimmermann (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 171.

itself to the other. Ford emphasises worship as the ultimate stance of the self. Although Ford uses Bonhoeffer to illustrate concepts of 'polyphonic living' and 'holiness', he does not draw on Bonhoeffer's ethical insight in dialogue with Levinas. In contrast, this thesis will demonstrate that Bonhoeffer's *Stellvertretung* links subjectivity and ethics cohesively.

Like Ford, Purcell draws on Levinas to articulate a 'liturgical self'. Inherent in this concept is the idea of the oriented self. Specifically, Purcell notes that the theological self is *oriented to Christ*. Purcell's use of the metaphor of 'awakening' provides a helpful way of conceiving a theological account of subjectivity, especially when understood in contrast to Bonhoeffer's own emphasis on the heart turned in on itself. Yet, Purcell's account does not reference Bonhoeffer. This chapter argues that Bonhoeffer's ethically oriented self offers a more persuasive account of theological responsibility than does a theological reading of Levinas. Purcell's emphasis on the asymmetrical nature of the self-other relation can be found in Bonhoeffer as well as Levinas.

This thesis engages Bonhoeffer and Weil in order to reveal the contours of a responsible self. This self reveals itself as an oriented self. Following a rich biblical tradition of *metanoia*, or turning, this chapter argues that metaphors of orientation capture the essence of Bonhoeffer's concept of self while also providing a strong ethical flavour to the self. In addition to the positive possibility of being oriented towards the other, a negative possibility exists. While the heart turned in on itself, that is, the *cor curvum in se*, is not strictly

original to Bonhoeffer, his originality is rendering this metaphor of the sinful self the ethical measure of the self.

Chapter 2: *Bonhoeffer's Contribution to Discussions of Selfhood: The Responsibly Oriented Self*

Bonhoeffer's theological imagery of the heart's orientation provides a valuable groundwork for a conception of the person as an ethically oriented, or responsible, self. Bonhoeffer's orientational model of subjectivity discloses both the difficulty and promise of articulating an ethical self. There are three primary advantages to such a model. First, the orientational model locates the self squarely in relationship to both the human and the divine other. Second, it provides a context for acknowledging a fundamental opacity of the self, while yet maintaining some sense of self-unity. Third, the orientational model acknowledges the contingent and contextual nature of ethical decision-making.

For Bonhoeffer, the human/divine other serves as a barrier and challenge to the self as well as the locus of authentic personhood. Although the self is irrevocably social, it is also challenged by the encounter with the human/divine other. This claim about the other is theological, or more properly, Christological in that the relation to the other depends entirely on the orientation of Jesus Christ.

Bonhoeffer holds up Christ as the paradigmatic human in his love for the other. Christ's self-other relation is the very example of both theological selfhood and ethics. As Bonhoeffer's Christ is fundamentally oriented to the human and divine other, so can every human being be oriented to the other. This model of

orientational subjectivity has room for acknowledgment that, in the words of Judith Butler, 'My account of myself is partial, haunted by that for which I can devise no definitive story'.⁴ The Christologically grounded complicity between subjectivity and ethics gives responsibility a theologically robust framework for an ongoing story of orientation.

Bonhoeffer distinguishes between human being 'in Adam' and 'in Christ'. Although all human beings are limited, contingent creatures, human beings in Adam and in Christ respond differently to their limitation. Human beings in Adam reject their limitation, and seek to establish their dominance over the world and others. Human being in Adam finds itself in solitude, illusion and disunity. Human beings in Christ, on the other hand, desire to be conformed to Christ. They become like Christ, who himself desires community with God and with others. This orientation of the self in Christ outwards leads to concrete responsibility. As Christ is responsible as a 'vicarious representative' for all others, so the human being in Christ seeks to be responsible for others. In vicarious representative action the self in Christ acts freely on behalf of others, standing where they cannot. Standing on behalf of others guides the self in Christ into true humanity. Ethical orientation, in conformation to Christ, allows human beings to be free creatures before God and others.

Chapter 3: *Bound But Not Held Hostage: Bonhoeffer and Levinas in Conversation*

⁴ Butler, Judith, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 40.

Implicit in many contemporary discussions of responsibility is Levinas, who is widely credited with reintroducing ethics into contemporary Continental theology. Theologians have attempted to appropriate Levinas for their own purposes. Despite his currency in much Continental theology on the self, this chapter demonstrates the decisive factors making Levinas's work an inadequate ground for a theological account of responsibility. Levinas presents a powerful argument for the ethical self as wholly bound to the other. For Levinas, the self is not only not the master of its domain, but profoundly indebted to the other who confronts it. Levinas accentuates the idea that the self is not its own master, but the 'hostage' of another who comes to it on its own terms. The hostage/host tension resonates with Bonhoeffer's own account of the bound/binding self. Yet, Levinas's approach to responsibility has two decisive problems for Christian theologians. First, although Levinas (like Bonhoeffer) understands well the problem of the self turned in on itself, he is unable to release the self from itself. Second, Levinas's privileging of absolute transcendence undermines the very concreteness and relationality that 'ethics as first philosophy' may imply. Levinas seems to face a problem: either the self is freed by a transcendent Other, who is no longer concrete or the self has no way to emerge from its solipsism. For Bonhoeffer these are critical issues for Christian ethics, especially for the self's relation to the other. This chapter will argue that Bonhoeffer's theology resists Levinas's criticisms of theology. Taking seriously Levinas's privileging of the other, Bonhoeffer will be shown to preserve alterity while also allowing for genuine relation with the other.

Chapter 4: *Being Seen as Well as Heard: Integrating Weil's 'Attention' into an Account of the Other-Oriented Self*

Despite the promise of Bonhoeffer's approach to the other, it is not enough however, to simply put forth Bonhoeffer's self-other relation as adequate for understanding personhood and responsibility. His writing on personhood is sporadic and far from systematic. Furthermore, while he provides a provisional answer to the question of *what* the self is, that is, a self beholden to another, he presents precious little in terms of *how* that self stands on behalf of the other. Simone Weil's 'attending to the other' serves to demonstrate how, in the words of Bonhoeffer, the self relates to the other as a 'vicarious representative', doing for the other what they cannot do for themselves. By reading Weil and Bonhoeffer together on this relation, a much fuller conception of how the theological self exists for and with others becomes possible. There are two specific ways attention gives content to a formal account of responsibility. First, for Weil attention is not a vague orientation to another. Instead, true attention to the other is a kenotic giving of one's energy, even of oneself, for another. Second, Weil's emphasis on attention as a perceptive and cognitive form of action highlights the ease with which a self can miss the call of the other on itself. Levinas attests to the crucial visual function of ethics when he draws on the metaphor of the 'face'. While both Bonhoeffer and Levinas assume that the self experiences and knows the other, Weil fills out the possibility that a self may never encounter the other cognitively and perceptively through attention. Weil invokes as support the parable of the Good Samaritan within the New Testament. Real ethical engagement with the other requires mindful attending. Weil treats

attention as an ethical concept in her account of the self. Like both Bonhoeffer and Levinas, Weil criticises the self-positing self as an insular and an enslaved self. She, however, contributes a helpful depth to a visual account of an other-oriented self.

Chapter 5: *Embracing Pontius Pilate: Adolph Eichmann as Personification of Irresponsibility*

The aim of setting up conversations between Bonhoeffer and Weil and Bonhoeffer and Levinas is to uncover an attentive, responsible self. In this context, Hannah Arendt's depiction of Adolph Eichmann in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* serves as a sobering reminder of the extremely unethical consequences of irresponsibility and inattention. Eichmann, who adhered quite carefully to what he thought was his duty and responsibility, displays the horrifying inadequacy of treating his 'duties' as ethical. When Bonhoeffer's criticism of abstract ethics, presented in *Ethics*, is applied to Eichmann, the latter is misled by these 'ethically' conceived duties. As a self inattentive to others, Eichmann has no ethical means to resist complicity in evil. Without attention as the ability and power to see the other ethically, Eichmann himself is irresponsible. Eichmann's failure to be, in Bonhoeffer's sense, an attentive self for others results in profound irresponsibility. Even though Eichmann professes an ethical code, he is far from genuinely ethical. As Bonhoeffer writes, 'The academic question about an ethical system seems to be the most superfluous of all questions' (DBWE 6:76). It is argued here that the crucial ethical question for theology today is not about the ethical system, but about the encounter with the

concrete other. Bonhoeffer's self both perceives the other attentively and gives of itself 'as for another'.

Eichmann personifies the irresponsible self in two ways. First, Eichmann cannot see anything other than himself as having a claim upon his person. His gaze is focused squarely on his own ends. Whether his motivation is personal gain or the assuaging of his conscience, Eichmann is turned in on himself. In a striking passage Arendt chronicles Eichmann's thought process. At the moment when Eichmann recognised resistance to the Final Solution would leave him in the vast minority, 'I sensed a kind of Pontius Pilate feeling, for I felt free of all guilt' (Arendt 2006:114). Following Bonhoeffer's analysis of the *cor curvum in se*, the decisive barrier for Eichmann is himself.

Second, Arendt observes that Eichmann is unable to think. Eichmann cannot consider another because to do so requires thinking by a unified self and not an unthinking self dispersed by various 'duties' and diverse orientations; wholeness, for Bonhoeffer, requires a singular orientation towards the divine Other. The inbreaking of Christ, and the consequent restoration of wholeness, never occurs for Eichmann. Instead, he serves as a stark example of the *cor curvum in se*. He is a disunited self trapped and blinded by his solipsistic orientation. Eichmann's disunity paves the way for other orientations, e.g. to good society and to success, to dictate Eichmann's moral course.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has demonstrated that while Bonhoeffer and Weil are persuasive individually, integrating Weil's account of attention into Bonhoeffer's ethically oriented self places attention at the heart of a responsible self. This closing piece offers three broad conclusions of the thesis and three points for further thought. The first conclusion of the thesis is that the ethically-oriented self is a responsive self. Bonhoeffer, Levinas and Weil all maintain that the self does not condition itself from a position of power or strength. Instead, the self is commanded and conditioned by the other. Both the divine and the human other make claims upon the self which cannot be evaded. The self for others is first a self of response.

Second, from this unity, theological ethics is grounded in the concrete realities of the self and its relationships. Such a model fortifies accounts of the self's essential relationality. It is not enough to acknowledge the communal tendency of human beings; there can be profoundly evil human communities. Rather, the emphasis on orientation focuses on freely giving oneself for another as the context for human relationality. The responsive character of this orientation is exemplified in Bonhoeffer's description of the Christ-human encounter as an *interrogative* encounter (DBWE 10:302-303). This unity of self grounds the responsible self. This model presents human selfhood as both a gift and a choice. In so doing this account neither embraces Levinas's domination of the self by the other nor sets up human beings as their own masters.

In addition to laying out general conclusions of the thesis, this closing piece proposes directions for further reflection. First, Bonhoeffer considers

communities, as well as individuals, as called to responsibility. What might it mean for communities, at every level, to be responsible? Second, this thesis considers the concept of an ethical gaze, a way of looking at another. This opens up reflection on the import and consequences of information technologies, and particularly social networking. Third, while Bonhoeffer and Weil comment briefly on the role of the Holy Spirit in ethical deliberation, they do not devote significant space to the question. How might the Holy Spirit inform ethics generally, and 'ways of looking' at others specifically? These questions go beyond the purview of this thesis, but they suggest points for further consideration.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Notes: Abbreviations for primary texts are below. Secondary literature is cited in footnotes. Biblical references are cited in text when directly quoted.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

CC	<i>Christ the Center</i>
DBWE 1	<i>Sanctorum Communio</i>
DBWE 2	<i>Act and Being</i>
DBWE 3	<i>Creation and Fall</i>
DBWE 4	<i>Discipleship</i>
DBWE 5	<i>Life Together</i>
DBWE 6	<i>Ethics</i>
DBWE 8	<i>Letters and Papers from Prison</i>
DBWE 10	<i>Barcelona, Berlin, New York: 1928-1931</i>
DBWE 12	<i>Berlin 1932-1933</i>
LPP	<i>Letters and Papers from Prison(SCM Edition)</i>
NRS	<i>No Rusty Swords</i>

Emmanuel Levinas:

BPW	<i>Basic Philosophical Writings</i>
EE	<i>Existence and Existents</i>
EN	<i>Entre Nous</i>
LR	<i>The Levinas Reader</i>
OBBE	<i>Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence</i>
OE	<i>On Escape</i>
TI	<i>Totality and Infinity</i>

Simone Weil:

FLN	<i>First and Last Notebooks</i>
GG	<i>Gravity and Grace</i>
LP	<i>Letter to a Priest</i>
SWA	<i>The Simone Weil Anthology</i>
WFG	<i>Waiting for God</i>

Biblical Text:

NASB	<i>New American Standard Bible</i>
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Introduction

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his essay 'Ethics as Formation', describes the precarious position of ethics in his context. He writes,

Today we have villains and saints again, in public view...That evil appears in the form of light, of beneficence, of faithfulness, of renewal, that it appears in the form of historical necessity, of social justice, is for the commonsense observer a clear confirmation of its profound evilness. Ethical theorists, on the hand, are blinded by it. With their preconceived concepts they cannot grasp what is real, let alone seriously encounter something whose essence and power they don't even recognize. Those who are committed to an ethical agenda are compelled to a senseless waste of their energies (DBWE 6:76-77).

Bonhoeffer sketches how several major approaches to ethics fail, in fact, to be ethical. Reasonable people are crushed by opposing positions and fall into resignation. The ethical fanatic is deceived by real evil, and like a bull charging a matador 'finally tire and suffer defeat' (DBWE 6:78). People of conscience are torn apart by compromises until they deceive themselves in order to avoid despair. People of duty cannot engage evil at its core; they are unable to undertake bold, responsible action. People of freedom lose sight of the good amidst their compromises, to the point that they no longer know the better decision. Finally, people of virtue keep themselves 'clean', but at the cost of being blind to the injustice around them. Bonhoeffer writes, "They must close their eyes and ears to the injustice around them. Only at the cost of self-deception can they keep their private blamelessness clean from the stains of responsible action in the world' (DBWE 6:80). Where then does that leave those who take seriously Bonhoeffer's criticism of Christian ethics?

Drawing on Bonhoeffer's theology, this thesis answers this question through the concept of an ethically-oriented self. Three broad points must be made. First, in turning the discussion to one of the self, the emphasis falls not on principles which forever determine right conduct, but on the *sort of human being one is to be*. It is a way of being within the world which determines one's ethical character. Second, the language of orientation points towards a stance, or disposition, of the self towards those around it. Orientation signifies more than merely being situated within a context. It is a desire of the human being. Third, this oriented self is ethical insofar as the stance it takes is decidedly 'for' the other. To be ethically-oriented is to desire to be for the other.

This thesis turns to Bonhoeffer's work to tease out a vibrant theological depiction of the self. In Bonhoeffer one finds a theological account of a self constituted by and existing for the other. Crucially, Bonhoeffer's account is thoroughly Christological; both his self and his ethics are unintelligible apart from Christ revealed in Christian scripture. In the pursuit of a theological and ethical self, the thesis stages conversations between Bonhoeffer, Emmanuel Levinas and Simone Weil. It concludes with extended reflection on this ethical self in relation to Hannah Arendt's presentation of Adolph Eichmann in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. The ethically oriented self attends to the other in responsibility, answering the call placed upon it by the other. This self, in attending to the other, understands itself as free only to this end. The self exists for God and for the concrete neighbour.

Conversation with Levinas helps to develop the tenor of the self-other relation. Levinas characterises the self-other encounter as one of confrontation. Bonhoeffer too implies confrontational potential within the self-other encounter. Conversation with Levinas draws out this implied confrontation within Bonhoeffer's own account. In addition, both thinkers characterise the response of the self to this confrontation as responsibility. Considering Bonhoeffer and Levinas alongside one another clarifies the content of their respective accounts of responsibility. Weil may seem a more unlikely interlocutor for Bonhoeffer than Levinas, but Weil too helps clarify the nature of the ethically oriented self. Her concept of attention provides insight into how the self orients to the other. In attention the self engages but does not dominate the other. The attentive self both perceives and, in a sense, recreates the other. This engagement between self and other, for Weil, comes at cost to the self. This account of an attentive self presents a sharp contrast to Arendt's account of Eichmann's self. For Arendt Eichmann represents an unthinking self. Integrating Weil's insights about perceiving the other, Eichmann is also an ethically blind self. Eichmann's failure to be a thinking and a seeing self matches his failure to act ethically for the other. The example of Eichmann illustrates, by contrast, the crucial connection of selfhood and ethics in the ethically oriented self.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter One develops the theme of ethical orientation through engagement with two contemporary accounts of theological selfhood. The concept of orientation describes the stance of the self in relation to the other. Both David Ford's *Self and*

*Salvation*¹ and Michael Purcell's *Levinas and Theology*² develop implicitly an orientational account of the self. The concept of self which appears in their work is thoroughly theological. Although each in their own way reference the ethical self and Christ, neither develop an ethically oriented self based on Bonhoeffer's Christology. They do, however, provide conceptual tools for considering the concept of ethical orientation. Ford and Purcell offer accounts of the self which highlight the ethical character of selfhood, albeit in different ways.

Chapter Two advances Bonhoeffer's implicit account of the self as one of an ethically oriented self. The chapter proceeds through Bonhoeffer's major texts, accentuating themes which support the image of an ethically oriented self. Having emphasised the orientational character of Bonhoeffer's self, the argument turns to the content and the implications of that ethical orientation. The concept of responsibility, for Bonhoeffer, describes the ethical content of the self's orientation. The contours of Bonhoeffer's account of the responsible self are teased out, with specific focus on the Christological element of Bonhoeffer's responsibility. The self in relation to Christ is both called into question and responsible. As the self finds itself in Christ, it is turned away from itself towards the concrete neighbour. This Christological and responsible self is located only within the concrete world.

Chapter Three places Bonhoeffer in conversation with Levinas. This staged conversation stresses the character of the self's encounter with the other. Like

¹ Ford, David, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

² Purcell, Michael, *Levinas and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Levinas, Bonhoeffer's self is challenged by the other. However, for Bonhoeffer the challenge of alterity stems not solely from the human other, but also from the divine other. Bonhoeffer's distinctively Christological account of the self-other relation preserves alterity, while also making room for a real relation between self and other. Christian theology, therefore, can learn from Levinas while responding differently to his diagnosis of the problem. While Bonhoeffer preserves the challenging tenor of this encounter, he also characterises that encounter as one of joy and human becoming. Bonhoeffer's Christological rendering of alterity's challenge provides a persuasive account of how the self is transformed by the other towards responsibility. This transformation towards responsibility entails joy. Invoking Purcell, it is an awakening to life.

Chapter Four initiates a conversation with Weil. Having clarified a concept of responsible selfhood through conversation with Levinas, Weil offers further conceptual development of this responsibility. Both Bonhoeffer and Levinas describe the responsibility of the self for the other as a transformation from an exterior source. While the exterior provocation of the self by the other is critical to the construction of the self developed here, Weil describes the ethical role of the self in this process through her concept of attention. In attention, Weil articulates the transformative potential of the self on behalf of the other.

Attending to the other, in imitation of Christ, gives fuller expression to Bonhoeffer's own account of responsibility as 'vicarious representative action', or *Stellvertretung*. Attention to the other contains both perceptive and creative potential. The attentive and responsible self not only perceives the other, but exists for that other in responsibility. This perceptive and creative faculty,

expressed in the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan, requires a core sense of truthfulness. Each of these aspects of attention – perceptive, creative and truthful – contributes to an account of an ethically oriented self attentive to others.

Chapter Five examines an egregious example of irresponsibility, or the refusal to exist ‘for’ others. Hannah Arendt’s presentation of Adolph Eichmann in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* offers a striking picture of the interrelation between discussions of philosophical theology and ethics. The provocation and unintelligibility of the example of Eichmann stems from this interweaving of questions. As Arendt notes, Eichmann is a conundrum for ethics. He is neither just a liar nor amoral; Eichmann is not a monster in the traditional sense. Yet, he facilitates murder on an enormous scale. Eichmann has no sense of himself as an oriented being. This lack of ethical orientation to the other crucially hampers his ability to engage in authentic responsibility. He neither perceives nor engages the other. He is the consummately *irresponsible* and *inattentive* self. Effectively, Eichmann is ethically blind. In addition, Eichmann is also unreflective; he cannot consider others. Both Eichmann’s ethical blindness and lack of thought follow from, in Bonhoeffer’s terms, his disunity of self. This disunity precludes him from venturing free, responsible action on behalf of another. The biblical metaphor of hardness of heart highlights Eichmann’s lack of orientation to the other. At every juncture he resists or evades the other.

The Conclusion reflects on three conclusions and three possible points of further exploration for the thesis. The first conclusion focuses on the crucially related disciplines of theological selfhood and ethics. Arendt’s presentation of Eichmann

demonstrates the need for these two areas to thought about alongside one another. Refocusing discussions of theological ethics on ethical *selves* offers a helpful way forward. The second conclusion emphasises the ethical priority of response. The self is always called upon for a response by the other. The third conclusion stresses the relational character of human life. For Bonhoeffer and Levinas, there is no self in isolation.

The first point for further reflection probes the role responsibility might have for larger communities. Can responsibility helpfully inform relationality on a level larger than the individual? The second point for reflection considers the ethical import of one's gaze. What would an account of ethical gaze contribute to discussions regarding information technologies, where vision is the immediate sense engaged? The third point of reflection questions what role the Holy Spirit might play in concepts of ethical orientation and ethical gaze. These are points of further research and they extend far beyond this thesis. Nevertheless, they illustrate the malleability and fecundity of the concept of an ethically oriented self.

A Few Words on Method

There are three reasons to place Levinas and Weil in conversation with Bonhoeffer. First, all three critically engage prior conceptions of the self-other relation. Specifically, they allege that philosophical forerunners miscast the relation between the self and the other. This miscasting results in the other either being absorbed or dominated by the self. These primary thinkers share a

concern for otherness. Each privileges the role of the other as one completely apart from the self. This separation between self and other protects the other from domination by the self.

Second, while they are definitively ethical thinkers, they do not compile lists or principles of good and evil actions. They resist rule-based approaches to ethics. Instead, this thesis has characterised their respective approaches as approaches of orientation. They are concerned with, to use David Ford's phrase, the way in which and the extent to which the self 'faces' the other. The orientational stance of the self towards the other defines the ethical life.

Third, on a historical level they share common milieus. Bonhoeffer, Levinas and Arendt were born in 1906. Weil was born in 1909. Each is profoundly impacted by the Second World War. Bonhoeffer and Levinas have first-hand experience of concentration camps. Levinas and Arendt write about the perils of totalitarianism. Bonhoeffer and Weil die before the war ends. It is not surprising that, given their concern for otherness and this relatively common context, Wayne Whitson Floyd writes of the time period that 'otherness was in the air'.³

Fourth, others have noted possible points of overlap. Paul Ricoeur explicitly claims the need for staged engagements of Bonhoeffer and Weil.⁴ Surprisingly, however, Vivienne Blackburn's monograph on Bonhoeffer and Weil remains the

³ Cf. Chapter Three, fn. 5

⁴ Ricoeur, Paul, 'The Non-Religious Interpretation of Christianity in Bonhoeffer' in *Bonhoeffer and Continental Thought: Cruciform Philosophy* ed. Brian Gregor and Jens Zimmerman (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 171.

only book-length project devoted to developing common areas of interest.⁵ In addition, there is a growing interest in the relation between Bonhoeffer and Continental philosophy. These beginnings point to fecund possibilities about further discourse between these figures.

In addition to the question of 'why' put these thinkers in a staged conversation, the question of 'how' this conversation develops must be briefly addressed. This thesis is a constructive one. Bringing together multiple voices both clarifies and expresses, ultimately, the author's voice. The various staged conversations serve as conceptual detours, always returning to Bonhoeffer's account of the self. These detours highlight both consonant and dissonant notes between thinkers. Every detour both refines and brings a new degree of conceptual depth to this reading of Bonhoeffer's account of the self. To draw on Levinas's own literary metaphor, this journey results not in a return to one's homeland, but to a new land. The thesis attempts an Abrahamic, rather than Odyssean, journey through thinkers. Each conversation teases out new facets of an ethically oriented self based on Bonhoeffer's implicit model of selfhood.

Significant theological and philosophical figures are regularly appropriated for projects seemingly alien to their thought. Stephen R. Haynes, for example, elaborates on the myriad ways Bonhoeffer has been appropriated by his interpreters.⁶ This thesis attempts to avoid asking Bonhoeffer's thought to say something foreign to his apparent intentions. However, this thesis is not a

⁵ Blackburn, Vivienne, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Simone Weil: A Study in Christian Responsiveness* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004).

⁶ Haynes, Stephen, *The Bonhoeffer Phenomenon: Portraits of a Protestant Saint* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 10.

historical reconstruction of a particular idea within Bonhoeffer's thought. This thesis attempts, therefore, to navigate between the Scylla of 'appropriating' Bonhoeffer for a project he would not support on the one side, and the Charybdis of trying to discover the 'real Bonhoeffer' on the other. This middle way entails interpreting Bonhoeffer's corpus faithfully (in light of itself), while reading Bonhoeffer's thought alongside unorthodox conversation partners. Bonhoeffer is the ground of the self articulated in this thesis, but that self develops beyond the borders Bonhoeffer himself demarcates. The result is a self ethically oriented to the other in responsibility. This responsibility attends to the other, perceiving their need and standing where they cannot. This self for others is responsible 'as a human being'.

Chapter 1: *Considering Contemporary Selves: Two Approaches*

Introduction

Bonhoeffer's account of the ethical self has become even more *apropos* with the onset of 'postmodernity'. While this term is perhaps too disputed to be helpful, it heralds increased scepticism regarding the concept of selfhood. Important for the Christian theologian is the question of how God impacts the self. Two texts of particular relevance to this proposed consideration of theological selfhood stand out. They provide tools for considering the concept of an ethically oriented self. Specifically, these texts present the concept of ethical selfhood not as the fruit of reflection on oneself, but as engagement with an 'other' who encounters the self. However, while they are helpful for conversations regarding the self, they do not consider what Bonhoeffer can add to an account of an ethically oriented self.

David Ford's *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* addresses selfhood from the perspective of dialogue between major theological and philosophical figures of the late 20th century. Ford's account integrates both robust Christian theology and Continental philosophy, with particular emphasis on Emmanuel Levinas and Paul Ricoeur. Ford's book devotes significant sections to both Bonhoeffer's theology and Levinas's ethical philosophy. The result of these conversations is a 'worshipping' self. Michael Purcell also engages seriously with Levinas in *Levinas and Theology*. Purcell utilises Levinas to articulate a 'liturgical' and a 'eucharistic' self. These two accounts illustrate how theology can engage with philosophy generally, and what sort of selves might emerge from that engagement specifically. To a more limited extent, attention is

given to how Ford's and Purcell's accounts relate to one another. Attention to these texts clarifies both the method and the content of this thesis.

1.1 *Self and Salvation*

David Ford's contribution to a theological appraisal of the self in *Self and Salvation* is significant. Ford's self combines Levinas's responsibility with Eberhard Jüngel's Christian joy. What emerges from this unity is a self characterised by worship. Ford's 'worshipping self' is not its own; it is a self fundamentally for others. It finds its shape in relationship with both God and neighbour by receiving its meaning from outside of itself, as well as giving of this new self to others it encounters. Yet, Ford's self is not a zero-sum economy of being; it is also a superabundant self, overflowing in care for others and worship of God.¹ It is a kenotic self of unlimited resource.

Integral to Ford's reading of the theological self is the metaphor of 'facing.' Drawing on Levinas, Ford understands the face as that which grounds the self.² For Ford, the face has an explicitly physical manifestation. Ford writes, '...the embodied self is material, the face is flesh' (Ford 1999:20). His argument begins with discussions of Levinas, Jüngel and Ricoeur on the nature of the self-other relation. Specifically, Ford develops an account of the self which is both oriented towards the other and joyful. Ford uses the book of Ephesians to justify his emphasis on joy as an integral element of the self-other relation. Following a detailed exercise in theological exegesis, Ford then offers two paradigms of his worshipping self. Thérèse of Lisieux represents 'facing' as the

¹ The question of economies of being will be critical in subsequent discussions of Simone Weil's philosophy.

² Cf. TI 197.

participation in joy and Dietrich Bonhoeffer exemplifies theological responsibility for the other. Finally, Ford develops feasting as the eschatological possibility for facing selves. Ford's joyful and responsible self stems from a certain stance, or *orientation of the self*.

Methodologically, Ford moves from the theological to the philosophical instead of *vice versa*. Ford is a theologian who dialogues intensely with Continental philosophy. This methodological approach overlaps with the current project. As Ford seeks to 'think the unthought' in Levinas, so this thesis attempts to work out how an attentive self, informed by Bonhoeffer, Levinas and Weil, might be developed (Ford 1999:76). At the same time, this 'thinking along with philosophy'³ does not diminish the theological character of the self argued for in this thesis. This self is fundamentally theological due to its commitment to and reliance on the person of Jesus Christ.

Ford demonstrates how theology can engage with philosophy in a way that neither elevates philosophy over theology nor subsumes philosophy under theology.

Furthermore, Ford acknowledges those areas where his interlocutors diverge from one another, avoiding artificial harmonisation of their positions. This method of drawing on different disciplines constitutes a notable virtue of Ford's text; he interweaves philosophers, theologians, poets, songwriters and painters into a tapestry of theological portrayals of selfhood. In this way, he invites the reader to experience what he calls (citing Bonhoeffer) 'the polyphony' of human existence. This thesis attempts a similarly

³ Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr. uses this turn of phrase to describe Bonhoeffer's engagement with philosophy. It best describes Bonhoeffer's approach to theology's relationship with philosophy (Floyd, Wayne W. 'Editor's Introduction' in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 2 ed. Hans-Richard Reuter, Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr. trans. H. Martin Rumscheidt (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 12).

interdisciplinary project regarding conversations about theological selfhood. It initiates conversations in an attempt to articulate a distinctively theological and Christological self.

In addition to the methodology in *Self and Salvation*, this thesis builds upon the following three major points. First, the self's openness to the other is assessed *ethically*. The use of 'ethically' raises the question of responsibility; responsibility arises through engagement with the other. The other leads Ford back to theology. Second, Ford's emphasis on facing accommodates discussion of Simone Weil and the gaze of the attentive self. Third, Ford's narratively-constructed self evokes conversations about the contextual and the dynamic character of selfhood. These points of contact between Ford's 'worshipping self' and this thesis's attempt to construct an account of an ethically oriented self provide valuable insight into humankind's ethical way of being in the world.

1.1.1 *Responsibility*

The first major point of relevance for this thesis is that Ford assesses the distinctively ethical nature of responsibility in Levinas, Jüngel and Bonhoeffer. Ford's theological engagement with Levinas and Bonhoeffer focuses on their ethically salient uses of responsibility. He notes that, by placing Jüngel and Levinas in dialogue about the ethical meaning of responsibility, 'We see here a form of Christian theology confronting, without much prospect of agreement, a form of philosophy in harmony with some traditions of Judaism' (Ford 1999:60). Ford shows how, by bringing together Jüngel and Levinas on responsibility, one ends up with a remarkably Bonhoefferian model of

responsibility. Ford highlights a significant overlap between Jüngel's Christian theology and Levinas's philosophy; that is, their mutual fear of idolatry.⁴ Levinas takes idolatry to be a problem for Christian theology, which reduces the transcendence of otherness to the immanence of the same. According to Levinas, theology reduces transcendence in precisely this way. Jüngel sees idolatry in taking God to be anywhere but in Christ (Ford 1999:57).⁵ Nevertheless, Ford finds 'profundity' in their awareness that their anti-idolatry is precisely haunted idolatry.

Both Levinas and Jüngel are rigorous critics of orientations which in their judgement are not towards the goodness of God, and Levinas in particular offers a wide-ranging critique of Western civilisation and its philosophy because of their tendency to totalise and reify reality in ways which close them to the appeal in the face of the other. But the profundity of what I call their anti-idolatry is in recognising that its most insidious and subtle dangers are found at the heart of their strongest affirmations and convinced practices (Ford 1999:46). Idolatry, as a false relation to the transcendent, remains an insidious danger even to those who speak against it.

From the inherent danger of idolatry, Ford turns to the question of substitution. Jüngel maintains the particularity of Jesus's substitution for the world. So substitution is not a task given to all human beings. Jesus's substitution is a function of his unique role as a human unlike every other human. For Jüngel the sacrifice of another for the self is *only*

⁴ Alistair McFadyen combines these themes of sin, idolatry and orientation. He writes, '...[idol] worship substitutes comprehensive dynamics of closure and rigidity in relational orientation (death) for the joyful, expansive, life-giving dynamism of true worship' (McFadyen, Alistair, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 226).

⁵ Jüngel's definition of idolatry follows from his conclusion that 'the most important form of the question about God has changed in modernity from being about the existence or the nature of God to the problem of the location of God' (Ford 1999:57). In response to this central question, Jüngel maintains that God is found in God's Word, itself revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

in the person of Jesus Christ. In contrast, Levinas emphasises the impossibility of such a one-for-all sacrifice. Levinas fears substitution of the one for the many leads to the self's own irresponsibility (Ford 1999:69). The acceptance of another's substitution on behalf of oneself risks reducing the Saying of substituting oneself for the Said of statically accepting another's substitution. And this returns Levinas to the problem of idolatry. But the question is whether Levinas is right. Is it impossible to preserve responsibility for the self while recognising that another has been responsible for it? To answer, Ford turns to Bonhoeffer who affirms a non-idolatrous mutual responsibility.

Ford's Bonhoefferian models, '...affirm[s], in non-competitive relationship, both the substitutionary self in radical responsibility and the substitutionary life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ' (Ford 1999:72). However, instead of invoking Bonhoeffer here, Ford invokes Paul Ricoeur to demonstrate a middle way between Jüngel's substitutionary particularity and Levinas's substitutionary universality in authentic human responsibility. This thesis will argue that Bonhoeffer himself affirms the uniqueness of Christ's substitution while preserving a genuinely responsible human self.

1.1.2 *Facing*

The second point on which this thesis builds is that Ford introduces the metaphor of facing. The worshipping self has a literal sense, but it also has a metaphorical sense as both 'the face' and 'facing'. The 'face' becomes the locus of human meaning and communication. More important for this point is that facing implies the decision of the

self to be before others.⁶ Facing also involves the setting of one's face, the most expressive physical manifestation of oneself, before another. Ford writes,

'Facing' helps to avoid the wrong sort of fixations on the face as an 'object'. It embraces the face in activity and passivity, purpose and temporality, loneliness and reciprocity. It can be a joint conception – facing something together. Or it can refer to interiority, facing oneself, one's past, present and future (Ford 1999:23).

Ford observes that facing involves both positive and negative possibilities. There is the possibility of hope, reciprocity and even love. However, there is also the possibility for despair and isolation. Either possibility, as Levinas demonstrates, possesses a degree of confrontation. The facing self is not the result of its own initiative. As it faces another, it is questioned by the other. As is evident by the uses of face by Ricoeur, Levinas and Ford, the specific tenor of this encounter differs for each. The questioning of the self by the other may end up being an encounter of joy, as in Ford and Ricoeur, or, if Levinas is emphasised, facing can be a 'persecution', a 'deafening trauma' for the self.⁷ For all three, the facing of the self towards the other is not a secure endeavour. In the act of facing, one does not return oneself to the same as before the engagement with the other. Following Levinas, the journey of subjectivity mirrors the journey of Abraham, who goes out to an unknown land, rather than the journey of Odysseus, who embarks on an ultimately circular adventure.⁸

Is facing best described in terms of passivity or activity? Ford's description presents facing as a fact of human existence; human beings cannot help but be relational

⁶ Attention, for Weil, involves both passive and active components. The self chooses to be for others, but attention has a passive character as well. If the self opts to face the other, attention develops as a function of that orientation. It is not simply 'done' from the self's sovereign decision. This will be further developed in Chapter Four on the ethical development of Weil's concept of attention.

⁷ OBBE 111.

⁸ Cf. BPW 48.

creatures (Ford 1999:19). Even with the most extreme effort, one can never fully extricate oneself from human relationships. Beyond finding oneself in a context of relationships, there must be some way the self *decides* to face others. Ford recognises this implicitly by acknowledging that not all selves are worshipping selves. Thus, saying that worshipping selves are facing indicates an orientation or disposition towards others which exceeds the universal need for relationships; we are all related to another but only some selves decide to face others. More than simple relationality, facing is a way of being towards others. For Ford, the distinctiveness of facing is found in its *ethical* orientation towards others. Facing is fully expressed in the taking of responsibility; responsibility is a way of facing in which the self cares for and gives of itself for others. Ford holds open the possibility, however, that one might deny responsibility. So how, then, does one move from a universal facing, loosely understood as relationality, to genuine responsibility?

Ford's commitment to the spatial metaphor of facing resonates with the Augustinian tradition of understanding the human being, in itself, being trapped within itself.⁹ While the Christian tradition has distinguished between the inward and outward life with a diverse set of metaphors, the image of the self turned in on itself has a particularly rich heritage in the Lutheran tradition. While for Augustine there is an ambiguous relationship with the inward turn, for both Luther and Bonhoeffer the heart turned in on itself has negative implications.¹⁰ This spatial metaphor of being turned inwards

⁹ Augustine's *Confessions* repeatedly depicts the self as being entrapped within itself. See Chapter Two, fn. 19 for a fuller account of Augustine's account of the self.

¹⁰ For an in-depth discussion of Augustine's and Luther's inward turn, see Jenson, Matt, *The Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on homo incurvatus in se* (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

colors Bonhoeffer's approach both philosophically and biographically.¹¹ Presaging Levinas's concerns about the Odyssean model of subjectivity, Bonhoeffer understands human beings as imprisoned within their own subjectivity.¹² Consequently, for the heart turned in on itself, any affirmation of facing (as more than basic relationality) is impossible. In this way, Bonhoeffer's self resonates with Levinas in asserting that the self is fundamentally passive with regard to selfhood. The self is unable to free itself from itself. For both, the self is reliant on the inbreaking of revelation to open up the possibility of facing the other in responsibility. These resonances and divergences will be explored in the following chapters, taking their cue from Ford's concept of facing.

A core focus of this thesis is Simone Weil's concept of attention. It is argued that attention serves as a central ethical insight of Weil's philosophy and as a powerful link to Ford's theology of facing. Attention is a universal possibility. However, Weil also understands attention as a discipline; some persons can attend to others in more intense and focused ways. A result of sustained personal effort, attending to the other is not a simple, rational decision. Instead, it is the cultivation of an ethical orientation towards the other. Although Weil never explains the cultivation of attention, this thesis argues that attention is the outworking of an attentive *self*. Like facing, attention is a responsive, dialogical enterprise.

¹¹ Cf. DBWE 3:165n.76, Bethge, Eberhard, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* ed. Victoria Barnett (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 37.

¹² For Bonhoeffer, the heart turned in on itself describes the state of human being in Adam. Central to human being in Adam is its incarceration within its own subjectivity. Unable to free itself from itself, human being in Adam militates against both God and other human beings. Bonhoeffer's image of the heart turned in on itself, with its insular circularity, resonates with Levinas's description of Odyssean subjectivity as a perpetual return to itself. Both the heart turned in on itself and human being in Adam will be addressed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Like Ford's concept of facing, Weil's attention has both active and passive elements. Active attention is more than simply waiting on the other to come to the self. Passive attention *receives* the other. So, attention, like Ford's 'facing', presupposes the other that the self sees and encounters.¹³ This other is not the projection of the self; the other comes to the self in freedom. Like facing, attention might be described as the 'fixing of one's gaze' upon the other. Weil uses the orientational and visual metaphor of fixing one's gaze to articulate the genesis of an authentic self in the person of the Good Samaritan.¹⁴ The movement of the self to the other acknowledges both the universality of facing and the singularity of individual types of facing. Facing is more than being *before* others; it can also be a positive movement of creative attention *towards* another.

1.1.3 Narrative

The third major point is that Ford's text informs this project through his narratively-constructed self. Not only is the self formed in responsible engagement with others, in openness, but it is also the recipient of a history. The self-other engagement does not occur in a vacuum. The self's emergence is mediated by time, events and locations as well as other persons. Here Ford invokes Ricoeur's concept of a self both historically conditioned and ethically responsible (Ford 1999:88-89). Ricoeur's self is constantly questioned (even by itself, as present in the question 'who am I?') and yet maintains its core unity. For Ricoeur, the self's recognition of its existence as a questioned being, allows it to proclaim a greater commitment to responsibility. Its unity is its perpetual

¹³ As will be seen in Chapter Three, Levinas maintains that the face is not seen. Here Ford's image of facing extends beyond what Levinas might approve (cf. Davis, Colin, *Levinas: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 46).

¹⁴ Cf. WG 90

existence before another; an existence which both proclaims 'here I stand' and asks 'who am I'?¹⁵

Ricoeur's account of the self takes on a sharper edge when read alongside Bonhoeffer's own work. Like Ricoeur, Bonhoeffer has a nuanced account of self-unity. Bonhoeffer's account of theological selfhood relies on a disruption of a self-positing self, yet he also recognises the continuity of human life.¹⁶ Yet, despite this significant similarity, Ford's reading of Ricoeur and this reading of Bonhoeffer differ at points. Ricoeur's self is dependent on a *choice* of the self to be dependable, despite its inconstancy. For Bonhoeffer the point of self-continuity lies solely in the revelation of the person of Christ. For Bonhoeffer, the primary question posed to the self is not Ricoeur's 'who am I?' but the question posed to human beings by Christ: 'who are you that you ask this question?'¹⁷ For Bonhoeffer, this counter-question is always present, thus providing a continual source of unity of self. It is unclear in Ford's reading of Ricoeur, given the self's inconstancy, how there is a unity from which to choose dependability over inconstancy.

¹⁵ The unity of the self, for Ricoeur, is already in the self's 'making itself available to others'. This presumes an encounter with otherness, while also assuming some form of self-unity. Ricoeur writes, 'The self, stripped bare in this way, has been evoked by thinkers as different as Jean Nabert, Gabriel Marcel, and Emmanuel Levinas – a fact that should make it clear to us that the issue here is the ethical primacy of the other than the self over the self. Even recognizing this, it is still necessary that the irruption of the other, breaking through the enclosure of the same, meet with the complicity of this movement of effacement by which the self makes itself available to others. For the effect of the "crisis" of selfhood must not be the substitution of self-hatred for self-esteem' (Ricoeur, Paul, *Oneself as Another* trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 168).

¹⁶ Evidence of Bonhoeffer's questioning of self-unity is provided by 'bookends' of his thought. In *Sanctorum Communio* he presents the self as a series of engagements with another, and in his Tegel poem 'Who Am I?' Bonhoeffer acknowledges a superlative contradiction within one's own self (DBWE 8:459-460)). Conversely, Bonhoeffer is likewise insistent that continuity is critical for the self's development (DBWE 6:375, Gregor 2008:215-216).

¹⁷ Cf. DBWE 12:305. Bonhoeffer writes, 'The human being can still fight against the Word become human and kill him, but against the Resurrected One the human being has no power. We ourselves are now the ones who stand convicted. Now our question has been turned around. The question we have put to the person of Christ, "Who are you?" comes back at us: who are you, that you ask this question? Do you live in the truth, so you can ask it? Who are you, you who can only ask about me because you have been justified and received grace through me?'. In constructing the counter-question in this way, Bonhoeffer invites a similar question posed to Simon Peter in the biblical witness, when Jesus asks 'who do you say that I am?' (Mark 8:29, NASB).

Ricoeur's question has its place in the discussion, but for Bonhoeffer the self-defining question is the one put to the self by Christ. For Bonhoeffer, the question of 'who am I' can only be answered in light of the self's answer to Christ's question, 'who do you say that I am?'

This preliminary construal of the self, centred around the person of Christ, provides a segue into an account of the responsible self. For Bonhoeffer, Christ is the basis for any concept of responsibility. Consequently, responsibility is the outworking of a self always responding to Christ. For Bonhoeffer, Christ provides both the unity and the continuity of the self. In this way, the self is historically conditioned, but maintains a sense of unity. Christ comes to the self anew within history, through practices and persons, rendering any a-historical account of selfhood inadequate. Yet, because it is the same Christ who breaks into the life of the self, there can be some sense of unity among the discrete moments constituting that history. Reading Ford and Bonhoeffer together, one might be a self not because they are dependable despite fluctuation, but because they are ever-again responding to Christ within that fluctuation.

For a constructive re-reading of Bonhoeffer's self, *Self and Salvation* is a most helpful resource. There are three key reasons for this. First, Ford integrates contemporary philosophy and theology together in a way that takes seriously the ways human beings understand themselves and their world. Second, Ford is diverse in terms of his sources. Not only does he draw from philosophers and theologians, but also from poets, the biblical witness and musicians. What results is a depiction of the self which takes into consideration the polyvalent fullness of human life. Third, Ford provides schemas through which to consider the writings of thinkers like Bonhoeffer in fresh ways. Ford's

concern for facing as an operative metaphor provides a lens through which to consider both Bonhoeffer's own account of Christ who calls and the self who responds. Facing attests to the dynamic possibilities of selfhood while also taking seriously the unity of a face. As the self faces Christ, it is opened to the possibility of responsibility for the other. Ford's concern for otherness, and specifically an otherness which does not dominate the self, offers an ground for considering Bonhoeffer's own attempt to understand the theological self. Ford reads Bonhoeffer as mediating between a philosophical self who dominates the other (as critiqued by Levinas) and a self who is dominated by the other (as critiqued by Ford and Ricoeur). Ford develops Bonhoeffer's thought in a new direction, emphasising Bonhoeffer's polyphony over his responsible self. This thesis builds upon Ford's re-reading of Bonhoeffer and his metaphor of facing, in order to demonstrate an orientation which renders the self ethical, i.e. responsible as a human being.

1.2 *Levinas and Theology*

Like Ford's *Self and Salvation*, Michael Purcell's *Levinas and Theology* implicitly contributes to fleshing out the ethically oriented self. If Ford introduces Levinas as a serious theological interlocutor, then Purcell builds on that introduction through a focused engagement with Levinas. Purcell's project is both descriptive and constructive; he provides a thorough account of Levinas, while developing his own 'liturgical' self. This liturgical self, in keeping with Purcell's reading of Levinas, is a persistent 'going out towards' the other. This section considers Purcell with three questions in mind. First, what can Purcell substantially add to the ethically oriented self? Second, how can Purcell guide the present project of locating Levinas alongside theology? Third, what

overlaps or disjunctions can be traced between Purcell's Levinas and this thesis's Bonhoeffer? It will be argued that in addition to confirming the importance of the metaphor of orientation, Purcell's reading of Levinas begs further consideration of Bonhoeffer's own account of the self which exists 'for others'.

In his justification for using Levinas as a theological conversation partner, Purcell writes, 'He offers to theology a new voice, a new grammar of response and responsibility, a new lexicon for articulating the human...' (Purcell 2006:3). Levinas has indeed re-introduced ethics to Continental philosophy, a re-introduction which has hastened a return of emphasis to distinctively theological accounts of responsibility. The idea of the other-oriented self, and particularly a self beholden to the other in responsibility, can also be found in Bonhoeffer's theological work. These two accounts of responsible selves are not identical. They stem from different contexts and engagements. As this thesis is a constructive attempt at formulating a definitively *theological* self, it will repeatedly return home to Bonhoeffer. Yet, this does not mean Levinas, read through Purcell, is not a helpful and even crucial conversation partner. Like Ford, it is not only *what* Purcell writes about Levinas and theology which is of interest, but *how* he writes about Levinas and theology. Purcell, therefore, makes a significant two-fold contribution to this budding conversation.

Purcell does not characterise the self as ethically oriented to the other. Yet, Purcell's account of the self is reliant on metaphors of orientation. The Levinasian self, read through Purcell's initial lens of orientation, develops in four stages. This development might best be depicted metaphorically through the image of a person waking from

sleep.¹⁸ First, consciousness in itself is oriented in terms of being consciousness 'of something. Metaphorically, the person realises they are no longer asleep, but are not acclimated to their new situation. The world of real life unites with the dream state. Second, the provocation of the other awakens the self, which itself has an orientational structure. In being awoken, the person recognises they are not alone. Third, the awakened self fixes its gaze, ethically speaking, on the other who initiated their awakening. The awakened person faces the one who woke them, rubbing their eyes to get a better view. Fourth, the self exists liturgically, or kenotically, 'for' that other. The person, now fully awake, engages with the one who woke them from their slumber. At every point of this process, the self does not choose to wake from itself, by itself. It is provoked by another towards whom the self is oriented. These four stages demonstrate the orientational structure of Purcell's self. Each stage is addressed more substantively below.

1.2.1 *Purcell's Oriented Self*

The first stage addresses the orientational character of consciousness. Consciousness is always directed to something; it does not simply exist in a vacuum. According to Husserl's philosophy, consciousness is characterised by orientation insofar as consciousness has 'intentionality'. Purcell writes, 'Intentionality is the structure of *all our relations* with the world...desire is always a desire for the desired...One might put this otherwise by saying that human life, as intentional, is characterised by transcendence' (Purcell 2006:15-16, emphasis in original). Purcell presents an account

¹⁸ Note that these stages are not Purcell's, despite their basis in his emphasis on the image of ethical 'awakening'. They are images used to highlight the orientational character of the self articulated by Purcell.

of the self which is fundamentally relational and extends 'beyond' itself towards another. In being oriented towards another, the subject orients towards transcendence. Purcell writes, '...the subject is already beyond itself as transcendence towards what is other than itself; it is always and already relational' (Purcell 2006:16). These two facets of intentional subjectivity critically inform Purcell's development of the liturgically-oriented self.

Building on the intentionality of consciousness, Purcell accentuates the 'concrete' and intersubjective character of consciousness. Consciousness is always consciousness *of* something (Purcell 2006:22-23). As a result of this concrete intentionality, Purcell maintains in Levinas the necessity of 'others'. This emphasis on Levinasian intersubjectivity, rather than simply subjectivity, implicitly shields Levinas against interpreters who observe that Levinas accommodates sociality only with difficulty.¹⁹ The concrete and intersubjective character of Levinas's account strengthens Purcell's reading of the ethical encounter with the other as 'first theology' (Purcell 2006:33).²⁰ What does this mean? For Purcell, to say that ethics is 'first theology' is to emphasise *praxis* (Purcell 2006:33-34). The foundational theological experience is not the self's going out, but the provocation of the other. Purcell writes, 'While the decision is free on the part of the subject, its provocation comes first. It is not the case of freedom then responsibility; it is rather the summons to responsibility and then the decision freely

¹⁹ Cf. Davis 1996:84. Davis notes the 'utopian' element of Levinas's account of the intersubjective relation with 'the third'.

²⁰ When Levinas develops his account of 'theology', it becomes clear that what he rejects is the theology of a certain sort. Purcell explains, 'In short, the theism against which Levinas reacts and which he rejects, is forgetful of ethics and the human existential. Such a *theism* invites *a-theism*, not because 'there is no God' but because the God of theism, before whom thought fails, is not the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob. It is only by way of the ethical encounter with the other person that access to God can be gained' (Purcell 2006:61, emphasis in original). In addition, Levinas takes issue with the paternalistic tenor of such theisms.

made' (Purcell 2006:34). It will be on the grounds of privileging *theoria* over *praxis* that Levinas critiques what he calls 'theology'.

1.2.2 *Self-Awakening*

The second stage of the self's emergence is its awakening following provocation. This awakening holds prominent place. Awakening results from the provocation of exteriority and is always already 'a transcendence' (Purcell 2006:48). So in awakening consciousness is oriented to something which exceeds it, particularly in the form of the other. This orientation towards what exceeds consciousness is orientation towards transcendence. Awakening heralds the coming to consciousness something outside of consciousness; this is the other. Purcell writes, 'The event of the other person – which may be described as an ethical awakening – predates the subject, but is only discovered 'after the event' of subjectivity, as it were' (Purcell 2006:49). Purcell stresses, following Levinas, that the self does not choose to be in ethical relation. To the contrary, to awaken is to recognise that provocation *precedes* one's consciousness, and thus precedes choice. The other provokes the self prior to consciousness, or as Levinas says, 'outside any a priori' (OBBE 192).

Does this image of awakening add to theology? Purcell offers a pregnant phrase within the work of Irenaeus of Lyons: 'the glory of God is a living human being; and human life [consists in] the vision of God' (Purcell 2006:125). Purcell alters the reading slightly when he writes, 'This can be more simply rendered: 'the glory of God is the human person fully alive'. This can also be expressed, in language both theological and phenomenological, as 'the glory of God is the human person fully awake' (Purcell

2006:126). This language of awakening provides an attractive perspective from which to consider the ethical self. As the morning brings new hope, so the ethically awakened self approaches the other in fresh and creative ways. Yet, Irenaeus's own formulation is equally attractive. What might it mean to delve into the concept of vision, and particularly seeing the human and divine other, as the quintessential purpose of human beings? Furthermore, the idea of God's glory found in the 'human person fully alive', or the self oriented towards life, provides a fecund starting point for theology. This thesis, with Weil and Bonhoeffer, will argue for a self that sees attentively and is oriented ethically towards real life.

1.2.3 *Provocation and Desire*

The third stage of the self's awakening involves focusing on the other who provokes. As the self awakes, the haze of sleep retreats and the eyes focus on the one who woke the self. This focusing of one's gaze is, according to Purcell, 'desire'. Both focus and desire in this context oriented to the exterior; they imply fundamental inclination towards something beyond the self. Purcell follows Levinas in distinguishing between desire and need. In contrast to desire, 'Need seems to respond to a deficiency in being which, like an empty stomach, when filled, is satisfied...' (Purcell 2006:96).²¹ Purcell also notes that need is 'disoriented intentionality'. Need knows neither what it intends nor what is best for it. It is a rapacious craving aiming in a multitude of directions, ultimately seeking

²¹ Purcell continues, 'Need satisfies at the expense of what is other. The self, in its needfulness, feeds on what is other than the self to fulfill a void in itself and, since alimentation is normally masticatory, the nourishing of the solitary self involves a certain destruction and violence towards what is other. The self, as it were, harvests alterity to make up for its own defects' (Purcell 2006:96). Note the striking parallels with Simone Weil's own preoccupation with the metaphor of hunger. Her analysis of the self, and particularly the consumptive yet empty character of the self, overlaps at several points with Purcell's reading of Levinas. For discussions of the role Weil's 'void' plays in human beings, see GG 10ff., 17ff.

release from its context.²² Desire, on the other hand, is intentionality directed towards infinity.²³ Speaking of the distinction between totality and infinity Purcell writes, ‘The first only leads back to the self, and the totality which the self constructs around itself. The second leads to an other than the self which enables escape from the totality, and the ethical redemption of the self alone with itself’ (Purcell 2006:99). Desire for the infinite opens the self to the plea of the other. Human life lives in the shadow of the accusative voice, rather than the nominative voice. Purcell writes, ‘To be a subject is to be ‘for’ the other, where this ‘for’ is the responsibility I bear towards the other person’ (Purcell 2006:106). Returning to the metaphor of awakening, Levinas’s self, according to Purcell, is awakened by desire for the infinite, which opens the self to the claim of the other.²⁴

1.2.4 Liturgical Existence

The fourth stage, having been awakened by and focusing on the other, requires living liturgically and kenotically for that other. This final stage describes how the ethical

²² Cf. Purcell 2006:97. The self’s ‘context’ is the Levinasian *il y a*, or the ‘there is’. The *il y a* is the threat of, in Purcell’s words, ‘anonymity and oblivion’ (Purcell 2006:90). Levinas describes it in more cryptic terms: ‘The rustling of the *there is*...is horror...an undetermined menace of space’ (EE 55, emphasis in original).

²³ Whereas need attempt to fill a deficiency within the self, desire for the infinite does not suggest a return to oneself. Instead, in the encounter with the infinite the self is open to the summons of the other. This summons, instead of fulfilling a need, demands ever more of the self. Levinas writes, ‘[The metaphysical desire] desires beyond everything that can simply complete it. It is like goodness – the Desired does not fulfill it, but deepens it’ (TI 34).

²⁴ Levinas expounds on the ethical import of this desire for the infinite when he writes, ‘The fact that the face maintains a relation with me by discourse does not range him in the same; he remains absolute within the relation. The solipsist dialectic of consciousness always suspicious of being in captivity in the same breaks off. For the ethical relationship which subtends discourse is not a species of consciousness whose ray emanates from the I; it puts the I in question...*The facing position, opposition par excellence, can be only as a moral summons. This movement proceeds from the other. The idea of infinity, the infinitely more contained in the less, is concretely produced in the form of a relation with the face*’ (TI 195, 196, emphasis added). The face, who exceeds every totality, is itself infinite. Responsibility before the face is also infinite. Levinas’s philosophy will be engaged more fully in Chapter Three.

consciousness, having been awakened to responsibility, relates to the other.²⁵ Purcell ends this stage with the 'liturgical' self. Prior to this, it is necessary to understand Purcell's conception of grace. Drawing again on Irenaeus's dictum, Purcell claims, 'Humanity is divinized, and becomes fully alive as ethical humanity, in heeding and responding to the call of the infinite, yet that call is always by way of the world in which one always and already finds oneself' (Purcell 2006:112). This quote contains two essential aspects of Purcell's liturgical self. First, it is incarnational, or in the world; and second, it is graced, or given. In support of the incarnational aspect of the liturgical self, Purcell repeatedly mentions Levinas's adaptation of Rimbaud, "'The true life is absent." But we are in the world' (TI 33). Whereas Rimbaud writes that 'We are exiles from this world really,' Levinas affirms the essential worldliness of human life.²⁶ Purcell's liturgical self is not only incarnational, but is an excessive gift of grace. Purcell reads grace ethically, identifying grace in the 'excessive' other. He writes, 'the other person is excessive to my own capacity to comprehend and my own power to control and determine...the relationship with the other person is a relationship which I, by my own Pelagian efforts, cannot achieve' (Purcell 2006:124). Purcell's conception of grace encompasses both the givenness of consciousness within the world and the approach of the other who exceeds the self. Although the self may desire the infinite, the self does not control the infinite. It is only through grace that the infinite other comes to the self.

So, incarnation and grace are essential to the liturgical self. The kenotic self comes next.

Purcell helpfully elaborates, 'For Levinas, liturgy is a work or intentionality that is

²⁵ Of particular note for this thesis is the problem Purcell is addressing. 'The theological problem and the phenomenological challenge is the coming together of the divine and the human in a way that respects transcendence yet is committed to an incarnation which is both responsible and just' (Purcell 2006:113). It is contended here that Bonhoeffer can be read helpfully to respond to this theological challenge.

²⁶ Cf. Purcell, Michael, 'Justice as an Aporia in Levinas' in *Explorations in Contemporary Continental Philosophy of Religion* ed. Deane-Peter Baker and Patrick Maxwell (New York: Rodopi Press, 2003), 98.

oriented to another without any hope or desire of return. The liturgical relationship is an asymmetrical covenant between two interlocutors, one of whom is always inspired by, and indebted to, the other' (Purcell 2006:135-136). What defines the self-other relation as liturgical is its orientation towards the other who exists beyond the self. What distinguishes the self's liturgical relation from an exclusively ethical relation is the practice of worship. The liturgical relation is indeed a stance of being 'for' another, but it is also an offering of oneself to God. Purcell writes, 'Liturgy, theologically understood, is both worship offered to God and achieves the sanctification of humanity. In short, the essential aspect of liturgy is *'a movement of the Same towards the Other which never returns to the Same'* (Purcell 2006:138, emphasis in original). Drawing again on Levinas's distinction between the journeys of Abraham and Odysseus, respectively, The liturgical relation is one which is an adventurous going out of the self.²⁷ This going out of the self does not appropriate the other for the self's purposes, but remains always at the mercy of the other. The self's liturgical relation is an asymmetrical relation (Purcell 2006:137). This asymmetrical relation comes from responsibility for the other to whom the self is indebted. This asymmetrical relation of orientation towards the other has a significant passive character: 'Liturgy is not so much something initiated by a subject, but is a work achieved and accomplished in the subject' (Purcell 2006:139).²⁸ The orientation towards the other, combined with the passive allowance of grace to accomplish its work within the subject, extends to the point of *kenosis*.

²⁷ Cf. Purcell 2006:101. Purcell writes, 'The Abrahamic itinerary is outgoing and responsive to what is other than the self; it is a movement of transcendence, an intentionality which intends exteriority...The Odyssean is circular, is marked by a constant return to the same; it remains locked within interiority and immanence; its point of departure is also the point to which one returns.' Compare this with Levinas: 'The detour of ideality leads to coinciding with oneself, that is, to certainty, which remains the guide and guarantee of the whole spiritual adventure of being. But this is why this adventure is no adventure. It is never dangerous; it is self-possession, sovereignty...' (OBBE 99).

²⁸ The tension between activity and passivity is significant for this discussion of the theological self. Simone Weil's concept of attention will provide the impetus for a more nuanced account of the self's activity and passivity in the face of the other.

The liturgical self experiences *kenosis* in the eucharist. Purcell calls eucharistic existence a logic which understands 'giving as a constant *kenosis* and nourishment of the self' (Purcell 2006:142).²⁹ Levinasian desire for the infinite only increases in encounter with the infinite, and for Purcell giving of oneself for another nourishes the self's desire to give even more for the other. Paradoxically, it is through giving of itself for the other that the self becomes itself. And yet subjectivity is still a graced subjectivity, and not an achievement of the self. *Kenosis* extends even to the point of death, and is thus, in Purcell's words, a '*kenosis in extremis*' (Purcell 2006:143). Here Purcell draws on the idea of gift. He uses Derrida to articulate a concept of the self-as-gift, where there can be no expected return. As a gift for the other, the self cannot approach otherness with the knowledge that in so doing subjectivity will be enacted. To do so anticipates a return on one's gift, and thus realises an economy of gift. Such economies of gift exchange destroy the complete excess of the gift. Purcell writes, 'If the one to whom the gift is given is obligated by the gift such that thanks is exacted or a gift in return is given, the gift is not truly a gift, but is a gift with strings attached' (Purcell 2006:146). Therefore, eucharistic existence is the gifting of oneself for another without reserve or expectation, even to the point of death.³⁰

²⁹ Purcell adopts Levinas's language when he further describes liturgical existence: 'Liturgical existence culminates in eucharistic existence, which is an *excoriation* of the self by the other and on behalf of the other, and the declension of the subject as essentially 'for-the-other'. To be is 'to-be-for' (Purcell 2006:143, emphasis added). The metaphors of orientation will be helpful in articulating a similar account based on Bonhoeffer's work.

³⁰ Although such *kenosis*, Purcell says, 'is not to be understood as the annihilation of the self' such a formulation of *kenosis in extremis* leaves the line between the two thin (Purcell 2006:152). On what grounds is the self preserved? What sort of self is realised if selfhood consists solely of *kenosis in extremis*? Purcell addresses this question in contrast to Heidegger. Whereas Heidegger's human existence is a 'being-towards-death' Levinas's is a 'being-towards-after-my-death'. It is unclear how Levinas's formulation does not end in self-annihilation. To posit a world beyond the world is, for Levinas, a return to being. Therefore, to orient oneself towards one's non-existence does not escape from Heidegger's 'being-towards-death'. However, Purcell fruitfully develops this idea towards an eschatological liturgy, a work which extends beyond the self to that time when the self does not exist. Purcell's *theological* reading allows him to promote a stance towards something other than one's own death.

Purcell's liturgical self, as discussed here in four stages, is entirely orientational. The self is always oriented towards what lies beyond it. First, consciousness itself is oriented towards another, insofar as consciousness is always a conscious *of* something. Put analogically in terms of sleep, even in the most inchoate sense of moving from dreams into reality the mind takes notice of *something*. Second, the self awakens and begins to take interest in its surroundings. In Levinas's terms, the self becomes aware of the provocation of the other. Third, the self fixes its attention on the other. The self's metaphorical eyes focus on the provocation which disturbed its subjective and ethical slumber. Fourth, the self relates ethically with the other. In Purcell this ethical relation is both liturgical and 'eucharistic'; the self gives of itself without hope of recompense. In this way the self is completely kenotic. This self is fully awake. These stages illuminate where Purcell will help the concerns of this thesis.

1.3 *Levinas and Theology?*

In addition to the oriented self, Ford and Purcell address a constellation of questions. To what extent can Levinas be read alongside theology? Why invoke a philosopher who 'distrusts' theology to articulate a theological self? How is Levinas helpful for an account of the theological self? What is his own understanding of theology? In addressing these questions, Purcell offers similar, but not identical responses to those of Ford. This subsection develops this question of theological appropriation of Levinas with an eye towards Chapter Three, where Levinas's philosophy, and particularly his approach to theology, is engaged in greater detail. Ford's comments about integrating Levinas into theology will be followed by Purcell on Levinas and theology.

Ford offers five justifications for invoking Levinas in an account of a theological self. First, Levinas is proficient in two major theological and philosophical traditions, the 'Hebraic' and the 'Hellenic' (Ford 1999:30). Second, Levinas is intimately acquainted with the greatest ethical *aporia* of modern times, the Holocaust (Ford 1999:31). Third, as a Jewish philosopher, Levinas's account is an 'other' for a Christian theological account of the self (Ford 1999:31). Fourth, Levinas's specifically phenomenological heritage makes him an attractive interlocutor, given phenomenology's importance for twentieth-century philosophy (Ford 1999:32). Fifth, in Ford's own sustained reading of Levinas, Ford has indirectly appropriated critical elements of Levinas's philosophy (Ford 1999:32). Levinas is important for Ford's account because he is a constant, if implicit, interlocutor.

Purcell's account offers similar reasons for integrating Levinas and theology. First, Purcell argues that Levinas is important for theological reflection because theological reflection necessarily begins with the human being who asks the question of who they are (Purcell 2006:2). Levinas makes the same assertion when he writes that ethics is 'first theology'. There is no genuine theology without ethics.³¹ Second, and following Ford's fourth point, Levinas draws extensively on phenomenological tradition and inspires new generations of like-minded conversation partners (Purcell 2006:3). Purcell writes, '...insofar as theology is a word about humanity in its dealings with God, or, minimally, a word about the religious dimension of human existence which opens on questions of God, it cannot operate other than in a mode which is phenomenological'

³¹ While this is true, it is more contentious to say that theology is *only* ethics. Is there more to theology than ethics? It is difficult to see how Levinas could answer this question affirmatively, and yet, much Christian theology would feel that this *must* be answered affirmatively.

(Purcell 2006:32). Levinas is attractive for theology not only because he addresses the human, but also for his phenomenological method of approaching humankind's fundamental question.

Ford and Purcell both have strong affinities with Levinas's approach and conclusions. What can be said about Levinas's *own* approach to theological reflection? It has already been noted that Levinas 'distrusts' theology. Why? This question will be revisited in Chapter Three, but the outline of Levinas's critique of theology can be introduced here. According to Ford, Levinas believes that theology thematises God inappropriately: Levinas's portrayal of theology is itself problematic (Ford 1999:45). Ford writes, '[Levinas's dismissal of theology] is, however, a blanket rejection which seems to depend on stereotypes rather than on respectful listening to any particular theologian' (Ford 1999:71). For Levinas, 'theology' is a reduction of the infinite Other into the immanent Same.³² This reduction of the infinite is the 'thematisation' of which Ford speaks. In addition to thematisation, Ford also recognises Levinas's fear of irresponsibility, due to theology featuring a substitutionary Christ. This blunts human responsibility (Ford 1999:69).

Purcell notes the distinctively ethical, rather than theological, character of Levinas's account. Levinas resists a metaphysical reading of God, or theism, which present ethics as theory rather than practice. In contrast to such theisms, Levinas promotes responsibility which precedes theory; a responsibility which precedes reflection. His approach is an 'a-theism'. Purcell emphasises this 'a-theistic' character of Levinas's philosophy. He writes, 'In short, the theism against which Levinas reacts and which he

³² Ford catalogues the various ways Levinas characterises this reduction. Cf. Ford 1999:49 n.8.

rejects, is forgetful of ethics and the human existential. Such a *theism* invites *a-theism*, not because 'there is no God' but because the God of theism, before whom thought fails, is not the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob' (Purcell 2006:61, emphasis in original). In addition to privileging theory over practice, Levinas believes theology does violence to God's transcendence (Purcell 2006:60). This 'violence' is Ford's thematisation. Finally, theology 'has been inattentive to the neighbour to whom God always inclines an ear' (Purcell 2006:60).³³ At the heart of theology, for Purcell, is ethics. This ethic is specifically an ethic of responsibility, of being for the other. Any attempt to delimit this responsibility falls under Levinas's critique of theology as 'theism'.³⁴

Ford and Purcell largely agree on the question of how to relate Levinas to theology as well as Levinas's own relation to theology. However, there are differences of emphasis. Ford stresses Levinas's resistance to theology which compromises God's absolute transcendence. This stress facilitates his reading of Levinas as a modern-day prophet, one persistently resisting idolatry. Purcell, in contrast, accentuates the disjunction between theory and practice within Levinas's interpretation of theology. Theory is the domain of theology, where ideas dominate the ethical horizon and delimit the responsibility of the self. In contrast, the *practice* of responsibility characterises Levinas's 'ethics as first philosophy'. Despite this difference of emphasis, there is general agreement that Levinas is a valuable, even critical, interlocutor for theology. He comes face-to-face with the horrors of the twentieth century and yet espouses an unflinching

³³ The metaphor of attentiveness will be important for the following discussion of Weil's own philosophy.

³⁴ This distinction is an artificial one, since Levinas does not distinguish between theism and theology. Also note Purcell's depiction of Levinas's position. Purcell writes, 'For the atheist there is no interventionist God who will relieve the subject of his or her responsibilities for the other person. In this sense, God is freed of his responsibility for his creation...The way to God can only start from a here which is wholly human' (Purcell 2006:63). It would be helpful if Purcell presented those theisms which espouse the relief of responsibility Purcell describes, following Levinas. In addition, it is unclear how theology is *specifically* inattentive to the neighbour. Relative to Levinas, every philosophical or theological position is 'inattentive to the neighbour.'

account of an other who provokes the self. In addition, he engages deeply with disparate traditions, drawing together the Hebraic and the Greek together. Yet, theology can only go so far with Levinas, as both Ford and Purcell acknowledge. Where does theology go from here? What can theology glean from Levinas's insights?

1.4 Threads to Follow

While both Ford and Purcell contribute to the task of this thesis, Purcell engages more deeply with Levinas's philosophy. Therefore, this section stresses his account over Ford's. Purcell's reading draws out essential elements of Levinas's philosophy while engaging with theological discourse. Purcell does not, however, exhaust the discourse between Levinas and theology. Although this thesis will take that exploration in a slightly different direction, Purcell's reading of Levinas is particularly helpful in determining where to go from here. This section argues that there are three particular points of emphasis which will be useful in the coming chapters. First, Purcell emphasises the incarnational and worldly character of human existence. Ethics must concern itself with the concrete other who exists before the self. Second, Purcell notes the dynamic character of this incarnate human existence. God relates to humankind differently at different points in human history. Third, Purcell's emphasis on desire in human subjectivity opens the way to consider a teleological account of the 'humanistic' self. Building on these themes, this thesis develops a self which is incarnational, evolving in its relation to God and oriented towards its ultimate goal of being ever more 'human'.

The first point of departure deals with incarnational existence. According to Purcell, Levinas's self is entirely 'worldly'. The self is located only within the world in which it

finds itself (Purcell 2006:80). Purcell writes, 'Human fulfillment is not a withdrawal from the world, but a commitment to the world' (Purcell 2006:73). Specifically, Levinas's commitment is to the other who exists in that world. This delineates Levinas's project from that of Heidegger, for whom everything exists 'for *Dasein*' rather than 'for the other'. Furthermore, the world calls *Dasein* into question. Rather than the self interrogating to the world for its meaning to the self, the world interrogates the self. What is called 'the world' can be more specifically understood as other persons. The self does not give meaning to other selves. Purcell writes, 'Heidegger's ontology works well with things encountered within the world, but becomes problematical when one encounters other people' (Purcell 2006:78).

Bonhoeffer can address this account of incarnational existence on two points. First, Bonhoeffer's self is likewise incarnational or worldly. Selves are only selves in-the-world. He writes, 'By this-worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God...watching with Christ in Gethsemane' (DBWE 8:486).³⁵ Second, Bonhoeffer's concept of self resonates both negatively and positively with Heidegger's 'self-for-itself' and Levinas's 'self-for-the-other'.

Bonhoeffer's conception of the heart turned in on itself describes a self similar to Purcell's reading of Heidegger. Yet, Bonhoeffer criticises this self as sinful precisely for this orientation towards itself.³⁶ The self, instead of being oriented inward, must become oriented towards the other. In this way Bonhoeffer recognises Heidegger's self

³⁵ The metaphor of vigilance, 'watching with Christ in Gethsemane', will be important for the ensuing discussion of Weil and attention.

³⁶ Purcell describes selfhood in a similar way when he writes, 'The solitary self, thrown back on itself, does not contain within itself the means of its salvation' (Purcell 2006:95). In addition Purcell calls the self 'enclosed' and 'enchained' (Purcell 2006:96,98). These metaphors of enclosure and imprisonment are useful for Bonhoeffer's account of selfhood.

(as presented by Purcell), but acknowledges this is the self in a corrupted state.

Bonhoeffer's self, redeemed by Christ, orients itself outwards towards the other.

Bonhoeffer's account is a transformative account; the encounter with Christ transforms the self-for-itself into a self-for-others.

The second point of departure involves the progressive character of human existence.

Purcell describes Enlightenment humanism as one in which humankind has no need of God. He writes, 'Such a humanism, in which humanity has come of age, might be considered an 'adult religion'. It is one in which the God of monotheism is not yet dead, but is no longer required for the development and progress of human life' (Purcell 2006:51). Humankind has evolved beyond the strictures of theism. Levinas critically engages with this Enlightenment humanism, affirming 'a-theism' while remaining unsatisfied with its conclusion. He appreciates the demise of the 'kind of kindergarten deity who distributed prizes, applied penalties, or forgave faults and in his goodness treated men as eternal children' (Purcell 2006:61). However, Purcell argues that Levinas attempts to go beyond this Enlightenment humanism to a chiefly *ethical* humanism. Such ethical humanism is a 'new' humanism. While Levinas agrees with the Enlightenment in terms of the need for a new humanism, the new humanism must be understood as ethical rather than rational. A proper ethical humanism is one which privileges the human oppressed and persecuted (Purcell 2006:51).

Purcell's account of the human serves as a starting point for an account drawing on Bonhoeffer. Arguably Bonhoeffer's most famous passages wrestle with humanistic ideas of 'world come of age' and secularity. In *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Bonhoeffer writes, 'I therefore want to start from the premise that God shouldn't be smuggled into

some last secret place, but that we should frankly recognise that the world, and people, have come of age...' (DBWE 8:457). Bonhoeffer also deals with the question of secularity. He writes, 'The God who lets us live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually' (DBWE 8:479).³⁷ Like Purcell's account of Levinas, Bonhoeffer's God withdraws. It is this withdrawal which requires secularity rather than a God who is 'a working hypothesis'.

The third point of departure centres around Purcell's teleological emphasis on desire. While Purcell does not describe Levinas's account as teleological, Purcell's emphasis on desire for the infinite provides Levinas's account with a distinctly teleological flavor. In keeping with Purcell's description of intentionality, desire is always desire *for* something. Intentionality therefore hints towards a teleological account of human existence. Even though intentionality originally suggests an orientation of *consciousness*, Purcell's account of desire implies a certain orientation of the whole human life. Desire is a movement towards another, a response to the other who calls to the self. Yet, that movement to the other cannot meet the excess of the other. For this reason, again, the relationship between the self and the other is one of asymmetry rather than symmetry. Purcell writes, 'But it is this excess [of the infinite] which constantly awakens thought, and ultimately becomes its condition of possibility' (Purcell 2006:109). The desire for the infinite draws the self up towards the other who exceeds the self.³⁸ This movement towards transcendence characterises the purpose or *telos* of human existence.

³⁷ Compare this to Purcell: 'God may no longer be the ontological support for the universe, the 'transcendent signified' who supports an ontological narrative of meaning...' (Purcell 2006:161).

³⁸ Levinas calls this 'transcendence'. Jean Wahl distinguishes between transcendence and transdescendence. Both concepts refer to the 'direction' transcendence can take. While transcendence moves upwards towards a superior force, transdescendence refers to elemental or even demonic transcendence. Simone Weil's concept of necessity might serve as an example of a transdescendent force.

The teleological impulse within Purcell's account of Levinas will be a point of distinction between Levinas, Bonhoeffer and Weil. If Levinas's *telos* is a directed response to the other, Bonhoeffer's account would be in complete agreement. Like Levinas Bonhoeffer stresses the orientation towards otherness. Yet, Bonhoeffer also maintains with otherness the importance of Jesus Christ for selfhood. Borrowing from both Levinas and Bonhoeffer, this thesis develops an account of Christ as the principal interlocutor, or other, to the self. That encounter, with Levinas, is both disturbing and 'transcendent'. Yet, with Bonhoeffer, it is also a theological encounter of peace and even joy. Furthermore, the self is called to be both like Christ and 'more human'. In this way Bonhoeffer's account has teleological impulses in its own right.

1.5 Conclusion

Ford and Purcell provide a valuable starting point for considering an ethically oriented self. Their respective readings of Levinas shed light on the contours of his philosophy in general, and the character of ethical subjectivity in particular. In addition to developing an account of the oriented self, Ford and Purcell assist this thesis in considering how to relate Levinas and theology. Despite Levinas's distaste for what he calls theology, both Ford and Purcell provide ways of considering Levinas alongside theologians who desire to 'think alongside philosophy'. While Ford, through Jüngel, questions Levinas's reading of theology, Purcell stresses that theology needs Levinas's unremitting emphasis on 'ethics-as-first-theology'. Both Ford's questioning of Levinas and Purcell's adoption of

Necessity, for Weil, forces human beings into submission and even affliction. Cf. Purcell 2006:183-184 n.17.

Levinas are pertinent and critical to constructive theological engagement with Levinas's philosophy.

Finally, beyond methodological considerations, there are conceptual points in both Ford and Purcell worth developing in greater detail. Ford's concept of facing alludes to the orientational character of human ethical life. Facing provides a starting point for considerations of ethical vision, honesty and truth-telling. These ideas will all be considered under the concept of 'attention' in Chapter Four. Purcell, on the other hand, provides through his reading of Levinas an account of a kenotic self which will also inform subsequent discussions of both Levinas and Weil. Purcell's in-depth use of Levinas's philosophy helps elucidate Levinas's complicated and difficult language.

While Ford and Purcell offer persuasive and helpful examples of theological engagement with Levinas's philosophy, there are questions which beg answers. Two of these questions will be addressed indirectly in the following chapters. First, Purcell asks the most significant question himself when he writes, 'Is Levinas's ethics interpretive or transformative? Does Levinas only present a vision of a world to come, or supply the means for its realisation?' (Purcell 2006:165).³⁹ Second, if the encounter with the other, as Purcell repeatedly asserts, occurs preveniently to any decision, why are so few concretely responsible? (Purcell 2006:125). Or, are many responsible, but the content of responsibility is not as radical as Levinas suggests? This thesis wrestles, in Chapter Five,

³⁹ Purcell describes the movement from the '*il y a*' to illeity as one of 'fear and horror to responsibility' (Purcell 2006:98). The question of transformation deals precisely with this transition. Most notably, how does fear and horror lead to responsibility? Is there precedent, philosophically or experientially, for fear and horror being adequate 'motivators' of the ethical relation? On this point this thesis is more convinced by Ford's account of the joyful self turned towards the other in responsibility. Christian theology provides resources for a joyful, rather than horrified, responsibility. This is due, in part, to the pervasive emphasis on *metanoia*, or conversion, within the Christian tradition.

with a particular rendering of this question: how did the Nazis, and particularly Adolph Eichmann, fail so miserably in being responsible? If responsibility is prevenient to consciousness, and thus beyond decision, what determines whether one exists responsibly? Subsequent chapters will shed light on these questions.

Chapter 2: *Bonhoeffer's Contribution to Discussion of Selfhood: The Responsibly Oriented Self*

Introduction

This chapter will show that, first, Bonhoeffer demonstrates a concern for the self-other relation, particularly through his account of human 'being for others', and second, this concern for a responsible relation to the other constitutes a theme within most of his main writings. Understanding human being as structured towards others will provide the starting point for staged conversations with Emmanuel Levinas and Simone Weil. The first section of the chapter explores Bonhoeffer's concept of the 'self' as the person who exists in the world. This section begins with the human person who exists in relation to others. Bonhoeffer distinguishes the person who is a human being 'in Adam' from the human being 'in Christ'. The second section emphasises both Bonhoeffer's rejection of 'idealism' and his adoption of an image of the human being turned in on itself, that is, *cor curvum in se*. Over and against human being in Adam and the inversion of the *cor curvum in se*, the third section examines human being in Christ. Human being in Christ is fundamentally oriented outward to the other who encounters the self. The fourth section surveys the relation of the human person to the other through a particular form of responsibility, or what Bonhoeffer calls 'vicarious representative action'. This chapter will offer a unified reading of Bonhoeffer's theology that lays the groundwork for further conversations with Levinas and Weil.

Two remarks must be made at this stage. First, it is important to note that Bonhoeffer's 'self' does not refer to either a concept or an entity available for detached assessment. To suggest that the self may be analysed, discovered or reflected upon apart from the whole human being would be incompatible with Bonhoeffer's own thought. To speak of the 'self' is to speak of the human being, a being who holds out possibilities for both evil and good.¹ This thesis interprets the self's possibility, following Bonhoeffer, as being one of either disunity or unity, fracture or wholeness.

Second, Bonhoeffer does not provide an explicit exposition of the 'self'.² This, however, does not indicate a lack of concern on Bonhoeffer's part for theological anthropology. To the contrary, Bonhoeffer demonstrates a striking concern for the human being beginning in his doctoral dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*, and continuing all the way through *Letters and Papers from Prison*.³ *Act and Being* depicts the structure and the way

¹ To speak of 'possibility' for good or evil is not to suggest that good may be accomplished by the human being in itself. To the contrary, Bonhoeffer argues in his inaugural Berlin lecture that, 'the concept of possibility has no place in theology and thus no place in theological anthropology' (DBWE 10:403). This conclusion follows from Bonhoeffer's repeated argument that conceiving human being in terms of possibility necessarily transcends the limits of human beings (DBWE 10:404). This transgression of limit seeks to establish human possibility in itself, apart from the revelation of God. In contrast to this fallen sense of possibility, the possibility spoken of here indicates a possibility for good only in response to the revelation of Jesus Christ. The possibility of the human being in itself is only a possibility for evil. This possibility for evil is demonstrated in the person of Eichmann, who is indeed a self despite his disunity of self. This fracture, or disunity, of self leads to Eichmann's ethical inconstancy and instability. Nevertheless, he is still a 'self'. Cf. Chapter Five.

² Karl Barth notes that Bonhoeffer was no systematician. He writes, 'But as always with Bonhoeffer one is faced by a peculiar difficulty. He was – how shall I put it? – an impulsive, visionary thinker who was suddenly seized by an idea to which he gave lively form, and then after a time he called a halt (one never knew whether it was final or temporary) with some provisional last point or other...Now he has left us alone with the enigmatic utterances of his letters – at more than one point clearly showing that he sensed, without really knowing, how the story should continue...' (Barth, Karl, 'From a Letter of Karl Barth to Landessuperintendent P.W. Herrenbrück, 21 December 1952' in Ronald Gregor Smith ed. *World Come of Age: A Symposium on Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (London: Collins, 1965), 89-90).

³ Clifford Green argues that theological anthropology animates all of Bonhoeffer's work (Green, Clifford J. *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 1-2). Wayne Whitson Floyd resists this conclusion, chiding Green for misplacing 'too much emphasis on anthropology as Bonhoeffer's guiding concern' (Floyd, Wayne Whitson, 'Encounter with an Other: Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer' in *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation* ed. Peter Frick (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 91). Even if Green does overstate Bonhoeffer's concern for theological anthropology, it is true that Bonhoeffer persistently returns to the theme of the human being.

of being of human being, or as Bonhoeffer (invoking Heidegger) calls this way of being, 'Dasein'. Bonhoeffer articulates this fundamental concern for human being when he states, 'the meaning of 'the being of God in revelation' must be interpreted theologically, including how it is known, how faith as act, and revelation as being, are related to one another and, correspondingly, *how human beings stand in light of revelation*' (DBWE 2:27-28, emphasis in original). This human being will then inform later conversations regarding the self-other relation as developed by Levinas and Weil.

2.1 Bonhoeffer's Account of the Self

For Bonhoeffer, human beings have a definitive 'structure'; this structure is given early in his doctoral dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*. Despite inevitable modifications, the fundamental structure of Bonhoeffer's self remains remarkably consistent. Four elements of this structure invite serious consideration for an account of the self-other relation. First, the structure of human beings is one of openness to others; human beings are fundamentally relational creatures. More than the truism of saying that human beings enjoy relationships with others, Bonhoeffer argues that encounter with others, an ethical encounter, is *constituent* of every self. This ethical encounter with the other distinguishes the person from the individual; the person relates ethically to the other, whereas the individual abdicates responsibility for the other (DBWE 1:50). Second, human beings are understood only in accordance with their limits, rather than their possibilities. Self-understanding from one's possibilities results only in a relation to others which judges and dominates those others. Third, the human person's relationality forms the basis for genuine human community. Genuine Christian

community is characterised by retention of individuality while maintaining unity with others. Fourth, the structure of human being is seen only in the form of Jesus Christ. The ethical task is to conform to Christ, who reveals himself to humankind.

2.1.1 *The Relationality of the Self*

First, for Bonhoeffer human beings are fundamentally interrelational creatures; they are governed by their relationships with others. Bonhoeffer writes in the opening pages of *Sanctorum Communio*, 'The concepts of person, community, and God are inseparably and essentially interrelated' (DBWE 1:34, emphasis in original). This connection between person and community is not one of abstract rationality, or a community based on shared participation in reason. Instead, person and community are connected by an *ethical* relation. It is the genuine encounter with the 'barrier' of the other that constitutes the distinctively ethical character of personhood. Genuine faith communities are communities of persons who encounter one another as barriers to each other (DBWE 1:169).

The constitution of the person by the encounter of the other does not occur once for all time. Instead, Bonhoeffer writes, 'The person does not exist timelessly; a person is not static, but dynamic. The person exists always and only in ethical responsibility; the person is re-created again and again in the perpetual flux of life. Any other concept of person fragments the *fullness of life* of the concrete person' (DBWE 1:48, emphasis in original). The ethical orientation of the human being inclines the self towards this

encounter with the other. As that encounter shapes the person, the capacity for even greater responsibility grows (DBWE 1:49).⁴

Distinctively Christian community is community whose members encounter the specific revelation of *God* as barrier and find themselves defined by that limitation. The encounter with the divine is not necessarily a secure one. In a passage which resonates with the philosophy of Levinas, Bonhoeffer writes,

It is a Christian insight that the person as conscious being is created in the moment of being moved – in the situation of responsibility, passionate ethical struggle, confrontation by an overwhelming claim; thus the real person grows out of the concrete situation...For Christian philosophy, the human person originates only in relation to the divine; the divine person transcends the human person, who both resists and is overwhelmed by the divine (DBWE 1:49).⁵

2.1.2 *Self-Reflection and Limit*

Bonhoeffer's *Habilitationschrift, Act and Being*, depicts genuine human being as defined by active epistemological questioning of 'human being's' ethical orientation. Crucially,

⁴ This is a critical insight for further discussions. Bonhoeffer, in an edited-out comment in his thesis, remarks, 'The more the barrier is obscured, the more the human being assumes the position of the one making demands...' (DBWE 1:49 n. 54). This quote offers a potent image; the self who does not (or cannot) recognise the boundary becomes even less able to understand itself rightly. On account of this failure of understanding does it make demands to the other. The progressive character of this development of self will be important for considering the way the concept of the heart turned in on itself, or *cor curvum in se*, is manifest ethically. The self turned inwards grows ever more inwards, while the self ethically oriented towards the other becomes ever more responsible. Bonhoeffer makes this point in *Ethics*, when he writes that one's capacity for responsibility can and should grow (DBWE 6:281). This insight will be further developed in the context of Simone Weil's concept of attention.

⁵ This depiction of responsibility resonates with Levinas's philosophy insofar as both highlight the profound depth of the other's claim upon the self. Levinas writes, 'The subject resting on itself is confounded by wordless accusation...More exactly, it is accusation which I cannot answer, but for which I cannot decline responsibility' (OBBE 127). An accusation which can be neither answered for nor declined indeed constitutes what Bonhoeffer calls 'an overwhelming claim'. In response to this claim, the self recognises its ever-growing sense of responsibility, even to the point of substitution for the other. As will be discussed below, responsibility culminates for Bonhoeffer in vicarious representative action, or standing on behalf of another when and where they cannot.

Act and Being questions how revelation affects the knowledge of human being. Bonhoeffer argues that every attempt at securing knowledge of human being is also the question of human being itself; epistemology, for Bonhoeffer, is also theological anthropology (DBWE 2:30).⁶ In response to the question of human being, Christian witness emphasises a form of knowing unavailable to philosophy in the form of revelation. Bonhoeffer addresses this question by distinguishing between theological approaches that begin from a consideration of act and those that begin from a consideration of being. Bonhoeffer writes, ‘...act is comprised of relationality, the infinitely-extensive, that which is bound to consciousness, discontinuity, and existentiality...being is comprised of confinement-to-the-self, the infinitely intensive, that which transcends consciousness, continuity’ (DBWE 2:29). While theologies of act account for transcendence and the need to perpetually relate again to revelation, theologies of being understand revelation as something which can be reflected upon and thus provide continuity of faith. Neither are wholly sufficient for theology. Act and being comprise a dialectic through which human beings understand themselves in light of revelation.

Bonhoeffer’s appraisal of act, in the philosophical form of ‘genuine transcendentalism’, is positive insofar as it places Dasein, or the way of human being in the world, in between two poles of transcendence (DBWE 2:35).⁷ On one side of Dasein’s knowing is

⁶ Bonhoeffer writes, ‘Epistemology is the attempt of the I to understand itself. I reflect on myself; I and myself move apart and come together again...The I intends to understand itself by regarding itself’ (DBWE 2:33). He will later note, however, that since thinking precedes the I, thinking belongs to that which cannot be comprehended (DBWE 2:38). The attempt to reflect on oneself from a position of comprehensive knowledge is therefore doomed to failure.

⁷ Bonhoeffer defines ‘genuine transcendentalism’ as the affirmation that ‘thinking refers to something transcendent which, however, is not at its disposal’ (DBWE 2:34). Such thinking opposes what Bonhoeffer calls ‘transcendentalist philosophy’. Transcendentalist philosophy, as it appears in idealism, transforms the limit of transcendence into the immanence of the I. Bonhoeffer writes, ‘To be sure, the transcendental

the thing-in-itself, which is unavailable to human reason. On the other side is transcendence which exceeds human knowing. Dasein is defined by this 'being between' poles of transcendence.⁸ Although Bonhoeffer affirms 'genuine transcendental thinking' over against the conflation of act and being found in 'idealism', such thinking is not without issue.⁹ Even when thinking observes strict limits, as in genuine transcendental thinking, these limits remain products of the self's reflection. Bonhoeffer writes,

What is this transcendent, towards which everything is said to be in orientation? If it can never be objectively knowable, how can reason fix its limits over against something unknown? Even if this is a free decision of practical reason, it remains the self-chosen limit by reason of itself, by which reason once again legitimates itself as that which put the boundaries in place...The miscarriage of the endeavor to ascertain the boundaries of reason is due to the fact that there are for reason essentially no boundaries, for even the boundaries are thought away until they are no longer genuine boundaries (DBWE 2:45).

The solution to this problem is not a different concept or different way of thinking, but a *person*. The genuine limit to thought is Jesus Christ (DBWE 2:45). Only God, in Christ, serves as a barrier that can draw the self out of its own thinking, its own reflection on itself. Bonhoeffer echoes this idea in his 1933 lectures on Christology, where he argues

starting point seems to have prevailed in idealism also insofar as the reality of the external world is to understood in it only from the I' (DBWE 2:43). The central distinction between genuine transcendental thinking and transcendentalist philosophy represented in idealism is the reality of the world. Only the chastened reason of genuine transcendental philosophy, reason which knows itself only alongside transcendence, is useful for theology. Even genuine transcendental philosophy, however, is not without problems. This will be discussed below through the concept of limit.

⁸ It is also significant to note that Dasein's 'being between' transcendence, for Bonhoeffer, also suggests an *orientation* towards transcendence (DBWE 2:35). Human being always finds itself lacking full knowledge of itself, unable to answer even the most primary questions about its existence. Bonhoeffer writes, '...the understanding of Dasein is characterised as it is for Kant as self-knowing 'in reference to'. It has the sense of *being deeply called into question* by knowledge, of never being able to rest in itself without surrendering itself...But as such, the understanding of Dasein must always transcend itself. Constantly oriented in reference to itself, such understanding *can never attain itself*' (DBWE 2:37-38, emphasis in original). The human person can only locate itself outside of its interior reflection, at the point of the concrete limit. The theme of orientation to transcendence, in the form of otherness, constitutes a crucial part of this thesis. The image of orientation helpfully articulates the ethical *stance* of those human beings who discover themselves outside of their own self-reflection.

⁹ A fuller treatment of Bonhoeffer's interpretation of 'idealism' can be found in the subsequent section of this chapter.

that Christology is 'knowledge par excellence' (DBWE 12:301). Because God's Logos is, for Bonhoeffer, the ultimate reality, to engage the Logos is to engage the very essence of reality. Jesus Christ, as God's Logos, stands over against knowledge which has no access to the reality of Christ. This resistance to the false knowledge of human beings characterises the transcendent. Bonhoeffer writes, 'From outside, Christology becomes the center of knowledge. The Logos we are talking about here is a person. *This human person is the transcendent*' (DBWE 10:301, emphasis added). The encounter with Christ's transcendence calls human self-reflection into question. No longer can the human being classify its world, including itself, into categories over which it rules. Instead, human being confronted by Christ has no choice but to ask 'who are you?' Only the question of 'who' acknowledges the absolute otherness of the one speaking to the self. Bonhoeffer writes, "The question of "who" expresses the very otherness of the other' (DBWE 10:303). The question posed to Christ '*how* are you' returns to the classificatory impulse of the human logos.¹⁰ Put in the terms of *Act and Being*, the 'being between' transcendence is a scandal to the human logos; the encounter with

¹⁰ Bonhoeffer writes, "The question of "how" is the question about immanence. But because the One who is questioned is the Son himself, the immanent question of "how" can never comprehend him. Not "how" is it possible for you to exist? – that is the godless question, the serpent's question – but rather, "who" are you?' (DBWE 10:302-303). The 'how' question cannot comprehend Christ because he exceeds every classification that the human logos can put to him. He is no object in the sense Bonhoeffer describes. He states, "The object is defined, recognized, and understood by means of its possibilities, but means of its "how," by the immanent logos of human beings' (DBWE 10:302). Bonhoeffer's concern for the question posed to Christ continues into *Creation and Fall*, where he describes the fallen question not as a 'how' question, but as the 'pious' question. He writes, "The question that the serpent posed was a perfectly pious one...Did God really say? – that is the utterly godless question...What is the real evil in this question? It is not that the question is asked. It is that this question already contains the wrong answer...It requires humankind to sit in judgment on God's word instead of simply listening to it and doing it' (DBWE 3:107-108). The quote reveals a critical similarity between the 'how' question and the 'pious' question; both questions require the elevation of human beings over God. The former asserts its authority over Christ even to the point of destroying the one who calls it into question. This authority appears in the form of classification and understanding. In this 'how' question, Christ becomes comprehensible to the human being. The latter requires also places God under its control. The pious question calls human beings to consider and weigh the word of God against their own reason. God's word is subsumed beneath the reflection and judgment of humankind. For Bonhoeffer, human beings never find themselves in questioning Christ; they are found in the answer they give to Christ's question to them.

transcendence in the form of Christ is, in the context of Bonhoeffer's early theology, a confrontational encounter.

It has been suggested above that the form of the self's reflection informs the form of the self's relation to others. It has also been claimed that Bonhoeffer considers the question posed to Christ, the 'who' or the 'how' question, to be the ultimate question of human being. Does the approach of the individual to Christ dictate an *ethical* stance?

Bonhoeffer states that it does: '[The who question] is the question that asks about the other person, the other being, the other authority. It is the question about love for one's neighbor. The question of transcendence, of existence, is the question about the neighbor; it is the question about [being] a person' (DBWE 10:303). Two points illuminate the ethical thrust of the question posed to Christ. First, the confrontation of the other to the self provokes a response of either violence or silence. The human logos must kill its questioner, since the question destabilises the human logos's own sovereignty.¹¹ Bonhoeffer writes, 'The Word become human must be hung on the cross by the human logos. Then the person who was causing the worry has been killed, and along with that person, the question' (DBWE 10:305). Even then, however, the question posed to the self by Christ is not silenced. This is the power of the resurrection. Only Christ, the Resurrected One, can endure the murderous impulse of the human logos.¹² Human beings are always responding to the Counter-Logos of Christ, a response which conditions the self's relation to human others.

¹¹ This depiction of the self's response to the summons of the other will be a significant point of connection between Levinas and Bonhoeffer. Cf. Chapter Three.

¹² Bonhoeffer writes, 'But what happens when this counter Word, though it has been killed, raises itself from the dead as the living, eternal, ultimate, conquering Word of God, when it rises up to meet its murderers and rushes at them again, appearing as the Resurrected One who has overcome death? Here the question, "Who are you?" becomes most poignant. Here it stands, alive forever, over and around and within humankind' (DBWE 10:305).

Second, the question posed to the self by Christ demonstrates the powerlessness of the self before otherness; the only way the self encounters otherness is through the other's self-revelation. This revelation of the other occurs within the church-community. Here one presents themselves before another as sinner, and asks for forgiveness of sin (DBWE 10:309). This posture of the self, one of waiting in confession for forgiveness, is one of humility and silence.¹³ Bonhoeffer writes, 'The silence of the church is silence before the Word. In proclaiming Christ, the church falls on its knees in silence before the inexpressible...To speak of Christ is to be silent, and be silent about Christ is to speak...The church's speech through silence is the right way to proclaim Christ' (DBWE 10:300-301). The question of human being's knowledge of itself is ethical insofar as the form of the question indicates a stance of the self towards otherness. The human logos questions the Logos of God, or Christ. This questioning attempts to classify and to assert authority over the response (DBWE 10:302). Christ rejects this question and offers a question of his own which destabilises the reason of the human logos. In the face of 'horrified, dethroned human reason' the human logos either kills the questioner or falls into silence (DBWE 10:302). Whether one kills or falls silent before the other, the way one thinks of itself determines its ethical response to the other.

2.1.3 *Self and Community*

¹³ The theme of confession and silence will be revisited in Chapter Four on Simone Weil and her concept of waiting. For Weil, waiting indicates the posture of the self who waits vigilantly for Christ to appear. This resonates with Bonhoeffer's own insistence that before the question of Christ (the Counter-Logos) the human logos is forced into silence or violence.

While the encounter between the human logos and the Counter-Logos of Christ portrayed in Bonhoeffer's Christology lectures is one of confrontation, this portrayal does not encapsulate Christ's engagement with humankind. The church-community, as the location of Christ in the world, is not defined by constant confrontation or conflict. To the contrary, the church-community is the epicenter of true human being, the place where genuine human relating occurs.¹⁴ The relationality of the church-community follows from its origin, the heart of God (DBWE 1:145).

Human beings, as participants in the church-community, are also the unity of act and being (DBWE 2:120). As act, human being inclines towards a transcendent limit, a limit which exceeds its own creative capacity. Within the church-community, this recognised limit is revelation. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Revelation gives itself without precondition and is alone able to place one into reality' (DBWE 2:89). Only this encounter with the limit enables human beings to participate in the church-community. As being, human beings have faith. This faith is the point of continuity for the human person; faith is the orientation of the person 'in reference to' the origin of revelation. This faith, however, is not a heroic faith of an individual, deciding to believe over and over again (DBWE 2:118). Instead, faith is conditioned by the being of the community, the church. Faith

¹⁴ The language of 'true' human being and 'genuine' human relating refers to Bonhoeffer's distinction between human beings as creatures in the image of God (*imago dei*) and human beings 'sicut deus'. Bonhoeffer writes, '...God and humankind in the *imago dei* versus God and humankind *sicut deus*. *Imago dei* – humankind in the image of God in being for and the neighbor, in its original creatureliness and limitedness; *sicut deus* – humankind like God in knowing out of its own self about good and evil, in having no limit and acting out of its own resources, in its aseity, in its being alone' (DBWE 3:113). Fallen human being, *sicut deus*, persistently attempts to go beyond itself in imitation of God. This self-initiated attempt at transcendence results only in a parody of human life as intended by God. The falsity of this existence is revealed by Christ, who demonstrates the full incarnation of human being in relation to God. He is the inaugurator of 'true' and 'genuine' human existence. True and genuine human being, then, refers to creaturely existence in the image of God, rather than existence *sicut deus*. The next section on 'Human Being and Conformation to Christ' will discuss the issue of true human being with more detail.

'decides' in continuity through the community who nurtures that faith. Bonhoeffer states,

God has willed that we should seek and find God's living Word in the testimony of other Christians, in the mouths of human beings. Therefore, Christians need other Christians who speak God's Word to them. They need them again and again when they become uncertain and disheartened because, living by their own resources, they cannot help themselves without cheating themselves out of the truth...They need them solely for the sake of Jesus Christ. The Christ in their hearts is weaker than the Christ in the word of other Christians...As such, God allows them to come together then grants them community (DBWE 5:32).

Although the individual may stumble, unable to 'act' in faith themselves, the individual in the church-community experiences the 'being' and continuity of faith through others.¹⁵

Every human being participates in both a life as an 'I' and a life as part of the larger community of humankind. All human beings together constitute a 'collective person', a unity of humankind. After the fall of humankind, the community of humankind is based on the universal complicity in guilt. Paradoxically, the very community of humankind in sin leads to the isolation of its members; because of humankind's universal complicity in the sin of Adam, true human community is lost. However, Christ restores community between both God and humankind, and human beings with one another (DBWE 1:145). Christ's restoration opens the way towards genuine ethical relation between human beings as a whole.

2.1.4 Human Being and Conformation to Christ

¹⁵ Cf. also DBWE 2:121. Bonhoeffer writes, "The unity of the historical I 'in faith' means unity in the community of faith, the historical community of faith that I believe to be the community of faith of Christ."

For Bonhoeffer the end of human beings is to be conformed to Christ. In conforming to Christ, the self is transformed into the image of Christ. This image of conformation to Christ is crucially informed both by Bonhoeffer's understanding of Christ as the 'prototype' of human being, and his interpretation of Thomas á Kempis's imitation of Christ tradition. Instead of being lords in their own image, God transforms human beings into the image of the 'new' human being, Christ.

Bonhoeffer introduces this teleological image of the prototype within the context of the 'analogia relationis' (DBWE 3:65). The *analogia relationis*, or analogy of relationship, describes the point of likeness between human beings and God. In contrast to the Thomistic doctrine of the *analogia entis*, or analogy of being, Bonhoeffer's *analogia relationis* is not a 'structure of human existence' (DBWE 3:65). Instead, it is a given *relation*, a gift given to human beings. Even as a gift, the *analogia relationis* does not provide human beings with a link through which they can ascend to God. Instead, the *analogia relationis* points humankind to the 'prototype' of humankind, or Christ.

Bonhoeffer writes, '...the analogia or likeness must be understood very strictly in the sense that what is like derives its likeness only from the prototype, so that it always points us only towards the prototype itself and is 'like' it only in pointing to it in this way' (DBWE 3:65). In pointing towards Christ, one discovers the most genuinely human, or 'new', stance of human beings to be one of 'being free for' others as opposed to 'being free from' others.¹⁶

¹⁶ Bonhoeffer analyses Christ's structure for others in his Christology lectures, where he writes of the *pro me* structure of Christ. He writes, 'The being of Christ's person is essentially relatedness to me. His being-Christ is his being-for-me. This *pro-me* is not to be understood as an effect that issues from Christ or as a

While Bonhoeffer maintains that human beings take on Christ's own structure, he rejects the idea that they can enact this transformation out of their own resources. The transformation of human beings into Christ-likeness, for Bonhoeffer, is a *conformation* to, rather than imitation of, Christ. The former describes the transformation of the self by one genuinely outside of the self. The latter, for Bonhoeffer, describes a self-initiated transformation, which in the end is no transformation at all.¹⁷

Bonhoeffer's characterisation of being conformed to Christ does not imply a complete rejection of tradition exemplified by Thomas á Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*. To the contrary, Peter Frick argues that no other work impacted Bonhoeffer's spiritual formation so completely.¹⁸ Bonhoeffer engaged with á Kempis's work throughout his adult life. He gave a copy of the *Imitation of Christ* to his grandmother in 1932, and was

form that he assumes incidentally, but is to be understood as the being of his very person. The very core of his person is pro-me' (DBWE 12:314, emphasis in original). Two further points clarify this idea. First, Christ's pro-me structure means that Christ can never be reflected on, faithfully, in the abstract. Inquiries about Christ which remove Christ's relation to the inquirer are, for Bonhoeffer, 'godless'. He writes, 'It is not only useless to meditate on a Christ-in-himself but godless, precisely because Christ is not there in-himself, but rather is there for you. From this perspective one can comprehend Melanchthon's aversion to Christology' (DBWE 12:314). Second, Christ's pro-me structure is the structure of redeemed, or 'new', humanity. This new humanity is called to demonstrate freedom 'for' others after its prototype and its Lord. Bonhoeffer writes, 'To those who have heard the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ is given the incomprehensibly great promise that they are to become like Christ' (DBWE 4:281). The disciple's likeness to Christ, for others, reveals the ethical import of the *analogia relationis*; as Christ is for others, so are humans called to be.

¹⁷ Self-initiated transformation is no transformation because, as already discussed in relation to *Act and Being*, what is initiated by the self can never get outside of the self. This is Bonhoeffer's criticism of even the most genuinely transcendental philosophy; even the most absolute limit posited by the self remains immanent, rather than transcendent, limit. In the language of Levinas, immanent thinking never encounters genuine 'exteriority'. For Bonhoeffer, transformation can only occur in encounter with such exteriority.

¹⁸ Frick 2008:31. Frick outlines possible points of influence within Bonhoeffer's work, most notably in *Discipleship* and *Life Together*. He does not, however, mention points of explicit divergence between Bonhoeffer's thought and the language of imitation. This seems to be due to Frick's close connecting of the concept of imitation and Bonhoeffer's concept of 'following after', a point similarly made by the editors of *Discipleship* (Frick 2008:34, DBWE 4:288).

reading a Latin copy in Tegel prison in December of 1943.¹⁹ In *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer draws upon the *Imitation of Christ* for an account of the spiritual disciplines of silence and humility. Echoing the opening words of his Christology lectures, Bonhoeffer argues that silence is critical to the spiritual life. Silence exists where the Word comes.

Bonhoeffer writes ‘We are silent after hearing the Word because the Word is still speaking and living and dwelling within us. We are silent early in the morning because God should have the first word, and we are silent before going to bed because the last word also belongs to God’ (DBWE 5:84-85). Closely related to silence is the discipline of humility. Practices of humility remind the self of its proper place in the world; for Bonhoeffer true humility neither debases the self in false self-flagellation nor allows the self to think more of itself than it ought. Instead, humility of self results in a creaturely confidence in Christ who redeems it. Both silence and humility characterise the self free from enslavement to its own opinions and self-evaluation. This freedom from oneself grounds all service of others.²⁰

Despite Bonhoeffer’s affirmation of á Kempis’s devotional classic, he refrains from drawing upon the language of imitation himself. Instead, he speaks of conformation to Christ. Bonhoeffer writes,

Formation occurs only by being drawn into the form of Jesus Christ, by *being conformed to the unique form of the one who became human, was crucified, and is risen*. This does not happen as we strive “to become like Jesus,” as we customarily say, but as the form of Jesus Christ himself so

¹⁹ Frick 2008:32.

²⁰ It has already been shown how transforms human beings from being free ‘from’ others to being free ‘for’ others. However, the transformation begun by Christ not only grants freedom ‘for others’ but also grants freedom from oneself. Subsequent sections on Bonhoeffer’s image of the human being *cor curvum in se* will elaborate on the idea of the human being needing freedom from itself. In the meantime, it should suffice to say that Bonhoeffer describes human being *cor curvum in se* as being incarceration within oneself. Silence and humility mark the disciple who has been freed from this imprisonment, and is freed for others.

works on us that it molds us, conforming our form to Christ's own. Christ remains the only one who forms (DBWE 6:93, emphasis in original).

Bonhoeffer's reticence towards the language of imitation follows from his concern about all attempts to follow Christ in terms of sheer emulation. Such approaches, for Bonhoeffer, are a return to humankind's persistent attempts to be gods after their own image, their attempts to be *sicut deus*.²¹ Bonhoeffer also writes,

The lie of the serpent was to suggest to Adam that he would still have to become like God, and to do so by his own deed and decision. That was when Adam rejected grace and instead chose his own deed...Human beings live without being truly human...Since then, the proud children of Adam have sought to restore this lost image of God in themselves by means of their own efforts. But the more seriously and devotedly they strive to regain what was lost, and however convinced and proud they are of their apparent victory in achieving this, the deeper the contradiction to God grows. Their distorted form, which they modeled after the image of the god of their own imaginative projections, resembles more and more the image of Satan, even though they may be unaware of this (DBWE 4:282).

This passage vividly portrays the depravity of the human attempt to imitate God. In contrast to such imitation, conformation to Christ is completely the work of Christ. Here again Bonhoeffer invokes the image of the prototype; through the prototypical human being God begins the transformation of human beings in his image (DBWE 4:283). Bonhoeffer writes, 'To be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ is not an ideal of realizing some kind of similarity with Christ which we are asked to attain. It is not we who change ourselves into the image of God' (DBWE 4:284). Christ takes on human form only to give it a new, transfigured form. This new human form is a form for others, a form which bears the burdens of those it encounters (DBWE 4:285).

²¹ Bonhoeffer writes in *Ethics*, 'All super-humanity, all efforts to outgrow one's nature as human, all struggle to be heroic or a demigod, all fall away from a person here, because they are untrue. The real human being is the object neither of contempt nor of deification, but the object of the love of God' (DBWE 6:94).

Participation in suffering is central to Bonhoeffer's account of conformation to Christ. In suffering one realises the true image of God in Christ within the world. More than marking the individual disciple, suffering marks the entire community of Christ. Bonhoeffer writes, 'It is by Christians' being publicly disgraced, having to suffer and being put to death for the sake of Christ, that Christ himself attains visible form within his community' (DBWE 4:286). Against this background of being transformed into the image of Christ, in suffering, Bonhoeffer suggests that disciples be imitators of God. Disciples imitate Christ because the transformative work has already been initiated. Jesus Christ transforms the disciples, freeing them for lives of humble imitation of God. This imitation of God, following Christ, is a life for others, bearing their burdens and standing where they cannot.

2.2 Humankind 'in Adam': Cor Curvum In Se

Underlying many of Bonhoeffer's concepts mentioned up to this point are the twin constructions of 'being in Adam' and 'being in Christ'. Every human being participates in either Adam or Christ. This participation governs the self's relation to both God and others. The contrast between being in Adam and being in Christ is also a contrast between disunity and wholeness, death and life, and an inward turn and an outward turn. In subsequent chapters, this outward orientation towards the other will be considered in relation to the thought of Levinas and Weil in terms of an ethically-oriented self.

'Being in Adam' for Bonhoeffer indicates the perversion of the whole human being, or being *cor curvum in se* (DBWE 2:137). Human beings now do not know themselves rightly; they can know themselves neither to be good nor to be evil. They must rely on God's word for any such knowledge of themselves. Humankind has separated itself from God, the one from whom the decisive word about humankind is uttered. Set adrift from its moorings, human being in Adam is characterised by its attempt to locate and to justify itself through its own resources. When the question of human being is asked the only response the human being can offer is one gleaned from self-reflection. Yet because human beings have separated themselves from their origin and end, this self-reflection offers illusion rather than true knowledge of oneself. Even what Bonhoeffer calls 'critical philosophy', or philosophy which acknowledges its considerable limitation, apart from revelation remains humankind's attempt at understanding itself.²² Humankind in Adam perpetually attempts to answer the ultimate question about itself from its own resources.²³

²² Bonhoeffer draws on the concept of critical philosophy in relation to the thought of Kant (DBWE 2:37 n. 10, DBWE 10:473), Barth (DBWE 2:18) and Grisebach (DBWE 2:27). In every one of these references Bonhoeffer notes the essential 'godlessness' of philosophy, insofar as it cannot hope to understand human being apart from revelation. He writes, 'Man must die in his sin in spite of philosophy, must remain alone in his overpowered and misinterpreted world. But now the Christian message comes...God makes himself known to man who is sinner in his whole existence. The whole existence of man in his egocentric world has to be shaken before man can see God as really outside of himself' (DBWE 10:473).

²³ As can be seen even early in this analysis, Bonhoeffer's account of idealism presages his account of human being 'in Adam', which will be discussed below. This resemblance is not coincidental. As Luther writes of a fallenness of reason, Bonhoeffer connects the epistemological arrogance of idealism with the fallenness of the whole human being (DBWE 2:41). Reason 'turned in on itself' cannot hope to understand itself, the human person, rightly. It is on this basis that Bonhoeffer can connect a philosophical position to the sinfulness of human beings. He writes, 'Hegel wrote a philosophy of angels, but not of human beings as Dasein. Even the philosopher simply is not in full possession of the spirit. *All who countenance that they need only to come to themselves, in order to be in God, are doomed to hideous disillusion in the experience of being-, persisting-, and ending-up-turned-in-upon-themselves utterly – the experience of utmost loneliness in its tormenting desolation and sterility*' (DBWE 2:42, emphasis added).

Bonhoeffer's theology is profoundly influenced by his interpretation of what he calls 'idealism'.²⁴ Bonhoeffer's interpretation of, and rejection of, of idealism follows from his account of being in Adam. For Bonhoeffer, idealism cannot help but fail precisely because it stems from an overestimation of the human being. This overestimation characterises human being in Adam's desire to be sicut deus. Idealism is the *reflection of human being in Adam on itself*. This section explores Bonhoeffer's account of human being in Adam, and to a lesser extent idealism, in terms of the human being's thought and relation to others. For Bonhoeffer, being in Adam leaves the self alone, leads to domination of others and leads the self into ever further disunity with itself. These three characteristics of being in Adam and its corresponding idealism highlight the *ethical* ramifications of human thinking apart from revelation.

2.2.1 *Being in Adam: The Self in Solitude*

Idealism, and indeed much of humankind's highest philosophy, is human being in Adam's attempt to answer its own question (DBWE 10:390). Bonhoeffer rejects idealism because it justifies human being in Adam's attempt to answer questions

²⁴ 'Idealism' for Bonhoeffer refers to, generally speaking, German idealism beginning with Kant. He writes, 'One may object to finding Kant mentioned here, without qualification, among the idealists...In the context of the present discussion he is the first in a line that progresses up to Hegel' (DBWE 1:42 n.5). Although Bonhoeffer engages explicitly with Hegel, at points he appears to be engaging the work of Gottlieb Fichte rather than Hegel. Charles Marsh writes, 'Although he attributes the modern origin of these aporias [of philosophical systems] to Kant and Hegel, his notion of *Systemgedank*, or "systematic metaphysics," is most dramatically exemplified in terms of what Fichte means by *Wissenschaftslehre*' (Marsh, Charles, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Promise of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 57). Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr. echoes this point (Floyd Jr. 2008:102). Both authors also note the development of Bonhoeffer's thought with regard to Hegel in particular. Where Bonhoeffer earlier denigrates most secular philosophies as 'idealistic', in his later work he moves towards a deeper appreciation of the nuance within Hegel's thought (Floyd Jr. 2008:108). What remains constant, however, is the depth of Bonhoeffer's antipathy for absolute idealisms which overstate capabilities of human reason and knowledge. Against such absolute idealisms Bonhoeffer draws a sharp contrast between that which is 'idealist' and that which is 'Christian' (DBWE 1:45).

beyond its ability to answer. Because human being in Adam has separated from its origin, everything apprehended by the self, including other persons, must be understood in relation to the self.²⁵ Nothing genuinely 'other' can encounter the self; human being in Adam intrinsically tames otherness. Paradoxically, in the attempt to draw close and understand all things, human beings are sundered from all things.²⁶ The depth of this breach within human existence is revealed in Bonhoeffer's account of humankind's distance from the earth. This section will explore how Bonhoeffer understands the solitude of the self in relation to both God and the world. The sundering of the self from others leaves the self in a state of self-induced solitude, apart from all that is life-giving.

For Bonhoeffer, idealism's elevation of human reason results not in intimate knowledge of God but in alienation from God. In *Act and Being*, Bonhoeffer observes that idealism sunders the self from God by reducing God to an object of reflection in consciousness. Theologically, this move is expressed in terms of the I who finds God in reflection on itself. This, however, makes God the 'prisoner of consciousness' (DBWE 2:51).²⁷ To make God an object of reflection assumes that human beings can reflect upon God; it

²⁵ Bonhoeffer cites with approval Fichte's recognition that personhood does not arise in isolation. Yet, Bonhoeffer also notes Fichte's lack of a genuine 'You'. For Bonhoeffer's Fichte, there is no genuine You, only an Other-I, a replica of oneself in the form of another (DBWE 1:56 n. 12).

²⁶ For Bonhoeffer, one important distinction between the Christian self and the idealist self is the approach to both origin and *telos*. The idealist self is its own origin and *telos*; it holds all possibilities within itself. In contrast, the Christian self knows neither its origin nor its *telos* in an unmediated way. Origin and *telos*, for the Christian, are only available in Christ, and even then are only apprehended in faith. Bonhoeffer writes, 'In this respect we differ fundamentally from idealism, for which origin and *telos* stand in real, unbroken connection, the synthesis of which is expressed in the concept of 'essence' ...The formal and general concept of person should be thought of as fulfilled by positive Christian content, i.e., established by God and oriented toward God' (DBWE 1:62-63). Bonhoeffer addresses this further in *Creation and Fall*, where he argues that God exists as the boundaries of the human person. These boundaries exist at both the margin and the center of the human being (DBWE 3:86). Idealism claims knowledge of what is beyond the self's limit; beyond being torn away from God and others, the idealist self is sundered even from itself.

²⁷ Bonhoeffer writes, 'What reason can perceive from itself (as Hegel puts it) is revelation, and so God is completely locked into consciousness' (DBWE 2:53).

assumes enough similarity between God and humankind that humankind can understand God. In contrast to this 'intolerable' thought, Bonhoeffer contends, 'It is not because human beings are like God that God comes to them – on the contrary, God then would not need to come – but precisely because human beings are utterly unlike God and never know God from themselves' (DBWE 2:54).²⁸ For Bonhoeffer, philosophy's fundamental delusion with regard to this point exposes its divorce from the divine Word. For philosophy to be in the truth, it would need to 'recognize in its eternal loneliness the curse of lost community with God' (DBWE 2:80). It is only in 'pure orientation towards Christ' that the 'echoless cries from solitude' are transformed into the prayers of a free child before the Father (DBWE 2:161).

This thematic connection between human being in Adam and solitude continues beyond *Act and Being*. In his inaugural lecture at the University of Berlin, delivered in 1930, Bonhoeffer addresses human being in terms of possibilities over against limits. Philosophy, as the human work 'par excellence', concerns itself with human possibility.²⁹ For Bonhoeffer, Heidegger offers a significant example philosophy concerned for human possibility. In Bonhoeffer's interpretation of Heidegger, the

²⁸ Bonhoeffer goes even further in terms of distinguishing God from human beings. Not only are human beings unlike God in themselves, they are not even prepared for revelation; they are not especially conditioned for revelation. Bonhoeffer develops this idea in contrast to Reinhold Seeberg's account of the religious a priori. For Seeberg, the religious a priori is the ability of human beings to receive revelation. In describing Seeberg's position, Bonhoeffer draws upon the image of a mold which receives revelation. Bonhoeffer quotes Seeberg: 'As a formal spiritual disposition, the religious a priori has no content of its own...The positive content of faith is given by revelation; the a priori is merely the inner capacity, in this context, by which are able...to receive the content of divine revelation...' (DBWE 2:58 n. 35).

²⁹ Bonhoeffer does not directly invoke the term idealism in the opening pages of this lecture. However, the thematic overlap between Bonhoeffer's earlier development of idealism, in *Act and Being*, and the development of philosophies of possibility in this lecture, is difficult to overlook. Recalling his prior definition of idealism as concern for continuity in essence, Bonhoeffer says in his lecture, '...the characteristic feature of the [possibility of drawing transcendence into the I] is that the person is fundamentally accessible and transparent to himself and understands himself through himself; he finds within himself the point of unity from which his own essence reveals itself' (DBWE 10:390).

authenticity of the human being is a human possibility; it requires no genuinely transcendent reference to draw it into reality.³⁰ Bonhoeffer writes,

By knowingly taking upon himself these realities even unto the reality of death, he overcomes them in their character as boundaries and so attains not the end but rather the completion, the wholeness of Dasein. The person gains command of the world by elevating himself into a tragically isolated individual. [The person remains alone, understanding himself from himself; being in the world has no meaning for one's authentic self-understanding. Ultimately the person himself answers the question about the human being] (DBWE 10:396).

For Bonhoeffer, Heidegger represents a significant philosophical and theological problem. Human being understood from itself, as in idealism, remains the lord of an imaginary and an isolated world.³¹

³⁰ Bonhoeffer writes of Heidegger's Dasein, 'Insofar as Dasein lays hold of the possibility, the existence, most authentic to it, Dasein grasps its own wholeness...It is capable both of choosing itself in authenticity and of losing itself in inauthenticity. *The decisive point is, however, that it already 'is' in every instance what it understands and determines itself to be*' (DBWE 2:70, emphasis in original). In Heidegger one finds a unique combination of philosophies of act and philosophies of being. Like genuine transcendental thinking, Heidegger's account of Dasein recognises limit. However, its central flaw, for Bonhoeffer, is that like philosophies of being, authenticity or true existence remains an immanent possibility for the self.

³¹ Bonhoeffer writes, 'Now the human spirit circles perpetually around itself. Now this spirit is master of the world, but only of the world its ego interprets and thinks up, master in its own, self-restricted, violated world' (DBWE 10:406). In his imaginative rendering of the human decision for or against joy in God, *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis offers a similar image of the self's delusory grandeur. Set in the context of the afterlife, Lewis describes persons in Purgatory/Hell as fundamentally opposed to community; they seek to escape one another unless they can possess one another. They oppose community because community threatens their dominion. Lewis reports on a conversation with one of the inhabitants: 'It seems a deuce of a town,' I volunteered, 'and that's what I can't understand. The parts of it that I saw were so empty. Was there once a much larger population?' 'Not at all,' said my neighbour. 'The trouble is that they're so quarrelsome. As soon as anyone arrives he settles in some street. Before he's been there twenty-four hours he quarrels with his neighbour. Before the week is over he's quarreled so badly that he decides to move. Very likely he finds the next street empty because all the people there have quarreled with *their* neighbours – and moved...But even if he stays, it makes no odds. He's sure to have another quarrel pretty soon and then he'll move on again. Finally he'll move right out to the edge of town and build a new house. You see, it's easy here. You've only got to *think* a house and there it is. That's how the town keeps growing' (Lewis, C.S. *The Great Divorce* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 9-10, emphasis in original). Like Bonhoeffer's account of the idealist person, Lewis's characters are indeed lords, but they are lords over imaginary dominions. Their creations are no more capable of protecting them from real danger than Bonhoeffer's idealist self can protect itself from its own anxious and angry disunity.

In *Creation and Fall*, Bonhoeffer's engagement with idealism shifts. While idealism still places humankind in a false relation with itself, this false relation follows not from an overt elevation of reason, but from a presumption to knowledge of 'the beginning'. Bonhoeffer writes 'That the Bible should speak of the beginning provokes the world, provokes us. For we cannot speak of the beginning. Where the beginning begins, there our thinking stops; there it comes to an end. Yet the desire to ask after the beginning is the innermost passion of our thinking' (DBWE 3:25). Thinking cannot establish the beginning; the beginning goes back before human thinking occurs. As such a limit, no amount or form of thinking can go beyond it. However, this question of the beginning is humankind's 'innermost passion', and is a question which cannot be avoided. This impasse, being unable to answer a question that must be asked, forces humankind apart from God to 'enthroned human reason' in order to remove the provocation of the question (DBWE 3:27).³² However, the attempt to go beyond the limit of the beginning, rightly found only from the Creator, is demonic.³³ In the attempt to go back to the beginning (or to go, through reason, to the end) human beings lose their connection with God, the only one who can genuinely inform them about the beginning (DBWE 3:30). The result of this attempt is isolation. Bonhoeffer closes *Creation and Fall* with a passage echoing his inaugural lecture:

There can at this point be no more doubt that the serpent was right in the promise it had made. The Creator confirms the truth of that promise:

³² This image of 'enthroned' human reason also appears in Bonhoeffer's Christology lectures. In speaking about human reason encountered by the Counter-Logos, Bonhoeffer writes, "The logos sees that its autonomy is being threatened from outside [by the Counter-Logos]...Human beings are those who must die and must fall, with their logos, into my hands. Here it is no longer possible to fit the Word made flesh into the logos classification system. Here all that remains is the question: Who are you? *This is the question asked by horrified, dethroned human reason, and also the question of faith...*" (DBWE 12:302, emphasis added).

³³ Bonhoeffer writes, '...as one who lies, the evil one will say: I am the beginning, and you, O humankind, are the beginning. You were with me from the beginning. I have made you what you are, and with me your end is done away....You are the beginning and you are the end, for you are in me...Discover the beginning yourself' (DBWE 3:28-29).

Humankind has become like one of us. It is sicut deus. Humankind has got what it wants; it has itself become creator, source of life, fountainhead of the knowledge of good and evil. It is alone by itself, it lives out of its own resources, it no longer needs any others, it is the lord of its own world, even though that does mean now that it is the solitary lord and despot of its own mute, violated, silenced, dead, ego-world (DBWE 3:142).

This desire to be sicut deus does not negate humankind's innate thirst for God. The life promised by the serpent in being sicut deus leads not to genuine existence, in relation to others, but to emptiness and isolation.

While alienation and solitude apart from God constitutes the most grievous repercussion of human being in Adam's being sicut deus, this alienation extends beyond God. In being sicut deus, human beings are also torn away from the earth. As early as *Act and Being*, Bonhoeffer notes the effects of human sin upon the earth. He writes, 'The faith of the creature, however, refuses to call the 'world' that which has become its own – *which has been defined in the form in which it actually exists by sin and death and has been violated in its Dasein* – the creation of God. Nevertheless, God remains lord even of this world' (DBWE 2:152, emphasis added). Bonhoeffer depicts the world as itself being 'for' God; the world obediently waits for the renewal of creation, even though in the meantime it exists in the dominion of human beings. The world's being for God, however, also indicates a being for human beings, under God's command (DBWE 2:153).³⁴

³⁴ This resonates with Bonhoeffer's development in the Christology lectures of Christ's existence 'for' human beings (DBWE 12:315). As Christ exists for human beings in love, so the world obeys Christ in being for human beings. The world bears the burden of human fallenness as Christ bears the burden of standing where human beings cannot.

Although distorted by the attempt of human beings to be *sicut deus*, the earth bears humankind in order that they might come to the kingdom they love more than the earthly kingdom (DBWE 12:286).³⁵ Despite this role which God gives to the world, human beings in their delusion scorn and reject the world. They do so for two key reasons. First, they think themselves better than the world, and second, they wish to escape the world for an otherworldly spiritual kingdom.³⁶ There exists a crucial connection between human being in Adam, idealism and alienation from the world; the idealist thinks itself lord of the world to the extent that it can go *beyond* the world. To the contrary, Bonhoeffer states that only those who love the world as the gift which bears them can believe in God's kingdom (DBWE 12:286).³⁷ Bonhoeffer writes, 'Whoever evades the Earth finds not God but only another world, his own better, lovelier, more peaceful world. He finds a world beyond, to be sure, but *never God's world, which is dawning in this world. Whoever evades Earth in order to find God finds only himself*' (DBWE 12:288, emphasis added). Idealist thought removes human beings from the world which God gives as a gift.

Bonhoeffer's invocation of the myth of Antaeus informs this image of the world as life-giving gift. This 'ancient and profound legend' tells of a giant who cannot be overcome when in contact with the earth (DBWE 10:377). Only Hercules, who lifted him up off of

³⁵ In 1932 the concept of the world clearly occupied Bonhoeffer. He presented the essay 'Thy Kingdom Come! The Prayer of the Church-Community for God's Kingdom on Earth' in November of 1932 and delivered the *Creation and Fall* lectures, in which one finds the chapter 'The Human Being of Earth and Spirit' during the winter semester of 1932-1933.

³⁶ In criticising the idealistic and weak character of otherworldliness, Bonhoeffer lays the groundwork for his reflections on 'this-worldliness' in *Letters and Papers From Prison* (cf. DBWE 8:480,485).

³⁷ Consider also Bonhoeffer's reflection on the relationship between human beings and the world in *Creation and Fall*: 'Humankind is derived from a piece of earth. Its bond with the earth belongs to its essential being. The 'earth is its mother'; it comes out of her womb. To be sure, the ground from which humankind is taken is not the cursed but the blessed ground. It is God's earth out of which humankind is taken' (DBWE 3:76). For Bonhoeffer, human beings see the image of God in their relation with both their 'brothers and sisters' and the earth (DBWE 3:79).

the ground, was able to defeat Antaeus. Human beings relate to the world in a similar fashion. As those who are born of the earth and commissioned to keep it, human beings cannot extricate themselves from the world. Bonhoeffer states, ‘Those who would abandon the earth, who would flee the crisis of the present, will lose all the power still sustaining them by means of eternal, mysterious powers. The earth remains our mother just as God remains our father, and only those who remain true to the mother are placed by her into the father’s arms’ (DBWE 10:377-378). Bonhoeffer connects this image to his idea of ‘serving one’s time’. The Christian serves the context in which he or she is placed. Instead of lamenting one’s time, the Christian is called to engage in the present and in solidarity with other people (DBWE 10:530). Drawing again on the image of the earth as mother, Bonhoeffer writes, ‘God wants to see human beings, not ghosts who shun the earth itself. God loved the earth and made us from that earth; God made the earth our mother, God, who is our Father. We were not created as angels but as children of the earth’ (DBWE 10:530).³⁸ To serve one’s time is to remain grounded on the earth, in one’s concrete context. Only in this way does one inadvertently serve eternity. Contrary to idealism, eternity is not served by flying to ‘unreachable heights’ and discovering within oneself a point of continuity. Idealism, for Bonhoeffer, represents Hercules; it lifts the human being away from the source of life.

2.2.2 Being in Adam: Immediacy and Mediation

Human being in Adam, for Bonhoeffer, exists within a thought-world of its own making. As lord and master of its domain, human being in Adam cuts itself off from its Creator.

³⁸ Bonhoeffer’s statement ‘We were not created as angels’ is a possible reference to Hegel’s philosophy, to which Bonhoeffer refers to as a ‘philosophy of angels, but not of human beings’ (DBWE 2:42).

Moreover, the sundering of relation with the Creator tears the self away from all genuine relation, including relation with other human beings. Even the most ethical idealism, one which acknowledges limit but locates that limit as self-initiated, cuts off the self from other human beings. This severing of genuine human relationality results in domination of persons by others. Idealism presumes unlimited access to the other; the very movement towards the other in love yields only domination. Idealism, as the philosophy of being in Adam, does not know the other as limit, and attempts to know the other immediately. Such immediate knowledge is not, for Bonhoeffer, Christian knowledge. Two points require special attention due to their centrality for Bonhoeffer's larger account: first, the other is a concrete limit to the self, and second, there is no human relation which exists in an immediate manner. Christ, as the ultimate limit to the self, mediates all human relations.

First, for Bonhoeffer the other person constitutes a fundamental limit to the self. In *Sanctorum Communio* Bonhoeffer writes, 'Obviously, here the concept of barrier is decisive...From the ethical perspective, human beings do not exist 'unmediated' qua spirit in and of themselves, but only in responsibility vis-à-vis an 'other'" (DBWE 1:50). Here Bonhoeffer notes that the self can never be a barrier to itself, but neither can the self 'leap' over the barrier of the other. This is the persistent temptation offered to human beings, especially in light of the solitude which enters into humankind after the Fall (DBWE 1:109). While forms of community remain after the Fall, they are distorted and perverted. The loneliness which follows this recognition only exacerbates the drive towards the other. The desperation sown and nurtured by the self's solitude tempts the human being to attempt the 'leap' over the barrier of the other.

Central to Bonhoeffer's argument in *Act and Being* is his interpretation of idealism as thought which knows no genuinely transcendent limit. Bonhoeffer cites with approval the work of Grisebach, who acknowledges that, 'People are tempted, as with a 'satanic propensity', to draw reality, the absolute, their fellow beings into themselves' (DBWE 2:87). Even in Grisebach, however, the possibility of genuinely ethical relation remains within the self. In contrast to Grisebach, Bonhoeffer argues that the only genuine ethical limit is the limit set for the self by God. He writes, 'The other person is the limit that God sets for me, the limit that I love and that I will not transgress because of my love' (DBWE 3:99). Bonhoeffer notes that where love does not exist, the limit can only be hated. The result of this hatred is the desire for possession and destruction of the other.³⁹ Whether the self rages against or attempts to seduce the limit, in either case the desire of human being in Adam is to overcome of the limit as limit. Human being in Adam wishes to be judge and arbiter, free from constraint.

Second, where the idealist self desires the other, it does so without recognition of mediation. Christ unmasks this key 'illusion'. Bonhoeffer writes, 'So people called by Jesus learn that they had lived an illusion in their relationship to the world. The illusion is immediacy. It has blocked faith and obedience. Now they know that there can be no unmediated relationships, even in the most intimate ties of their lives...Immediacy is a delusion' (DBWE 4:94-95). For Bonhoeffer, there is no human relation which is not mediated by Christ. In the loss of genuine community with God, humankind also lost

³⁹ Bonhoeffer writes that this is the origin of shame. He writes, 'Shame expresses the fact that we no longer accept the other as God's gift but instead are consumed with an obsessive desire for the other; it also expresses the knowledge that goes along with this that the other person too is no longer content to belong to me but desires to get something from me' (DBWE 3:101).

unmediated community with other human beings (DBWE 1:63). However, in acknowledging the mediation of Christ, human relationality is returned to human beings in a new way. It is not an immediate relation of complete knowledge and intimacy with another, but a relation of creatureliness and service. The new relation is creaturely insofar as it acknowledges the limit of the other and its own lack of full knowledge. It serves rather than dominates. Bonhoeffer writes, '[Christ] stands in the center between the other person and me. He separates, but he also unites. He cuts off every direct path to someone else, but he guides everyone following him to the new and sole true way to the other person via the mediator' (DBWE 4:98). God's restoration, for Bonhoeffer, is not limited to interpersonal relations. Bonhoeffer writes in *Letters and Papers from Prison* that, 'Christian hope of resurrection is different from the mythological in that it refers people to their life on earth in a wholly new way...' (DBWE 8:447). The idea that Christ mediates all human relations, even humankind's relationship with the world, is constant throughout Bonhoeffer's work.⁴⁰ Unlike idealism, which assumes knowledge

⁴⁰ What might it mean to speak of Christ's mediation between the self and the world in light of the previous section? For Bonhoeffer, this indicates an engagement with one's concrete context; engagement with the time and place in which one is placed. Christians 'serve their own time' since, as Bonhoeffer writes, the only genuinely significant time is the present (DBWE 10:529). Christians are not asked to portend the future or live in the past; instead they are asked to be responsible in the current moment. Serving time means to exist in present responsibility, rather than abstracting about the historical past or the possible future. Bonhoeffer revisits this concept of God who encounters the concrete human being in the present in his Christology lectures, where Christ is never engaged in the abstract, but only engaged *pro-me* (DBWE 12:314). When read together Bonhoeffer's point is clear: God engages human beings in the present, for them personally. There is no Christian reflection which lives in another time, even another 'religious' moment. Bonhoeffer writes, 'If you want God, focus on the world' (DBWE 10:528). Bonhoeffer echoes this concern for the world when he writes, 'We must awaken from the state of intoxication with which the poison of the cursed ground has drugged us and become sober. The Earth wants us to take it seriously...it comes right out shows us how it is enslaved in finiteness. Its enslavement is our enslavement; with it we, too, are subjected' (DBWE 12:290). Bonhoeffer's account of the mediation of the world by Christ offers two provocative implications for reflections on ecology. First, the world, as the location of Christ's encounter with human beings, must be cared for in such a way that the 'coming of grace' is not obstructed by human neglect of the environment. Bonhoeffer writes in *Ethics*, 'There are conditions of the heart, of life, and in the world that especially hinder the receiving of grace, that is, which it infinitely difficult to believe' (DBWE 6:162). Human practices which reduce the land to an exploitable commodity, or which deprive communities of basic resources, oppose the coming of grace which sees a crucial connection between humankind and the earth. Second, beyond the implications for humankind, the Bible depicts the restoration at the end of all things to be a restoration of *all* creation, restoration of a 'new heaven' and a 'new earth'. In this restoration, according to the book of Isaiah, 'The wolf and lamb will

of, and immediacy with, oneself and others, the Christian hope looks only to Christ for knowledge at these boundaries.

2.2.3 *Being in Adam: Disunity*

Human being in Adam is separated not only from God and others, but is also sundered from itself. This fracture within the self Bonhoeffer calls 'disunity'. Because human beings are structured as referential creatures, oriented towards God, the rejection of this structure results in a divorce from humankind's very ground. However, idealist self-understanding, as the work of human being in Adam, presumes to speak of humankind's beginning and end. This presumptuous attempt yields false knowledge which contributes to the self's *disunity*. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Human beings have torn themselves loose from community with God, and, therefore, also from that with other human beings, and now they stand alone, that is, in untruth' (DBWE 2:137).

Humankind's existence in untruth, however, leads to its own disunity; human beings *know* that they are in untruth. Their self-given lordship is not ignorance in bliss, but is the tortured knowledge that one is not quite what it claims, or wants, to be. Although the disunity of humankind will be addressed again in the final chapter on the ethical

graze together, and the lion will eat straw like an ox; and dust will be the serpent's food' (Isaiah 65:25, NASB). The restoration of God extends to the most fundamental elements of natural life. Human beings must care for the natural world because it too will be redeemed by Christ at the end of all things. This motif of creation's restoration is not limited to the Old Testament. The book of Revelation also speaks of the new earth, an earth where '...the leaves of the tree [of life] are for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bondservants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads' (Revelation 22:2-4, NASB). That God restores all creation to be a dwelling place for redeemed humankind indicates that God does indeed care for the world. Humankind's commission of dominion over the earth does not legitimate wanton destruction of the earth. Although it is created, and thus not hallowed in itself, the earth is for Bonhoeffer the context in which God approaches human beings. It is also the vehicle in which Christians travel to God's Kingdom. As a 'mother' who bears her child into life, the earth must be respected for what she does in the present and what she will be in the future.

challenge of Adolph Eichmann, two salient characteristics of human being in Adam's disunity will lay the groundwork for that discussion. First, disunity stems from being in untruth. Second, disunity exists where the human being knows good and evil. This disunity is manifest in human conscience. The presumed knowledge of good and evil, combined with an inability to accomplish the good, leads to what Bonhoeffer 'bad conscience'.

First, the self's fundamental misreading of itself leads to disunity. Human being in Adam is neither lord of itself nor others. To the contrary, the self is a creature designed to commune with God in unbroken love and obedience. Part of this obedience, however, is obedience to God's command to rule over creation. Bonhoeffer writes,

It is my world, my earth, over which I rule...But my freedom from it consists in the fact that this world, to which I am bound like a master to his servant, like the peasant to his bit of ground, has been made subject to me, that over the earth which is and remains my earth I am to *rule*, and the more I master it, the more it is *my* earth. What so peculiarly binds human being to, and sets them over against, the other creatures is the authority conferred on humankind by nothing else than God's word (DBWE 3:66).⁴¹

⁴¹ This passage is striking when read alongside Levinas, quoting Pascal: 'My being-in-the-world, or my 'place in the sun,' my home – have they not been the usurpation of places which belong to the others already oppressed or starved by me, expelled by me into a third world: a repelling, an exclusion, an exile, a spoliation, a killing. 'My place in the sun,' said Pascal, 'the beginning and prototype of usurpation of the whole earth' (EN 124). Bonhoeffer's theology and Levinas's philosophy seem to be at odds on the question of humankind's authority over any 'place in the sun'. Despite the ostensible divergence, both thinkers resist the *right* of the self to claim a place in the sun. Even though Bonhoeffer grants that human beings claim the world in which they live, they can only do so due to God's commandment. Their working of the earth does not follow from action or initiative of their own. The dominion of the earth given to human beings is a limited one; it is a dominion which is given to humankind by another. For both Bonhoeffer and Levinas, the human inclination towards domination and rule results in oppression and violence. For Bonhoeffer this is a result of the fall, after which human beings forget the limit of the other and seek only the other's destruction (DBWE 3:123). In short, although Levinas goes further than Bonhoeffer in connecting possession with violence, both thinkers share similar recognition of, and resistance towards, the dominating impulses of fallen human beings.

Humankind is intended by God to rule. However, in the disobedience of Adam the desire to rule oversteps its bounds; it seeks to be *sicut deus* in knowing no authority which is conferred by anyone other than itself. Humankind, therefore, does not misunderstand itself insofar as it should not rule, but it misunderstands both where authority for rule comes from and how it relates to what is ruled. Bonhoeffer writes, 'The reason why we fail to rule, however, is because we do not know the world as God's creation and do not accept the domination we have as God-given but seize hold of it for ourselves' (DBWE 3:67). After the fall of Adam, humankind knows itself rightly only in relation to *Christ* the Lord. In Christ human beings know true human being. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Jesus is not *a* human being but *the* human being. What happens to him happens to human being. It happens to all and therefore to us. The name of Jesus embraces in itself the whole of humanity and the whole of God' (DBWE 6:85, emphasis in original). Accounts of human being which do not relate to Christ as Lord, for Bonhoeffer, result in untruth. This untruth promotes disunity, since in misunderstanding itself humankind cannot but fail to realise the twin tasks of ruling and of being creatures.

Second, human being in Adam and its correlating idealism presumes knowledge of good and evil. Instead of granting freedom, the knowledge of good and evil binds human beings to their fallenness. Contrary to idealism, which presumes that one knows what one ought to do, for Bonhoeffer the self is not able to discern and do the good. Conscience testifies to this failure. Although Bonhoeffer first emphasises the knowledge of good and evil as a problem in *Creation and Fall*, his development of the relationship between good and evil culminates in *Ethics*. In *Ethics* Bonhoeffer devotes significant attention to the way judgment regarding good and evil contributes not to discipleship,

but to disunity. This disunity is unveiled in the conscience, which reveals the guilt of all human beings.

One of the central problems of idealism is its assumption that human beings are transparent to themselves.⁴² This transparency extends into ethics, where idealism assumes that good and evil are clear choices for the self. Bonhoeffer writes, 'The offense against Christian thinking in any autonomous self-understanding is that it believes human beings to be capable of giving truth to themselves...' (DBWE 2:79). In *Creation and Fall*, Bonhoeffer develops this insight in a distinctly ethical direction through his depiction of the knowledge of good and of evil. Not only is the nature of human being obscured for humankind, but what human beings ought to do is equally ambiguous. After the fall, human beings are tempted to live in judgment of God's word, rather than living in unbroken communion and obedience (DBWE 3:108,109). For the first time, human beings do not simply hear and obey God's commandment, but reflect and weigh options in their pursuit of the good. Whereas Adam was 'beyond' good and evil, relating only to God's commandment, human beings are now mired in reflection on good and evil (DBWE 3:87).

The knowledge of good and evil constitutes 'the deepest divide in human life' (DBWE 3:88). Bonhoeffer expounds on this insight through the twin concepts of 'tob' (good)

⁴² This facet of idealism is also rejected within some current secular philosophy. Judith Butler, for example, writes of the self's opacity: 'My account of myself is partial, haunted by that for which I can devise no definitive story' (Butler 2005:40). The image of the self's opacity is not completely foreign to Bonhoeffer. He writes, 'Wherever the I is truly at the end, where it truly reaches out of itself, and where this reaching is no final 'seeking the self in oneself', there Christ is at work. However, certainty about this is never won by reflecting on the act – psychologically we remain opaque to ourselves – but only in each case in pure regard to Christ and Christ's action for us' (DBWE 2:142). Cf. also DBWE 1:173-174.

and 'ra' (evil).⁴³ In human beings after the fall, tob and ra always co-exist. Good is recognised over against the evil from which it came. This does not mean that evil is the origin of good, but that good is experienced as good only from a position which has experienced evil or pain. Likewise, evil and pain are recognised only from a position of hope for freedom from that evil and pain. For human beings after the fall, there is no knowledge of pure good or pure evil; good and evil are mixed together and only experienced alongside one another. Bonhoeffer says, '...those who have attained the knowledge of good and evil, who live as people who are split apart within themselves, have lost their life' (DBWE 3:89). For Bonhoeffer, human being in Adam not only cannot know itself, it cannot draw itself into good because it does not know the good, apart from also knowing evil. The knowledge of both good and evil marks the fundamental disunity of the human being.

The divide within the human being, a divide between good and evil, extends into ethical deliberation.⁴⁴ Whereas Adam lived in simple obedience to God's commandment, human beings in disunity are forced to decide for themselves what is good and what is evil. This decision, occurs under the watchful eye of conscience (DBWE 3:128).⁴⁵ Both

⁴³ While Bonhoeffer defines with concepts of tob and ra in terms of good and evil, they seem to equally indicate the *perversion* of good and evil (DBWE 3:88). For example, Bonhoeffer writes that obsessive desire and hate are the fruits of tob and ra (DBWE 3:123). It seems necessary, then, to note that when Bonhoeffer speaks of tob and ra, these concepts indicate terms more akin to 'pleasure' and 'pain' than good and evil. This removes possible confusion about how genuine good can animate evil and how evil in any way generates good.

⁴⁴ Bonhoeffer writes, 'Now, for human beings in disunion from God, everything splits apart – is and ought, life and law, knowing and doing, idea and reality, reason and instinct, duty and inclination, intention and benefit, necessity and freedom, the hard-won and the ingenious, the universal and the concrete, the individual and the collective; and even truth, justice, beauty, and love conflict with one another just as do desire and aversion' (DBWE 6:309). As the finely tuned investigation into the 'good life', much of what passes for ethics, for Bonhoeffer, remains nothing other than humankind's persistent attempt to be *sicut deus* in knowing good and evil. He writes, 'The knowledge of good and evil appears to be the goal of all ethical reflection. The first task of Christian ethics is to supersede that knowledge' (DBWE 6:299).

⁴⁵ In *Creation and Fall*, Bonhoeffer has only harsh words for the conscience. He writes, 'Conscience chases humankind away from God into its secure hiding place. Here, far away from God, humankind itself plays

reflection on right ethical decision and conscience testify to the fallenness of human beings, since both are an attempt to justify oneself before God. For Bonhoeffer, this attempt at justification follows from humankind's attempt to tear away from their origin, God. In tearing away from their origin, however, human beings tear themselves away from their reality and their context for existing. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Knowledge about good and evil points to the prior disunion and estrangement from this origin...They now know themselves beside and outside of God, which means they now know nothing but themselves, and God not at all. For they can only know God by knowing God alone. The knowledge of good and evil is thus disunion with God' (DBWE 6:300). Having torn themselves away from the source of true knowledge, human beings in Adam exists only in light of its own self-evaluation through conscience.

The problem for ethical deliberation is therefore two-fold. In the first place, the quest for knowledge of good and of evil is itself indicative of separation from God as the source of true knowing. The very attempt to be good is in actuality evil. In the second place, the attempt to discover the good is doomed to failure. The attempt by human beings to define and to discover the good is doomed to fail because humankind rejects the only source of good. Returning to the theme of idealism, it becomes clear that the very promise of idealism, as the philosophy of human being in Adam, is actually a curse.

the role of being judge in this way seeks to evade God's judgment. Humankind now lives truly out of the resources of its own good and evil, its own innermost dividedness from itself' (DBWE 3:128). While Bonhoeffer speaks negatively of conscience in *Creation and Fall*, he does not totally undermine any positive contribution of conscience to human life. In *Ethics*, he notes that living contrary to conscience invites disintegration of the self's wholeness and despair (DBWE 6:277). Both the image of the deluding conscience and evading the address of the other will be invoked in Chapter Five, in relation to Adolph Eichmann's flight from responsibility.

Where idealism promises equality with God as creator and knowledge of good and evil, human beings finds enslavement and moral confusion.⁴⁶

In the question about humankind, human beings persistently ask the wrong questions and give wrong answers to the right questions. Human being in Adam exists in light of its own death, a death brought about through its disobedience and rebellion against God. The disobedience of being in Adam is rebellion in both act and being. Sin as act is expressed through the repeated egoistic actions of the self (DBWE 2:144). Sin as being is found in the self's continued participation in rebellion from God, a rebellion of orientation rather than specific act. It is the rebellion of seeing oneself as creator and lord rather than creature. As a result of this rebellion, there is no part of the human being which can be separated out and preserved in its fallen state.⁴⁷ Sin, for Bonhoeffer, cannot be repaired; it must be *killed*. The death of the self in Adam, therefore, must be a death of the *whole* self. Human being in Adam takes on the guilt of the whole world, as a collective person who has abused God's mercy in free acts of rebellion. Bonhoeffer writes,

⁴⁶ Recall that Bonhoeffer's depiction of idealism is one in which the self comes to itself; it is its creator. In Heidegger's case, for example, 'Insofar as Dasein lays hold of the possibility, the existence, most authentic to it, Dasein grasps its own wholeness' (DBWE 2:70). In addition to making humankind its own creator, for Bonhoeffer idealism promises full knowledge of existence. This is true in a sense; idealism gives full knowledge of existence, but that existence is not grounded in reality outside of one's mind. Instead, such a mental existence is a 'monism unaffected by reality' (DBWE 2:39). Speaking of those who envision the philosophical task as just such an idealist enterprise, Bonhoeffer writes, 'As people who are questioning, thinking, and acting, they have to find their way in the midst of it, and have to relate every given situation to themselves so that they can decide...' In relating to themselves, they remove any possibility of knowing the good, since God is the only good. Idealism, for Bonhoeffer, promises what it cannot provide.

⁴⁷ The desire for self-preservation and justification militates against the self's death. Bonhoeffer observes through the Heideggerian concept of 'everydayness' the desire of human beings to evade this demand of their death. He writes, 'But the flight [from the right knowledge of limit] is hopeless, for human beings are to be revealed before the tribunal of Christ, if not today, then certainly in death (2 Cor. 5:10). Because this is so, the wilder the flight and the less human beings are conscious of that hopelessness, the more desperate is everydayness in Adam. *Superficiality masks solitude; it is oriented towards life, but its ground and end is death in guilt*' (DBWE 2:147, emphasis added).

But the death of Christ kills my entire being human, as humanity in me, for I am I and humanity in one. In my fall from God, humanity fell. Thus, before the cross, the debt of the I grows to monstrous size; it is itself Adam, itself the first to have done, and to do again and again, that incomprehensible deed – sin as act...As human being, the I is banished into this old humanity, which fell on my account. The I 'is' not as an individual, but always in humanity. And just because the deed of the individual is at the same time that of humanity, human beings must hold themselves individually responsible for the whole guilt of humankind (DBWE 2:146).⁴⁸

The guilt of human being in Adam, however, is not necessarily the final judgment of the human being. There is a renewal which can occur; a movement from eternal death into eternal life. Bonhoeffer describes this transition in terms of a change of orientation: 'God can let human beings die of the knowledge of their sin and can lead them through this death into community. For then God turns one's eyes away from oneself, and gives them God's own orientation towards Christ...' (DBWE 2:149). Human being in Adam, as a turning towards oneself, is not necessarily the final stance of the human being. The next section describes Bonhoeffer's account of being in Christ, which will crucially inform Bonhoeffer's account of responsibility.

2.3 *Being in Christ*

This chapter has focused on Bonhoeffer's account of the human being, specifically the human being 'in Adam'. Themes of limit, solitude and disunity have been emphasised, with the human being in Adam described as eschewing limit, rejecting authentic

⁴⁸ This passage resonates with Levinas's account of the self who recognises responsibility for all others. Levinas is fond of quoting Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* to describe the self's responsibility for guilt incurred apart from one's acts. Levinas writes, 'To posit subjectivity in this responsibility is to catch sight of a passivity in it that is never passive enough, that of being summed for the other...This is the I that is not designated, but which says 'here I am'. 'Each of us is guilty before everyone, for everyone and for each one, and I more than others,' ...' (LR 181-182). The guilt of the self is not only a guilt freely chosen; the self finds itself *already* guilty by being human.

community and being fractured within itself. In stark contrast, human being in Christ knows itself only as a whole creature defined by its relation to others. In his definition of 'being in Christ', Bonhoeffer writes, 'Here, the person *in se conversus* [turned in upon itself] is delivered from the attempt to remain alone – to understand itself out of itself – and is turned outwards towards Christ. The person now lives in the contemplation of Christ. This is the gift of faith, that one no longer looks upon oneself, but solely upon the salvation that has come to one from without' (DBWE 2:150, emphasis in original). Being in Christ is a turning towards the other 'that has come to one from without'. This section will address being in Christ as an orientation of the self which leads to creatureliness, to others and to wholeness. These three marks of human being in Christ can be united under Bonhoeffer's concept of simplicity.

First, for Bonhoeffer the self 'in Christ' exists in creaturely being. The designation of creaturely being indicates the limited character of the self's relation to both itself and to others. Creaturely being knows itself only in relation to its Creator, as opposed to knowing itself through its own self-reflection. Bonhoeffer writes, 'If in Adam Dasein was violated by the form in which it actually exists – through the encapsulation of human beings in themselves – then the solution to this problem comes as humanity reorients its gaze towards Christ...where alone it recognizes itself in original freedom as God's creature' (DBWE 2:150). To be a creature does not indicate servility. Instead, Bonhoeffer characterises creaturely being as one governed by both obedience and freedom. The human being as creature knows itself only from its Creator, and thus must be obedient to the commands of that Creator. However, obedience does not preclude freedom; instead obedience foments freedom and responsibility. Within obedience to

God's commandment there is wide berth to actualise that obedience in a myriad of ways. Creaturely freedom is the gift to creation to *create* out of itself the good (DBWE 6:287).⁴⁹ Precisely because the world is bereft of absolute ethical guidance, God calls human beings to freely act for others, in obedience. Only this conforms to the image of Christ, the one who in obedience and freedom bore the guilt of all human beings.

Second, the orientation of the self in Christ is an orientation towards others. Over against the solitude of the self's reflection, the faith exhibited by the self oriented towards Christ leads it to others. The human being in Christ only knows itself in reference to Christ, and finds Christ in the community of faith. Bonhoeffer writes in *Discipleship*, 'The body of the exalted Lord is likewise a visible body, taking the form of the church-community' (DBWE 4:226). However, being in Christ as orientation towards Christ leads beyond the community of faith. The insularity of the self 'turned in on itself' does not give way to an insular Christian community. In conformation to Christ, the self in Christ inclines towards all others, including those who do not consider themselves part of the church-community.⁵⁰ This inclination towards others allows the self in Christ to be for the other, in what Bonhoeffer calls *Stellvertretung*, or vicarious representative action. The self in Christ only reflects on itself in Christ, as a creature before its Creator. In this creaturely freedom it then exists for others in the world.

⁴⁹ Although Bonhoeffer articulates this idea in *Ethics*, he develops the idea much earlier in *Creation and Fall*. There Bonhoeffer writes, 'The Creator wills that the creation should itself, in obedience, endorse and carry on the Creator's work – wills that creatures should live and should in turn themselves create life...God does not will to be Lord of a dead, eternally unchangeable, subservient world; instead God wills to be Lord of life with its infinite variety of forms' (DBWE 3:57). Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the ingenuity, creativity and joy that God intends for creaturely human existence will helpfully inform later ethical ideas such as wisdom and the moral imagination.

⁵⁰ Bonhoeffer writes, 'The church-community can never consent to any restrictions of its service of love and compassion toward other human beings. For wherever there is a brother or sister, there Christ's own body is present; and wherever Christ's body is present, his church-community is also always present, which means I must also be present there' (DBWE 4:236).

Third, the self in Christ exists in wholeness, rather than disunity and fragmentation. The paradox of being in Adam is that while it desires to be its own lord and creator, it cannot bear or justify such a position. Human being in Adam discovers slavery, rather than freedom, in its lordship. For human beings in Adam, there are two lords: the self's reflection on itself and God's word about itself (DBWE 2:155). There is no ultimate knowledge which emerges from self-reflection; the only ultimate word about humankind is Christ's word. Wholeness follows from humankind's hearing and accepting Christ's word about itself.⁵¹ Accepting the word of Christ results in faith which looks to Christ for both self-understanding and justification. The wholeness granted to being in Christ is the wholeness of being in faith.⁵²

Bonhoeffer's concept of simplicity unites the above three aspects of being in Christ; the self in Christ is simply a creature, simply for others and simply whole in orientation. This simplicity allows human beings to exist for others with joy and responsibility.

Bonhoeffer writes,

The basis from which the New Testament speaks is not the disunity of the human being vis-à-vis God, other people, things, and the self; instead, the rediscovered unity, the reconciliation, has become the ground, "the point

⁵¹ Although Bonhoeffer frequently emphasises the priority of the word of God as the word from which humankind understands itself, it is striking how often images of sight, of 'viewing' Christ, occur in *Act and Being* (e.g. DBWE 2:145, DBWE 3:41). Bonhoeffer writes, 'Being in Christ, as being directed towards Christ, sets Dasein free. Human beings are 'there' for and by means of Christ; *they believe as long as they look upon Christ*' (DBWE 2:153, emphasis added). Cf. also DBWE 2:156.

⁵² Bonhoeffer argues that faith from the perspective of human self-reflection is not unproblematic. Self-reflection cannot get 'behind' faith to abstract or to concretise it inappropriately (DBWE 2:153-154). To speak about one's own faith abstractly, or from the perspective of sovereign knowledge, is not to speak of faith at all. It is instead to turn towards oneself again in an attempt to justify oneself. Bonhoeffer writes, 'A faith that grows doubtful of itself because it considers itself unworthy, stands in temptation. Faith itself knows that it is Christ who justifies and not faith as *opus*; it requires no reflection to find this out, particularly since reflection declares something quite different, as it brings faith into temptation' (DBWE 2:154). The gravity of this problem is revealed through conscience, through which self-reflection threatens even those who are a part of Christ's community (DBWE 2:156).

of decision of specifically ethical experience.” There is nothing problematic, tortured, or dark about the living and acting of human beings, but instead something self-evident, joyous, certain, and clear (DBWE 6:309).

Over against the self in Adam, torn apart by ethical dilemmas or by conscience, the self in Christ exhibits an orientation towards Christ which simply obeys Christ’s word (DBWE 6:81). Simple obedience leads to concrete responsibility for others, in conformation to Christ.⁵³ If the self in Christ, conformed to Christ, is responsible for others, of what does this responsibility consist? The final section of this chapter will explore Bonhoeffer’s *Stellvertretung*, or vicarious representative action, as the pinnacle of creaturely responsibility in conformation to Christ.

2.4 Vicarious Representative Action

Bonhoeffer’s image of the self oriented towards Christ is one which is a self also oriented towards other persons. The self in Christ finds its ground in a person outside of itself, and finds its meaning in ethical relation to others. In conformation to the ‘new’ human, Jesus Christ, human beings in Christ are called to live on behalf of others.

Bonhoeffer calls this ethical relation to others responsibility. However, Bonhoeffer’s responsibility is a very specific sort of relation. The responsibility of the self for the other is one in which the self engages in ‘vicarious representative action’

(*Stellvertretung*)(DBWE 6:247). For Bonhoeffer, vicarious representative action is

⁵³ Bonhoeffer writes, ‘...I am never set free to act in genuine responsibility by looking at myself, but only by attending to Christ’s call’ (DBWE 6:294). Responsibility follows only from attending to Christ, which Bonhoeffer depicts as a gazing upon Christ. In describing this orientation of the self towards Christ as ‘attending to Christ’s call’ Bonhoeffer’s account resonates with Weil, who describes the task of the self in similar terms. For Weil, attention towards Christ also leads directly into ethical obligation. Cf. Chapter Four.

‘standing where others cannot’, and doing for them things they cannot do for themselves.⁵⁴ Three forms of vicarious representative action provide the context through which this thesis will consider the ethical relation between the self and the other. First, vicarious representative action requires loving participation in the lives of others. This includes participation in the suffering of the other, which will be a point of connection with Weil’s philosophy. Second, vicarious representative action may require the taking on of another’s guilt. Third, vicarious representative action on behalf of another, within the church-community, often consists of prayerful intercession for the other. While these elements of vicarious representative action do not exhaust the concept, they do provide crucial links for future conversations with Weil, Levinas and Arendt in subsequent chapters.

First, vicarious representative action entails loving participation in the concrete lives of others (DBWE 6:261). For Bonhoeffer, vicarious representative action is only God’s initiative, rather than an innate possibility for all human beings. However, vicarious representative action nevertheless affects human relations.⁵⁵ In Christ’s vicarious

⁵⁴ The first explicit mention of vicarious representative action occurs in *Sanctorum Communio*. There Bonhoeffer writes, ‘God can see the whole people in a few, as God could see and reconcile the whole of humanity in one man. Here arises the problem of vicarious representative action’ (DBWE 1:120). Here vicarious representative action describes the work of Christ on behalf of all humankind. As all of humankind is guilty insofar as it participates in Adam, through Christ humankind is redeemed. Both are ‘representative human being’ (*der Mensch*). For individual human beings, Christ stands where they cannot; they receive the benefit of his redemption by participation in him. Bonhoeffer writes, ‘In Christ humanity really is drawn into community with God, just as in Adam humanity fell...In the old humanity [of Adam] the whole of humanity falls anew, so to speak, with every person who sins; in Christ, however, humanity has been brought once and for all – this is essential to real vicarious representative action – into community with God’ (DBWE 1:146). Even in *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer begins to note how vicarious representative action informs ethical relations. Service to the other person ‘springs from the life principle of vicarious representative action’ (DBWE 1:147).

⁵⁵ Bonhoeffer writes, ‘The idea of vicarious representative action is therefore possible only so long as it is based on an offer by God; this means it is in force only in Christ and Christ’s church-community. *It is not an ethical possibility or standard, but solely the reality of the divine love for the church-community; it is not an ethical, but a theological concept*’ (DBWE 1:156, emphasis in original). Bonhoeffer’s statement offers two points for further reflection. First, it questions the extent to which vicarious representative action can be considered an ethical possibility, and second, the extent to which vicarious representative action

representative action community is restored between humankind and God; at the same time the possibility of community between human beings is restored (DBWE 1:157).

This restoration of community provides the context for the emergence of authentic Christian love, or a love of the 'real neighbor'. Bonhoeffer writes, '[Christian love] *loves the real neighbor*, not because it would derive pleasure from that person's individuality, but because the neighbor as a human being calls on me as the other who experiences God's claim in this You of the neighbor...I love the You by placing myself, my entire will, in the service of the You' (DBWE 1:169, emphasis added). Bonhoeffer addresses the other person neither as an idea nor as a proxy for the love of God. The concrete person is the one who encounters the self within daily life, and is loved as an end in themselves, rather than being loved as proxy for God (DBWE 1:170).

Vicarious representative action is self-renunciation in relation with the other.

Bonhoeffer writes, 'This being-for-each-other [of vicarious representative action]...involve[s] giving up the self 'for' my neighbor's benefit, with the readiness to do and bear everything in the neighbor's place, indeed, if necessary, to sacrifice myself, standing as a *substitute* for my neighbor. Even if a purely vicarious action is rarely

occurs outside of the Christian community. To the first point, it should be noted that Bonhoeffer does not indicate that vicarious representative action does not have an ethical facet; he argues that vicarious representative action is embodied in Christ in a way that cannot be replicated by human beings. Human beings cannot take on another's being as Christ did on behalf of humanity. However, there is a creaturely way of performing vicarious representative action. Humankind's performance of vicarious representative action consists of taking on another's evil in another's stead (DBWE 1:156 n. 17). Even this, however, points to Christ, the ultimate *Stellvertreter*. To the second point, Christ is the ground of all vicarious representative action, but his action for humankind extends beyond the visible church-community. Human beings in Christ exist for *all* others, rather than only those who share in the visible church-community. This intensifies the Christological character of vicarious representative action; it is only because Christ exists for the world that Christians can be for the world. In conformation to Christ, his disciples are called to be for all others, to stand where they cannot in intercession and in service. Vicarious representative action is not 'ethical' insofar as it is a timeless principle which universally governs all human action. Instead, it is ethical insofar as it governs how disciples relate to all other human beings, their neighbors. As Bonhoeffer writes in response to Barth, 'God has made the 'neighbor as such' infinitely important, and there isn't any other 'neighbor as such' for us' (DBWE 1:169-170 n. 28).

actualized, it is intended in every genuine act of love' (DBWE 1:184, emphasis in original).⁵⁶ In being-for-another rather than oneself, the self potentially becomes a 'Christ to the other' (DBWE 1:83). As Christ sacrificed his own will to the will of his Father, so participants in the church-community renounce their own will before the will of the neighbor. For Bonhoeffer this possibility *ought* to occur within the church-community. Bearing the burden of another follows from Christ's own bearing of all others; only in Christ can human beings face one another in a way which is giving, rather than demanding (DBWE 1:190). Vicarious representative action is a giving of oneself for another.

Second, vicarious representative action involves the taking on of another's guilt.⁵⁷ For those within the church-community, this means being with others in their temptations and struggles, with both evil and conscience (DBWE 1:180,183). However, in *Discipleship* Bonhoeffer mentions another profound possibility, that of persons standing in another's stead as messengers, and even mediators, of Christ. Speaking of the disciples' labor for Christ, Bonhoeffer writes, 'But what is work, if not this struggle with the powers of Satan, this struggle for the hearts of the people, this renunciation of their own reputation, possessions, and joys of the world, for the sake of serving the poor, the mistreated, and the miserable' (DBWE 4:190). In the same passage, the editors note that

⁵⁶ The concept of substitution will be a point of contact between Bonhoeffer and Levinas, even if their respective accounts of substitution are somewhat different. In both accounts, the human being is primarily a being-for-others, rather than a being which exists for its own self-actualisation. This emphasis on being-for-another over against being-for-oneself animates discussion with Weil as well.

⁵⁷ Bonhoeffer articulates this slightly differently in *Sanctorum Communio*, where he first speaks of the ethical character of vicarious representative action as a 'voluntary assumption of an evil in another persons's stead' (DBWE 1:156 n. 17). In *Ethics*, however, where Bonhoeffer offers a more complete account of standing in another's stead, he speaks of vicarious representative action as an act of taking on guilt, rather than evil. This distinction is slight but worth mentioning, since Bonhoeffer suggests that taking on another's guilt can actually result in a higher righteousness. For a thorough account of Bonhoeffer's concept of taking on guilt, see Schliesser 2008.

Bonhoeffer, in connection with the work of the disciples, characterises this work as an intervention of *mediation* (DBWE 4:190 n. 25). As emissaries of Christ, Christians stand where those outside the community of faith cannot, performing and even mediating between the message of the gospel of the suffering other.

This point, however, should not be pushed too far, since Bonhoeffer writes at length that there is no human relation which is immediate (DBWE 5:40-41). Christ stands in between every human relation. So in what sense can Christians participate in an intervention of mediation? This potential mediation, which Bonhoeffer does not explicitly develop, might best be understood alongside Bonhoeffer's concept of 'preparing the way'. The task of preparing the way is one in which the obstacles to belief are removed by those who themselves know Christ. Bonhoeffer says, 'We can make it hard for ourselves and others to come to faith. It is hard for those thrust into extreme disgrace, desolation, poverty, and helplessness to believe in God's justice and goodness' (DBWE 6:162).⁵⁸ The Christian who stands where the other cannot prepares the way for the coming of grace. Of course, this does not place the disciple in control of, or over, grace.⁵⁹ The Christian simply has the responsibility of testifying to the good news of Christ's redemption. This testimony consists of being responsible for others, of being conformed to the image of the one who restores justice and releases the captive.

Bonhoeffer writes,

⁵⁸ Weil makes a similar point when she speaks of the dehumanising effects of affliction. She writes, '...in a time such as ours, where affliction is hanging over us all, help given to souls is effective only if it goes far enough to really prepare them for affliction. It is no small thing. Affliction hardens and discourages us because, like a red hot iron, it stamps the soul to its very depths with the scorn, the disgust, and even the self-hatred and sense of guilt and defilement that crime logically should produce but actually does not' (WFG 70).

⁵⁹ Bonhoeffer writes, 'Grace must finally clear and smooth its own way, it alone must again and again make the impossible possible' (DBWE 6:162).

[Preparing the way is] a commission of immeasurable responsibility given to all those who know about the coming of Jesus Christ. The hungry person needs bread, the homeless person needs shelter, the one deprived of rights needs justice, the lonely person needs community, the undisciplined needs order, and the slave needs freedom...To bring bread to the hungry is preparing the way for the coming of grace (DBWE 6:163).

The intervention of Christians on behalf of all other people is an intervention which mediates grace only insofar as it smoothes the way for the coming of grace. Such intervention comprises neither an immediate relation with the other, nor does it control grace. Instead, it facilitates justice, mercy and obedience even where the other cannot.⁶⁰ In preparing the way for grace, the Christian does not preserve their own righteousness, provided that righteousness designates an abstention from all which is ethically ambiguous.⁶¹ Instead, the Christian participates in the concrete existence of others, a participation which means taking on their guilt. In so doing, the disciple conforms further to their Lord. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Jesus' concern is not the proclamation and realization of new ethical ideals, and thus also not his own goodness (Matt. 19!), but solely love for real human beings. This is why he is able to enter into the community of human beings' guilt, willing to be burdened with their guilt' (DBWE 6:275). From Jesus's own willingness to become guilty comes all such vicarious representative action.⁶²

⁶⁰ Bonhoeffer writes, 'I simultaneously represent Christ before human beings, and represent human beings before Christ. My answering for Christ before human ears simultaneously reaches the ears of Christ as my answering for human beings. Being accountable for Jesus Christ before human beings means being accountable for human beings before Christ' (DBWE 6:256).

⁶¹ Bonhoeffer develops this idea in both 'After Ten Years' (DBWE 8:37-52) and 'Ethics as Formation' (DBWE 6:76-102). In these essays he examines different ethical paradigms which fail to come to grips with the situation in Germany. Of particular interest is the person governed by personal virtue. Of this person Bonhoeffer writes, 'In flight from public controversy this person or that reaches the sanctuary of private virtuousness. Such people neither steal, nor murder, nor commit adultery, but do good according to their abilities. But in voluntarily renouncing public life, these people know exactly how to observe the permitted boundaries that shield them from conflict. They must close their eyes and ears to the injustice around them. Only at the cost of self-deception can they keep their private blamelessness clean from the stains of responsible action in the world' (DBWE 6:80). This passage powerfully demonstrates that responsible action entails becoming guilty. Vicarious representative action means becoming guilty on behalf of others; it means giving up one's claim to 'purity'.

⁶² At the risk of overemphasising the point, note that Bonhoeffer here denotes the recipient of responsibility as the 'real human brother or sister' (DBWE 6:275). It is the other's existence *as a human*

Paradoxically, Bonhoeffer argues that this taking on of guilt renders the responsible person 'guiltless' (DBWE 6:276). The image suggests gradations of guilt; there is a false sinlessness which is in fact guilt, insofar as it is characterised as divorce of oneself from the true righteousness, or Christ. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Those who, in acting responsibly, seek to avoid becoming guilty divorce themselves from the ultimate reality of human existence' (DBWE 6:276). Those who freely engage in responsibility, and take on the guilt of others become sinless. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Because of Jesus Christ, the essence of responsible action intrinsically involves the sinless, those who act out of selfless love, becoming guilty' (DBWE 6:276).⁶³ There is an even deeper sinlessness than one's own estimation of personal righteousness, the estimation of conscience. Where human beings enter into responsibility on behalf of others, a deep sense of unity is found; this unity springs from Christ who declares human beings righteous.⁶⁴ Genuine vicarious representative action requires that human beings rely on the deep righteousness which is proclaimed by Christ, rather than the false righteousness which springs from conscience.

being that demands the responsibility of the Christian. The entire community of humankind needs the restoration of the true human being, the ultimately responsible human being, Jesus Christ. In conforming to Christ's image, the disciples become responsible as human beings; they enter into genuine responsibility and genuine humanity.

⁶³ Bonhoeffer writes that while conscience, as the arbiter of one's guilt or righteousness, should never be flippantly rejected, it too must be denied in favor of finding one's righteousness not in conscience, but in Christ. For this reason Bonhoeffer observes that the Nazi Hermann Göring's famous phrase, 'Adolph Hitler is my conscience' is actually close to what the Christian claims about Christ (DBWE 6:278, n. 120). He writes, 'Where Christ, true God and true human being, has become the unifying center of my existence, conscience in the formal sense still remains the call, coming from my true self, into unity with myself' (DBWE 6:278).

⁶⁴ Bonhoeffer notes that this unity is to be preserved, since it is from this unity in Christ that responsibility flows. Specifically, he writes against forms of responsible action which would destroy the self's unity. He writes, 'Surrendering the self in selfless service must never be confused [with] destroyed and annihilating the self, which would then also no longer be able to take on responsibility' (DBWE 6:281). This will become particularly important in relation to Weil's philosophy, since she recommends an extreme form of self-abnegation in relation to others. However she, like Bonhoeffer, suggests that one's capacity for relation with others should increase. While she affirms this through the image of the self's growth in attention, Bonhoeffer writes that 'It is true that the ability to bear the weight of making responsible decisions can and should grow' (DBWE 6:281). In both cases the capacity for ethical growth and maturity has the potential for change.

Third, prayer is a powerful form of vicarious representative action. Although Bonhoeffer does not discuss prayer specifically in relation to responsibility in *Ethics*, in *Sanctorum Communio* there is a strong resonance between concepts of prayer and of vicarious representative action. Prayer constitutes vicarious representative action both because in prayer one stands on behalf of another, and because through prayer one enters into the brokenness and affliction of the other (DBWE 1:187).⁶⁵ It is significant that in *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer speaks of intercessory prayer following his comments on loving the other more than one's own community with God (DBWE 1:184ff). The proper love of the other, following Bonhoeffer's interpretation of Moses and Paul, gives itself even to the point of damnation. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Paul wants to be accursed and separated from Christ, not in order to be damned with his people, but to win community with God for them; he wants to be damned instead of them' (DBWE 1:185). Paul's prayer, moreover, is offered for those outside of the church-community; prayer draws the other into the church-community (DBWE 1:186). Intercessory prayer, according to Bonhoeffer's model, is vicarious representative action insofar as it is a petition for those who are not petitioning God on their own behalf. Bonhoeffer writes, 'In intercession the nature of Christian love again proves to be to work 'with', 'for', and ultimately 'in place of' our neighbor, thereby drawing the neighbor deeper and deeper into the church-community' (DBWE 1:189). As an example of both vicarious representative action and love, Paul's example demonstrates that even the pursuit of community with God is relativised in relation to the concrete affirmation of the other.

⁶⁵ Here again the connection between Bonhoeffer and Weil should not go unnoticed. Weil will also emphasise the importance of entering into another's affliction through prayer, which she develops as the highest form of attention. The character of this attentive prayer is one which is largely passive; it is a waiting upon God. This too is not foreign to Bonhoeffer's own thought. In reinterpreting Nietzsche's aphorism, Bonhoeffer describes prayer as 'waiting for God to draw near' (DBWE 1:186). Cf. Chapter Four.

This affirmation of the other through prayer takes form through entering into the other's affliction.⁶⁶ Prayer becomes one way, for Bonhoeffer, in which the self enters into the reality of the other while observing that other as limit. Entering into another's affliction only occurs through Christ who intercedes for all people, and thus participating in the other's suffering does not constitute an immediate relation. Mediated by Christ, the members of the church-community bear the burdens of one another.⁶⁷ Bonhoeffer writes, 'Without implying any mystical notions of blurring the boundaries of the concrete reality of I and You...It must come to the point that the weaknesses, needs, and sins of my neighbor afflict me as if they were my own, in the same way as Christ was afflicted by our sins' (DBWE 1:180). Prayer is not solely offered for the church-community as presently constituted; prayer is also undertaken for all those who have the potential of being a part of the church-community (DBWE 1:186).

The vicarious representative action of prayer situates the believer squarely within the travails of the world. Bonhoeffer writes,

Thy kingdom come...this is the prayer only of the church-community of children of the Earth, who do not set themselves apart, who have no special proposals for reforming the world to offer, who are no better than the world, but who persevere together in the midst of the world, in its depths, in the daily life and subjugation of the world. They persevere because they are, in their own curious way, true to this existence, and they steadfastly fix their gaze on the most unique place in the world where they witness, in amazement, the overcoming of the curse, the most profound yes of God to the world (DBWE 12:290-291).

⁶⁶ Bonhoeffer writes, '...in intercession I step into the other's place and my prayer, even though it remains my own, is nonetheless prayed out of the other's affliction and need...In our intercession we can become a Christ to our neighbor' (DBWE 1:186-187).

⁶⁷ In *Discipleship* Bonhoeffer writes that, 'There is no such thing as unmediated praying' (DBWE 4:153). All genuine human action, including prayer, is mediated by Christ.

Prayer is action on behalf of the world, action which opposes retreat from the world. Bonhoeffer takes up this theme again in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, where he writes that one can be a Christian only by partaking in both prayer and justice (DBWE 8:389). Rather than understanding prayer as a retreat from the suffering of the world, prayer is understood as a *deeper* participation in the world's suffering, in an attempt to relieve suffering and injustice. Paradoxically, the activity of prayer, or the activity of interceding for the other, requires waiting on God. Prayer is not first the work of the human being on behalf of the other, but is the response of the human being to God's initiative. In pursuing justice, the Christian recognises that there is no true justice which is accomplished by human beings in themselves. It is only through Christ, who himself restores and reconciles the world, that justice is enacted. Human beings pray and work for that restoration while understanding that Christ brings it into fruition. The vicarious representative action of prayer flows from the self's orientation towards the other, mediated by Christ, and asks God to accomplish the reconciliation only He can enact.

2.5 Conclusion

Bonhoeffer demonstrates throughout his work a concern for the self-other relation generally, and concern for orientation towards the other specifically. Bonhoeffer understands Christian ethics not as the application of universal principles to difficult moral dilemmas. Instead, he understands ethics fundamentally as an *orientation* of the human being. This ethical orientation constitutes the structure of authentic human being, or human being manifest in the figure of the ultimate human being, Jesus Christ. This chapter has offered an overview of key components of Bonhoeffer's development

of human being, with particular emphasis placed on how Bonhoeffer's interpretation of human being sends persons into the world, giving of themselves on behalf of others.

In addition to exploring Bonhoeffer's concept of the human being, this chapter also provides an account of Bonhoeffer's interpretation of idealism. This concept of idealism lurks in the background of much of Bonhoeffer's theology; idealist philosophy is for Bonhoeffer the work of human being in Adam. Human being in Adam is characterised by its solitude, desire for domination and disunity. In contrast to the solitude and the dominating tendencies human being in Adam, human being in Christ shows an overriding concern for otherness. As Christ gave himself freely for other, human being in Christ is conformed to Christ's image and gives of itself for others. For human being in Christ, there is no relation, however, which is unmediated. All genuine human relation occurs through Christ. This includes the fullest expression of human relation, vicarious representative action. Recognising an infinite debt, human being in Christ participates alongside, and for, the other. This participation in the life of the other includes the mediation of grace and intercessory prayer.

This chapter has sought to demonstrate how themes within Bonhoeffer's theology offer a powerful starting point for considering parallel developments in both theology and philosophy. It is by no means a complete interpretation of Bonhoeffer's theology; the themes expounded upon are chosen due to certain likenesses to themes developed by Emmanuel Levinas and Simone Weil. Specifically, the resonances between thinkers are not randomly selected; from varying perspectives they illustrate the *structure* of human being as one of ethical orientation. The ethical structure of human being facilitates

reflection on humankind's 'way of being' in the world. Through Weil's concept of attention, subsequent chapters will explore this way of being as an *attending* to the other. Human beings are responsible for others beyond themselves, and that responsibility extends even to the point of offering oneself for another. This offering of oneself for another, or substitution, is considered in the next chapter on Levinas, who also interprets human beings as oriented towards otherness.

Chapter 3: *Bound But Not 'Held Hostage': Bonhoeffer and Levinas in Conversation*

Introduction

This chapter turns to Levinas in order to shed light on Bonhoeffer's theological account of a responsible self. Levinas is a powerful interrogator for theologians. Levinas questions whether theology can accommodate otherness. This chapter will show how Bonhoeffer preserves otherness while remaining robustly theological. In particular, Bonhoeffer's construction of Christ as the mediator of personhood retains genuine otherness.

In brief, Bonhoeffer's invocation of the other as a boundary to the self ensures that the 'I', as a fallen entity prone to possession and to violence towards the other cannot extend its grasp to the other.¹ Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer does safeguard the concrete reality of the other for whom the self is responsible.² The self is responsible not for the idea of the other, but for the actual other who one encounters within human life. In the end, it will be shown here that Bonhoeffer retains the unity of the self in Christ, while maintaining the necessary distance from and respect for the concrete other.³

¹ See, for example, DBWE 10:406 where Bonhoeffer suggests that without genuine limit against the I's claims to lordship, 'He becomes anxious in the face of this dominion over a dead world; in his anxiety he breaks the terrible silence of his solitude and breaks away from himself, stands over against himself in order to replace the missing other, and accuses himself. That is conscience. But since he is simultaneously accuser, accused, and judge, this summons of conscience proves to be merely the last grasp of the ego for itself, for its own possibilities. And its summons dies away in the silent, dominated world of the ego' (DBWE 10:406). This passage is pregnant with possible connections with Levinas's own philosophy, most notably in the criticism of the totalising and dominating impulses of the I.

² Bonhoeffer's uses the term 'concrete' to describe reality. Concepts which accord with reality, for Bonhoeffer, are concrete. Concrete responsibility stands in contrast to an abstract, ideal or otherworldly responsibility. In this way what is concrete accords with human existence as it is lived (cf. DBWE 6:102,433).

³ Here 'distance' refers to the unrelenting exteriority of the other for Bonhoeffer. Attempts to reduce or remove this distance or exteriority can only be described as sinful and idealistic (DBWE 10:390,391).

Yet Levinas contends that theology neutralises, rather than preserves, otherness. This chapter will argue to the contrary that Bonhoeffer's theology preserves otherness without reducing the other to the same.

3.1 Reading Bonhoeffer with Levinas

Bonhoeffer highlights the *theological* and *social* character of the self.⁴ This distances him from Levinas. For Levinas, responsibility emerges prior to any theological experience or affiliation, while for Bonhoeffer responsibility is the culmination of Christology. While Bonhoeffer neither explicitly engaged with Levinas nor vice versa, they share the concerns of Continental thinkers in a tumultuous time of European history.⁵ In agreement with Levinas, this thesis promotes an account of the ethically oriented self who preserves the other from domination. Responsibility for the other will extend for both Bonhoeffer and Levinas to the point of substitution. Bonhoeffer's theological contribution, interpreted alongside Levinas, will open up greater understanding of concrete, substitutionary responsibility.

Four points of Bonhoeffer's theology will be brought into conversation with Levinas.

These points of resonance highlight similarities but illuminate important distinctions.

⁴ Bonhoeffer's theological vision of subjectivity emerged from a host of different sources. One of these sources was the work of Eberhard Grisebach, who Bonhoeffer discovered through reading Friedrich Gogarten (Bethge 2000:83). Grisebach's account of the I-You, however, did not emerge from a reading of Buber's rendition of dialogical philosophy (Friedman, Maurice, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 191).

⁵ Levinas and Bonhoeffer were born one month apart in 1906. Levinas's father, brothers, and mother-in-law were all killed in Nazi concentration camps. Levinas himself was interned at a camp for military prisoners near Hannover, Germany. Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, was executed at Flossenbürg in 1945 after vociferous protest against the Nazi regime and participation in an assassination attempt of Hitler. On the philosophical milieu, Wayne Whitson Floyd remarks, 'Otherness was in the air...' (Floyd 2008:94).

First, Bonhoeffer presents a self not immediately transparent to itself. Second, the self in Bonhoeffer remains inextricably *social*. Third, Bonhoeffer elucidates the 'givenness' of human selfhood. Fourth, Bonhoeffer's account elevates the other beyond the self, while not asserting the dominance of the self. Levinas's pervasive emphasis on preservation of alterity will deepen readings of Bonhoeffer's theology.

First, for Bonhoeffer the self is not transparent, even to itself. The human being is a mystery to itself, even after encounter with another. For Bonhoeffer, this contrasts German idealism, which represents the zenith of the transparent and the self-positing subject.⁶ Bonhoeffer notes two problems with the idealist self. First, an idealist self verifies *itself* through reason, and second, the idealist self presumes too much about the other. Bonhoeffer notes that every boundary conceived for reason (by reason) is therefore already transcended. If one sets a limit for oneself, one has already gone beyond that limit through thought.⁷ Bonhoeffer writes, "The boundary by which the human being limits himself remains a self-drawn boundary, that is, a boundary the human person essentially has already crossed, a boundary that person must already have stood beyond in the first place in order to draw it" (DBWE 10:399). For Bonhoeffer, genuine limits come from outside of the self. Yet, philosophy, as a human endeavour, only affixes limits at self-drawn boundaries. Because self-imposed limits originate within the self, they remain immanent, rather than transcendent, limits. The self which posits the other as other encounters only a chimera of genuine alterity. For Bonhoeffer, a truly external limit cannot be thought through philosophy alone. The limit of the human self emerges from genuine ethical *transcendence*. Bonhoeffer writes, "The I

⁶ Although Hegel bears the brunt of Bonhoeffer's ire, Wayne Floyd notes Bonhoeffer's lack of attention to Hegel's primary texts (Floyd 2008:101). In addition, Charles Marsh cites Bonhoeffer's tendency to ascribe to Hegel ideas which more comfortably fit with the ideas of Johann Fichte (Marsh 1994:57).

⁷ Floyd 2008:86.

being searched for can never become an object of reflection but rather has its essence in relation to the questioning self, that is, to transcendence; the essence of the human being then rests no longer in itself, but rather in the ever-renewed act of relating to transcendence' (DBWE 10:390).⁸ Drawing a contrast to genuine transcendence, Bonhoeffer addresses the tendency of the idealist self both to establish itself and to disregard the other.⁹ Encounter with genuine transcendence, on the other hand, constitutes what Bonhoeffer describes as the boundary or limit experience. This boundary experience of encounter by the other, an experience of both confrontation and peace, draws the self into responsible selfhood. As will be seen, Levinas and Bonhoeffer locate subjectivity and responsibility in the encounter with the other.

Bonhoeffer argues that the I is like (although not identical to) the I of the other. Only on this basis can the idea of relation be thought at all.¹⁰ Bonhoeffer's theology resists, however, the conclusion this unity reduces the alterity of the other. Bonhoeffer's other encounters the self in ethical transcendence, but preserves the possibility of genuine relation. Bonhoeffer's self neither identifies completely with the other, as in his reading of idealism, nor maintains the *absolute* alterity of other, as does Levinas.¹¹ The self possesses total self-knowledge and mastery neither over itself nor the other. The

⁸ Recall that for Bonhoeffer the boundary to the human being exists both in the interior and the exterior. Although this chapter is primarily concerned with exteriority, or the boundary which comes to the self from without, Bonhoeffer also maintains that the self's interior remains equally transcendent. Put in terms of time, humankind knows neither its beginning nor its future (cf. DBWE 3:86).

⁹ The other cannot be understood, in an immediate sense, by the self. Bonhoeffer writes, 'In contrast to the idealist object-form, it is not immanent to the mind of the subject. The You sets the limit for the subject and by its own accord activates a will that impinges upon the other in such a way that this other will become a You for the I' (DBWE 1:51).

¹⁰ DBWE 1:43. Although Bonhoeffer stresses the similarity of the I to the 'other-I' he is careful to leave the relationship an analogous one. 'The other can be experienced by the I only as You, but never directly as I, that is, in the sense of the I that has become I only through the claim of a You' (DBWE 1:51). This relation of analogy between selves opens the possibility of unity. In contrast, unity for Levinas invites an inappropriate familiarity between the self and the other.

¹¹ Cf. Section 3.3 below, TI 101.

responsible self only comes into being through the intervention of a genuinely transcendent other.

Second, Bonhoeffer's self is irrevocably social. Both the divine and human other draw the self into genuine existence. Like the divine Other, the human other provides a concrete boundary for the individual.¹² The difference between the human and the divine other exists in the necessity of response; the human other places a claim upon the I which can be either answered or ignored. In addition to the volitional character of Bonhoeffer's ethical subjectivity, Bonhoeffer's self exists with a multiplicity of 'other' selves. The social in this context means more than a dyadic encounter between a self and an other. It is responsible relating to a *community* (DBWE 1:51). This social element of subjectivity frees Bonhoeffer to argue that humans are, ethically speaking, most fully human and responsible for one another in community. Human community finds its fullest expression in the *Gemeinde*, or church-community. The church-community is Christ-existing-as-community; the church is the communal body of Christ.¹³ In the person of Christ, humanity sees its *telos*: beings completely free *for* one another rather than free *from* the other. For Bonhoeffer, the sociality of human beings follows the sociality of Christ, who, in his freedom, chooses relationship *with* humankind over freedom *from* humankind.

In anticipation here, Bonhoeffer will differ from Levinas on the sociality of human beings in two primary ways. First, for Bonhoeffer, the ultimate example of

¹² 'At the moment of being addressed, the person enters a state of responsibility or, in other words, of decision' (DBWE 1:48).

¹³ Cf. DBWE 1:190. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Not all the individuals, but the church-community as a whole in Christ, is the 'body of Christ'; it is '*Christ existing as church-community*'. Participation in the church-community is the ground of the Christian, one who 'bears the other in active love, intercession, and forgiveness of sins, acting completely vicariously' (DBWE 1:191).

responsibility is found in the church-community where a community of selves participates in the body of Christ. Only in this participation is the I-You enacted completely. The individual I-You remains solely a microcosm of the larger I-You relationship; one between God and the church-community as the body of Christ (DBWE 1:225). Second, while Levinas will have some account of irreplaceability, or the idea that beings are utterly unique, Bonhoeffer adds a teleological element to the an account of irreplaceability.¹⁴ For Bonhoeffer account of responsibility requires participation within the larger community of those anticipating their transformation into the perfect image of God. The collection of those who have been conformed to Christ and sought to be like Christ in complete discipleship and responsibility participate in this transformative image. The transformative community preserves the individual *qua* individual, but emphasises the role that the individual performs within the body of Christ. Consequently, the self is indeed irreplaceable within the community, but it is not on that basis that the self is preserved. Each person bears the image of the transforming Christ. For Bonhoeffer, irreplaceability has *theological warrant*.

Third, Bonhoeffer understands selfhood as given to the self by God through the summons of the human other. In contrast with the self-positing subject of 'idealism', selfhood is, for Bonhoeffer, not an *achievement*. 'Gift' better describes the being of the self. The language of gift avoids, for Bonhoeffer, the ultimate pitfall of philosophy: 'Here

¹⁴ The uniqueness, or irreplaceability of the I gives weight to the concept of substitution. Substitution of one generic object for another describes a substitution which comes at little cost. For Levinas in particular such a substitution represents a return to being, or a system of substitution. Substitution for both Bonhoeffer and Levinas, on the other hand, describes a substitution which comes at great cost. Levinas writes, '[the ego's] exceptional uniqueness in the passivity or the passion of the self is the incessant event of subjection to everything, of substitution. It is a being divesting itself, emptying itself of its being, turning itself inside out...' (OBBE 117). The irreplaceability of the self means that its substitution is a *real* substitution of itself, a substitution which comes at a significant cost. This issue comes to the fore in reference to the discussion of Christ's own unique sacrifice. Although this thesis argues with Bonhoeffer that human beings become like Christ in substitution for others, it also recognises the essential uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice. See fn. 61.

conceptualization of one's own I, as the process of conceptualization out of unity, becomes the primal position of all philosophy. Hence philosophy means posing the question about the human being and providing the answer in one and the same act...Philosophy is the human work *κατ' ἔξοχήν* [*par excellence*] (DBWE 10:390-391). The idea of gift means selfhood is not the result of human wisdom or insight, but the largesse of a loving Other. In giving being to human beings, God invites them to partake in the freedom of Christ, a freedom is freedom to exist in a relationship of self-giving for others. The gift of selfhood, given through the summons of the other, frees human beings from futile attempts to understand themselves. Persons are *given* identity and meaning. Bonhoeffer writes, 'The person exists, that is, he is in time and in the world as the one who must inquire about himself at any given time. The person thus does not know in general who he is, but rather it is part of his essence to inquire about himself' (DBWE 10:394). This questioning, combined with the inability of humankind to answer its own question, means the approach of the other is a salvific approach.¹⁵ Again, however, it should be noted that it is God, the divine Other, who invests the approach of the human other. The human other, in itself, possesses no salvific potential (DBWE 10:398).

Fourth, the asymmetry of the self-other relation constitutes the final point for conversation with Levinas. A critical asymmetry, combined with the summoned character of the self, animates Bonhoeffer's own affirmation of substitution. For Bonhoeffer the self and the other are not equals; their initial encounter is one of confrontation. This asymmetry proceeds from two sources. First, in keeping with the

¹⁵ For Bonhoeffer, this approach is also not as reciprocal as Martin Buber's approach. The other remains a confrontation to the self, rather than merely a helpmate in asking the existential question.

givenness and the contingency of human existence, both the divine other and the human other place a claim upon the self which must be answered (DBWE 1:51). As the limit of the human self, the other constitutes a boundary which cannot be transgressed. Thus, the self is dependent on the other for selfhood. It is impossible for the solitary self to both be responsible and yet remain in the idealist paradigm of self-actualisation and acquisition. Second, the self does not make a claim on the other; the self can only respond to the claim of the other. The image for subjectivity is consistently one of question; the questioning of the self by the other leads to ethical selfhood. Bonhoeffer writes, 'The only real question which now remains is: 'Who are you? Speak for yourself!' The question, 'Who are you?', is the question of dethroned and distraught reason; but it is also the question of faith...This is the question with which Christology is concerned' (DBWE 12:302). Bonhoeffer's self can only answer the question posed by the other. To question the other transgresses the boundary presented by that other. Consequently, the self-other relation cannot be understood as a directly mutual, or reciprocal, interchange. For Bonhoeffer, too strong of an account of mutual reciprocity falls back in to the idealist self-other relation. There the other becomes comprehensible and intelligible to the self.

While Bonhoeffer emphasises the preservation of otherness, he uses theological resources to preserve the fundamental unity of humankind as well.¹⁶ Bonhoeffer notes that humankind has the potential to be unified in response to the Divine Other.

Bonhoeffer writes, 'My real relationship to another person is oriented to my

¹⁶ The unity of humankind is seen in the collective person, particularly the church-community. Here the familial image of the being brothers and sisters in Christ testifies to the essential unity of the church community. At the same time, Bonhoeffer maintains the essential uniqueness of persons when he writes, 'Social relations must be understood, then, as purely interpersonal and building on the uniqueness and separateness of persons...no 'unity' can negate the plurality of persons' (DBWE 1:55).

relationship to God. But since I know God's 'I' only in the revelation of God's love, so too with the other person; here the concept of the church comes into play' (DBWE 1:56). As selves confronted by Christ's question, the church community is capable of a unity which does not reduce otherness; a unified orientation towards Christ. This orientation requires ethical response to the summons of the other, as well as sacrifice even to the point of substitution.¹⁷

3.2 Responsibility in Levinas

Levinas's understanding of responsibility renders him a particularly valuable interlocutor for Bonhoeffer's theology. Before points of continuity can be drawn, the distinctiveness of ethics as 'first philosophy' can be captured in two points. First, he understands the ethical relation as involving a summoning, or invocation, of the self by the other. Second, this summons culminates in substitution. These two provide the clearest departure points for discussion.

First, the ethical relation, for Levinas, involves in a summons of the self by the other.

The ethical summons follows from a Levinasian 'manifestation', of the self to the other.

Levinas explains, 'In expression a being presents itself...this attendance [to the presentation of the other] is not the *neutrality* of an image, but a solicitation that concerns me by its destitution and its Height...to manifest oneself as a face is to impose

¹⁷ The elevation of the other's good culminates in *kenosis*, or self-emptying. *Kenosis* is a thorny issue in contemporary philosophical and theological thought. The concept of *kenosis*, especially for another, evokes questions of self-negation and self-affirmation. This is particularly provocative for some feminist theologies. For example, Daphne Hampson writes, 'I am a feminist. I wish an ethical position in which I do not give over my being to any person or to any God who lies outside of myself' (Hampson, Daphne, *After Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 38). Despite ambiguity over the exact content of a 'kenotic theology', there are undoubtedly kenotic themes flowing throughout the New Testament. Bonhoeffer's *conformatio Christi* amplifies the role of *kenosis* in Christian responsibility.

oneself...' (TI 200, emphasis in original). Moving away from a paradigm of the self as sovereign over its ethical domain, Levinas stresses that it is the other who determines the ethical relation. The ethical relation is not determined by the *decision* of the self, since what is manifested cannot be understood or even agreed to in advance. It occurs prior to any decision.

This determination by the other comes in the summons which calls the self and cannot be ignored (TI 215). While 'the presentation of the other' evokes images of domination or power, the other comes to the self in the ethical relation with a qualified power; its power is in its very reconfiguration of power. Coming in 'destitution' and 'nudity', the advance of the other exposes the very powerlessness of typical interpretations of power. The supreme power of the other lies in its resistance to murder. It is a power which, paradoxically, remains even when the other is afflicted and destroyed. For Levinas, 'the Height', signifying transcendence of the other, is only found alongside the humility of the other.

Levinas maintains that the calling into question of the self does not do violence. To the contrary, the ethical relation is by definition a peaceful relation. Levinas says, 'The "resistance" of the other does not do violence to me, does not act negatively; it has a positive structure: ethical' (TI 197). As a result, despite the elevation of the other in its alterity, the ethical relation is not 'struggle with a faceless god' (TI 197). The height and transcendence of the other refers centrally to its *freedom*. In freedom, the other responds to the self with a response that is unforeseeable (TI 199). Based on freedom, the ethical relation is a relation of goodness. Even though the self does not choose its

relation to the other, it is nevertheless a good relation.¹⁸ Goodness grounds the ethical relation, regardless of whether or not the summons of the other elicits welcome or violence. Murder as the absolute negation of alterity always fails, since even the negation of an existent does not nullify the alterity found in the face. Consequently, even though alterity can provoke murder, murder only exposes its paralysis in light of otherness. Levinas insists that, 'I can wish to kill only an existent absolutely independent, which exceeds my powers infinitely, and therefore does not oppose them but paralyzes the very power of power' (TI 198). The relation with the other is not one of reverse domination, where the self stands before an absolute oppressor. Instead, the very destitution and nudity of the other provokes violence. Yet, such violence does not negate the infinity of the other, instead it discloses the self's own impotence. The ethical relation is a relation of peace, in which the self freely responds to the summons of the other.

Levinas describes intersubjectivity as a 'relation without relation' (TI 80). By this Levinas means that the relation between the self and the other, the relation of being 'face to face', does not form a totality. Totalities and systems, for Levinas, signify a return to unity rather than desire for genuine alterity.¹⁹ Such a reduction of alterity does violence to the other by not allowing it to speak for itself. This lack of self-

¹⁸ Levinas writes, 'Thus in expression the being that imposes itself does not limit but promotes my freedom, by arousing my goodness...The ineluctable has no longer the inhumanity of the fateful, but the severe seriousness of goodness' (TI 200).

¹⁹ Even when transcendence is desired, it cannot be maintained for Levinas within a system. Such an existence would make transcendence intelligible through reversible correlation. He writes, 'The reversibility of a relation where the terms are indifferently read from left to right and from right to left would couple them the one to the other; they would complete one another in a system visible from the outside. *The intended transcendence would be thus reabsorbed into the unity of the system, destroying the radical alterity the other*' (TI 35-36, emphasis added). At this point Levinas's argument sounds much like that of Bonhoeffer, who also contrasts a false transcendence initiated by the self in itself and genuine transcendence which comes from outside of the self.

expression returns to knowledge as disclosure rather than knowledge as revelation.²⁰

In contrast to any reduction of alterity, Levinas's face to face relation preserves the infinity of the other. Levinas explains, '[The face to face] involves a calling into question of oneself, a critical attitude which is itself produced in face of the other and under his authority...The face to face remains an ultimate situation' (TI 81). This infinity marks the *strangeness* of the stranger, one who disturbs the self's own enjoyment of itself.²¹

The alterity of the other in Levinas must be understood in terms of 'the face'. Levinas states, 'What we call the face is precisely this exceptional presentation of self by the self' (TI 202). The face cannot be contained or comprehended, and it is this refusal which marks its presence (TI 194). However, while the face resists all thematisation, or what Levinas also calls being a part of a 'community of genus', it is also not a negation of the self. Direct opposition of I and not-I would re-establish a totality, since the other would necessarily be defined, or thematised, as that which is opposite the I. Instead, the face obligates the self to respond to the self-expression of the other. For this reason the face to face relation can be described in 'discourse' which allows the other to express itself. Only then is alterity preserved apart from the grasp of the self. Levinas explains, 'In discourse the divergence that inevitably opens between the Other as my theme and the Other as my interlocutor, emancipated from the theme that seemed a moment to hold

²⁰ In contrast to knowledge-as-disclosure, knowledge-as-revelation must wait upon the other to manifest itself, on its own terms. This manifestation of the other is language. There is no power or capability of the self to comprehend the truth of the other without the self-expression of the other. The relation, or discourse, animated by the self-expression of the other is the basis for ethics. It is an original relation with the other's presence which comes 'from on high' and is unforeseen (TI 66). This relation to presence, constituted through language, resists all attempts at categorisation and thematisation.

²¹ While the other disturbs the self, the other remains desirable to the self. However, the desirability of the other does not indicate a *lack* within the self and the revelation of the other to the self does not disclose the interiority of the other. The revelation of the other does not *unveil* the other, satisfying either a need or a possessive impulse of the self. Instead, the revelation of the other foments the desire of the self for otherness. Levinas writes, 'The metaphysical desire has another intention; it desires beyond everything that can simply complete it. It is like goodness – *the Desired does not fulfill it, but deepens it*' (TI 34, emphasis added).

him, forthwith contests the meaning I ascribe to my interlocutor' (TI 195). The critical component of Levinas's self-other relation is the recognition that the ethical relation does not 'emanate' from the I, but instead emanates from the other (TI 195). It calls the self into question.

What of the self's response to this invocation? Initially, there must *be* a response. There is no evasion of the summons of the other. Since the ethical relation occurs prior to thought, prior to reflection, it cannot be evaded by silence. Levinas claims that, "The face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation, which no "interiority" permits avoiding' (TI 201). To be silent before the summons of the other does not remove the summons, since the summons appears apart from the initiation of the self. In addition to the necessity of response, 'the revelation of the other founds peace' (TI 34). The freedom of the self is called to responsibility, while also maintaining the plurality of the self and other (TI 203). The retention of plurality opposes two alternatives: i.) locating the self-other relation within a larger drama (what Levinas calls mysticism) or ii.) unity which ameliorates the otherness of the other. Both of these alternatives threaten to turn the self-other relation into a private, privileged relation. The face to face relation refuses such privacy.²² The face to face is not the privileged relationship between I and Thou which Levinas criticises in Martin Buber.²³ Instead, it is an acknowledgement of otherness which does not remove that otherness, a self dominated by the other but not undergoing violence from the other.

²² Levinas writes of the 'forgetfulness' of the I-Thou: 'Language as the presence of the face does not invite complicity with the preferred being, the self-sufficient "I-Thou" forgetful of the universe; in its frankness it refuses the clandestinity of love, where it loses its frankness and meaning and turns into laughter and cooing. The third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other – language is justice' (TI 213).

²³ See LR 72-74.

Second, Levinas develops the self-other relation as culminating in substitution. Drawing on earlier criticisms of Western philosophy, in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* Levinas describes the traditional philosophical self as both in possession of itself and 'for' itself (OBBE 102). These characteristics of possession of and orientation towards oneself constitute the erroneous assumptions of the Western 'idealist' self, a self which elevates consciousness to a sovereign position in subjectivity. Levinas writes, 'In the traditional teaching of idealism, subject and consciousness are equivalent concepts...' (OBBE 103). In holding to these idealist characteristics, the conscious self remains tied to ontology, an account of the self which cannot help but thematise and dominate otherness.²⁴ Against such an idealist subject, Levinas posits subjectivity as an expulsion: 'There is expulsion in that it assigns me before I show myself, before I set myself up. I am assigned without recourse, without fatherland, already sent back to myself, but without being able to stay there, compelled before commencing. Nothing here resembles self-consciousness' (OBBE 103). The expulsion of Levinas's subjectivity is such that the self can neither form itself nor be for itself. As an entity not founded in its own power, it cannot claim possession over itself. Whatever self-possession it does have, it finds already bound to another. The only possession of the self is the ability to respond to the invocation of the other. Self-possession of subjectivity does include recognition of oneself, but not possession or sovereignty over oneself. Instead, the disturbance of invocation by the other renders the self is always 'compelled before commencing'.²⁵ As Levinas writes, 'The word *I* means *here I am*, answering for everything and everyone' (OBBE 114). This answer the self proffers is substitution.

²⁴ Levinas writes, 'The *for itself* in consciousness is thus the very power which a being exercises upon itself, its will, its sovereignty. A being is equal to itself and is in possession of itself in this form; domination is in consciousness as such' (OBBE 102, emphasis in original).

²⁵ In describing the concept of summons prior to reflection, or this compelling before commencing, Levinas also refers to it in terms of 'absolute passivity' (OBBE 110). This absolute passivity he calls

The self developed in *Otherwise than Being*, a self never completely at home with itself and forever founded before any memory, finds itself already obligated to give to and for the other (OBBE 105). This obligation to giving goes to the uttermost extreme; the self gives *itself* for the other. This giving of oneself for the other Levinas calls substitution. Substitution, however, is not a freely given *act*. To make substitution an act would return to the paradigm of the oneself who embraces freedom (and substitution) as an initiative of the self.²⁶ In contrast to substitution-as-initiated-act, Levinas places substitution at the very heart of subjectivity itself. Substitution is the play of identity within the self. It is the reduction of pure self-identity over against the presence of otherness. Levinas presents his challenging notion of responsibility here:

Responsibility for others has not be a return to oneself, but an exasperated contracting, which the limits of identity cannot retain. Recurrence becomes identity in breaking up the limits of identity, breaking up the principle of being in me, the intolerable rest in itself characteristic of definition. The self is on the hither side of rest; it is the impossibility to come back from all things and concern oneself only with oneself. It is to hold on to oneself while gnawing away at oneself. Responsibility in

obsession. Obsession is a passivity which extends prior to any formation by narrative, nature or *kerygma*. Levinas writes, "The total passivity of obsession is more passive still than the passivity of things, for in their "prime matter" things sustain the kerygmatic logos that brings out their outlines in matter...Western philosophy, which is perhaps reification itself, remains faithful to the order of things and does not know the absolute passivity, beneath the level of activity and passivity, which is contributed by the idea of creation' (OBBE 110). This connection between passivity and ethics constitutes a critical link between the work of Levinas and Weil. As will be developed in the subsequent chapter, Weil too understands passivity as essential for any ethical relation. What Weil calls *decreation*, or the giving of oneself to God, calls for a passivity of self which consents to its own abnegation of being. Although their accounts differ substantially in other ways, in their emphasis on passivity they are similar. Consider Levinas again: "The subjectivity as *the other in the same*, as an inspiration, is the putting into question of all affirmation for-onself, all egoism born again in this very recurrence' (OBBE 111, emphasis in original).

²⁶ For the same reason that responsibility is not an act freely chosen, responsibility does not incur guilt. Levinas writes, "The for-the-other characteristic of the subject can be interpreted neither as a guilt complex (which presupposes an *initial* freedom), nor as a natural benevolence or divine "instinct," nor as some love or some tendency to sacrifice' (OBBE 124). This issue of incurring guilt constitutes a significant divergence from Bonhoeffer's own account. At this point it must suffice to say that whereas Levinas locates guilt not as incurred from an action but is inherent within subjectivity, for Bonhoeffer guilt is pervasive but must be assumed. However, for both guilt constitutes a formidable force within the self.

obsession is a responsibility of the ego for what the ego has not wished, that is, for the others (OBBE 114).

Responsibility and substitution are movements within the self, where the Levinas likens them to the act of respiration.²⁷ The respiration of responsibility, Levinas insists, is not submission to the other, but an *openness* to the other. This openness is the *unity* of activity and passivity (OBBE 115).²⁸ This openness is actively desired, but requires a passivity 'beyond' all passivity; it requires that one eagerly await otherness. The desire for otherness, manifest in responsibility, marks of existence 'otherwise than being'. Levinas claims, 'To be oneself, otherwise than being, to be dis-interested, is to bear the wretchedness and bankruptcy of the other, and even the responsibility that the other can have for me' (OBBE 117).

The above sketch of responsibility in Levinas has drawn out central characteristics: the desire for otherness even to the point of possession, the self's inability to achieve this in its own power and reliance on a summons by the other, and the self's responsibility for all even to the point of substitution. As Levinas says, '...this desire for the non-desirable, this responsibility for the neighbor, this substitution as a hostage, is the subjectivity and uniqueness of a subject' (OBBE 123). These characteristics inform the conversation between Levinas and Bonhoeffer to follow.

3.3 Levinas and Theology

²⁷ OBBE 109. Levinas also uses the image of contracting in one's own skin, or 'incarnation', as descriptive of this contraction and breakup of the self.

²⁸ This argument for a passivity which extends *beyond* activity and passivity marks another potential point of conversation between Levinas and Weil. Responsibility as an orientation of the self, an orientation of openness, will concern the next chapter.

David Wood is correct in saying that Levinas reintroduces ethics into Continental philosophy.²⁹ What does this mean for theology? Levinas remains distrustful of theology for two reasons. First, Levinas fears that theology inevitably returns to ontology; theology cannot help but codify and concretise, and therefore 'tame' the transcendent other (BPW 112). Theology is always a return to 'the same' (neutralising otherness). Second, as Ford says specifically of Christian theology, '...what worries Levinas most...is that somehow Christianity involves a shifting of responsibility on to that man on the cross, and an infinite pardon which encourages irresponsibility.'³⁰ The substitution of Christ for all others, for Levinas, obviates the self's substitutionary responsibility for the other.

First, this section will address Levinas's distrust with the help of Bonhoeffer's theology. Bonhoeffer privileges the transcendence of the divine Other while also preserving the immanence of the divine Other in the form of Jesus Christ. It is important to acknowledge the danger inherent in reducing the other to the same. Yet Bonhoeffer seems to preserve both the transcendence of the other and the self-other relation as an immanent encounter. Responsibility, as a response of the self to the demand of the concrete other, encounters the other in concrete human life as an other *whom God loves*. The self shares a collegiality with the other; they are both loved by and mediated by God. This self does not cast responsibility solely on Christ and ameliorate the concrete responsibility of life in the world. Instead, Bonhoeffer affirms that the substitution of Christ *makes possible* genuine responsibility for the other.

²⁹ David Wood notes, 'Readers of Sartre, Heidegger and Derrida had become accustomed to having their hopes for ethical illumination disappointed...Levinas came to that scene as rain to the cracked earth of a parched landscape' (Wood, David, 'Introduction' in *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other* ed. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (London: Routledge, 1988), 2-3).

³⁰ Ford 1999:59

Second, to address Levinas's distrust, Bonhoeffer's theology can ameliorate tensions in a newly articulated 'ethically oriented self'. Levinas informs this ethical orientation of the self in two ways. First, Levinas sets a boundary for theological discourse, protecting the transcendence of the other. Second, Levinas provides the language to describe the responsible self. Specifically, Levinas captures a kenotic responsibility which is undertaken at cost to the self. Levinas's own debates with Buber situate his retrospective relation to Bonhoeffer. Buber, for Levinas, holds out too much hope in the mutuality of the self-other relation. If Levinas's reading of Buber marks the boundaries of complete transcendence and of complete immanence, Bonhoeffer's Christologically-mediated self offers a third alternative. Placing Levinas and Bonhoeffer in conversation yields a hybrid account of a Christologically responsible self; this preserves both the alterity of the other and the reciprocity of responsibility in the concrete world.

3.3.1 *Levinas's Critique of Theology*

Levinas's work is philosophical rather than theological.³¹ First, unlike Levinas's philosophy, theology 'thematizes' the transcendent, thus reducing it to the same. This thematisation of the transcendent brings what is exterior to the self into the self's consciousness. Here the acquisitive character of human being reveals itself. Levinas claims that, 'The possibility of possessing, that is, of suspending the very alterity of what is only at first other, and other relative to me, is the *way* of the same' (TI 38, emphasis in original). In thematising the transcendent, the self possesses everything it encounters.

³¹ In response to a question posed by Jean Wahl about the theological possibilities within his work, Levinas responds, 'I agree these notions [of the Kierkegaardian and Levinasian Other] are connected, but ultimately my departure is absolutely nontheological. I insist upon this. It is not theology I am doing, but philosophy' (BPW 29-30).

The transcendence of the other, however, resists that possession and calls the self into question. In the face of such resistance to the self, the self has two choices. It can either compromise the alterity of the other through, in Levinas's words, 'murder' and 'betrayal', or it can exist in the tension of being called into question. The extreme response to the confrontation of the self and the other is murder. For Levinas, the existence of alterity challenges the self's presupposition of possession. This challenge must be negated; this negation Levinas calls murder. Levinas explains, 'I can wish to kill only an existent absolutely independent, which exceeds my powers infinitely, and therefore does not oppose them but paralyses the very power of power. The Other is the sole being I can wish to kill' (TI 198).

'Betrayal' is Levinas's second image for the reduction of alterity. Betrayal signifies reduction of the other into language. This reduction of otherness represents Levinas's fears for theology. Concepts of 'Transcendence', 'Infinity' and 'Height' all refer to the alterity of the other. Here alterity defies linguistic attempts at description. The final unutterability of alterity is, according to Levinas the 'Saying'. The reduction of the Saying, or that which describes a tidal 'letting go of what it grasps', to static description, is the movement from the Saying to the Said (LR 156). As a result, mastery through description represents the self's negation of genuine alterity. Every attempt to organise the transcendent comes face-to-face with Levinas's designation of violence against genuine alterity.

Levinas contends that theology succumbs to the temptation to order. Theology absorbs every 'disturbance' of genuine otherness into an account of order. However, Levinas holds out for the possibility of a humbled theology which does not return to the *arche* of

the same. Addressing this humbled *way of being*, Levinas writes, ‘To manifest itself as humble, as allied with the vanquished, the poor, the persecuted – is precisely not to return to this order’ (EN 48). In arguing for a way of being which affirms both the transcendence of God and the possibility of that transcendence existing in the world, Levinas provides a way to a staged conversation with Bonhoeffer. In the person of Christ for Bonhoeffer, the scandal of a transcendence appears immanently within human existence. In keeping with Levinas’s account of transcendence, this scandal erupts within and disrupts human existence. Yet, for Bonhoeffer, Christ also appears for and with human beings.

3.3.2 *Bonhoeffer’s Preservation of Both Transcendence and Immanence*

In arguing for the self’s responsibility for the other, Levinas reminds the theologian that even within the immanence of the Incarnation there exists a disturbing element of disjunction. The self does not will the inbreaking of Christ into one’s existence; revelation is not in any way an extension of the self and that inbreaking involves dislocation. The self never possesses Christ; God in Christ retains alterity even while existing with and for human beings. The gospel of Christ is both ‘good news’ and source of joy, but only because it comes on its own terms. This revelation in Christ dislocates the self accustomed to possession and domination. The dislocating potential of the gospel re-positions the self to *real* freedom and *real* life. Attempts to reduce the scandal or the ‘otherness’ of Christ result in a false gospel, a gospel which Bonhoeffer famously calls ‘cheap’.³² Like Bonhoeffer, Levinas notes that this dislocation of the self by the

³² Bonhoeffer writes, ‘Cheap grace means grace as doctrine, as principle, as system. It means forgiveness of sins as a general truth; it means God’s love as merely a Christian idea of God’ (DBWE 4:43). In Bonhoeffer’s words one hears echoes of Levinas’s own injunction against the thematisation of

revelation of the other, often results in the persecution of the other by the self.³³ Both Levinas and Bonhoeffer describe a self intent on preserving its self-grandeur to the point of ‘murder’.

In addition to preserving otherness, Levinas’s stresses the orientational character of human being. Prior to all decision, or intention, there is orientation to the other. For Levinas, ‘the face’ represents this orientation to the other. Subjectivity is born through this orientation to the other; the self comes to itself through the other. This coming to oneself occurs alongside substitution for another. Theology can affirm this with Levinas. Specifically, the concept of the self coming to itself through another permeates the gospel. Jesus repeatedly proclaims himself the source of real life, and beckons to those around him to discover that life. His followers ‘find themselves’ in him. Yet, this discovery of the self in Christ follows from his substitution of himself for the self. Since, for Bonhoeffer, Christ is the paradigmatic human being, substitution is integral to authentic human being.³⁴ Although the content of substitution for others differs from the substitution of Christ, substitution itself remains critical to human being. The substitutionary character of human life follows from selves which are intrinsically oriented to one another.

This chapter began with Levinas’s contention that theology neutralises, rather than preserves, otherness. However, this thesis is arguing that Levinas’s suspicion of

transcendence. A reduction of God occurs in both instances. As thematisation of transcendence renders the other into the same, cheap grace renders the gospel of Christ an idea. Thematisation and cheap grace bring into possession what resists possession in all circumstances.

³³ For Bonhoeffer’s account of this, see his discussion on the ‘counter-logos’ in DBWE 12:302ff.

³⁴ This is not to say that substitution in Christ and the average human being will be identical, or even similar. There is an ‘unrepeatability’ in the person of Christ. Yet, the New Testament affirms the idea of one giving oneself for another (cf. John 15:13, Romans 9:3).

theology does not strike the heart of Bonhoeffer's responsible self. This argument has two parts. First, Bonhoeffer depicts a Christologically-mediated self which neither dominates nor is dominated by the other. Bonhoeffer is clear that the self desires possession and domination of the other (DBWE 10:406). This impulse is resisted by Christ, who calls the self to serve rather than dominate. Yet, Bonhoeffer is equally clear that this elevation of otherness does not result in a self dominated by the other.³⁵ Instead of these two polar options of domination or being dominated, Bonhoeffer describes the self-other relation as mediated by Christ, who resists all domination. This Christological mediation accounts for Levinas's depiction of desire for the transcendent, while also limiting that desire. Bonhoeffer's self indeed desires the transcendent, but is fulfilled in that desire through Christ.³⁶ Second, this mutually non-dominating relation has a reciprocal element which locates human beings squarely with, rather than against, other human beings. Yet, this reciprocity is never total. Bonhoeffer can therefore articulate a strong account of theological community. Bonhoeffer's Christology implicitly acknowledges the danger Levinas warns against; the inclination to reduce the otherness of the other results in violence. Bonhoeffer calls such reductive attempts 'godless' (DBWE 12:303). Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer's Christology preserves the self-other relation from simply reversing the dominating inclination. Whereas Levinas must render absolute the transcendence of the other, running the danger of an abstraction

³⁵ DBWE 10:398. Bonhoeffer criticises Eberhard Grisebach for exactly this problem. In Grisebach the other becomes the 'absolute' in place of the absolute I of Western philosophy. Although the absolutising of the other as in Grisebach is 'certainly worthy of serious attention,' Bonhoeffer ultimately rejects it since the rendering of the other as absolute remains a boundary set by the self, for the self (DBWE 10:399).

³⁶ This claim requires eschatological context. The New Testament depicts Christ saying, 'Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well springing up to eternal life' (John 4:13-14). At the same time, the restoration of the Kingdom of Heaven as described by Christ exceeds both the categories of present and future. The self is indeed fulfilled in Christ, but this fulfillment is partial in the present. As a result the complete fulfillment of the self remains distant; it is something hoped for in the coming age.

from concrete life, the Christologically-mediated self retains both the strangeness of the other and the concrete worldliness of the other.

Levinas would be right to allege that God, as the ultimately transcendent figure in theology, resists all thematisation. In the Hebrew Scriptures God repeatedly confounds human attempts to reduce him to perceptible and manageable categories. The most profound expression of this stems from the Decalogue: 'You shall not make for yourself an idol...' ³⁷ Biblical examples of Idolatry exemplify Levinas's point; human beings perpetually orient their desire for the transcendent towards immanent, false idols. Even Moses, 'whom the LORD knew face to face', ³⁸ did not encounter God in his glory. After the giving of the Decalogue, 'the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.' ³⁹ Distance characterises the God of Israel; the transgression of this distance mitigates transcendence and results in idolatry. Bonhoeffer's theology, which focuses on Christ as the manifestation of both God and human being, preserves the transcendence of God, but also preserves the immanence of God through Christ.

The very designation of Christ as Immanuel, 'God with us', addresses the significant difference between God in the Hebrew scripture and the Christ of the New Testament. ⁴⁰ However, the final answer must be 'no', since Bonhoeffer's Christ exhibits the same resistance to reduction and definition as the God of the Decalogue. Christ is perceptible to human beings, and thus already available to human beings in a different way from the

³⁷ Exodus 20:4 (NASB).

³⁸ Deuteronomy 34:10 (NASB).

³⁹ Exodus 20:21 (NASB).

⁴⁰ This does not suggest a Marcionite distinction between the God of the Hebrew scriptures and the God of the New Testament. Nuanced reading of the Hebrew scriptures reflect an immanent concern for the people. This chapter argues that God is *both* transcendent and immanent in the life of his people, much as Christ is both immanent and transcendent.

God of the Decalogue. At the same time, even Christ confounds human relationality. He resists the possessive desire of human beings, preserving alterity even while appearing in humility. Christ thwarts the self's acquisitive and classificatory impulse through a rejection of domination in the present. Yet Christ's being present does not ameliorate his transcendence, a transcendence encountered in the concrete world.⁴¹ Christ appears to the self as a confrontation, a stranger who calls the self into being. In contrast to the human logos, Bonhoeffer describes Christ as the 'counter-logos'.⁴² Bonhoeffer writes, 'What happens if a counter-logos appears which denies the classification [of the logos]? Another logos which destroys the first? What if the old order of the first logos be proclaimed as broken up, superseded and in its place a new world has already begun? When the human logos is addressed like that, what answer can it give?' (CC 29).⁴³ Speechlessness characterises the self presented with exteriority. Only transcendence can render the self speechless or powerless, because only transcendence is genuinely exterior to the self.⁴⁴ Christ remains transcendent, even while appearing in the world, because he remains exterior to the self. This exteriority is not simply the exteriority of the individual, in which every human being remains exterior to every other. Christ

⁴¹ An example of concrete transcendence might be religious art in the form of the icon. As a mode of revelation, the icon bears not the 'I' of the iconographer, but the revelation giving to him or her (Ouspensky, Leonid and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 42). Icons of Christ, which often present Christ facing the viewer, eyes staring, communicate reality apart from the realities present to the viewer or even the author. As revelatory in the Orthodox tradition, this reality offers an encounter in the concrete world which nevertheless permits no easy assimilation.

⁴² Levinas's account of 'being' resonates with Bonhoeffer's reading of the human 'logos'. This encapsulating description of being bears a striking resemblance to Bonhoeffer's concept of the *cor curvum in se*. For both conceptions, the self remains enclosed within itself, without genuine exteriority. Both thinkers also equate the breaking of this incurvature with metaphors of confrontation and 'breaking in'.

⁴³ In this instance Edwin Robertson's reconstruction of the lectures on Christology has been retained, instead of the reconstruction provided in the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English edition. This is selection of preference; Robertson translates the passage in a way which stands alone better than the DBWE edition. However, see DBWE 12:302 for the same passage.

⁴⁴ The powerlessness of the self against genuine exteriority might best be equated with Bonhoeffer's description of Jesus's encounter with the Pharisees. He writes, 'Just as the Pharisees have no choice but to confront Jesus with situations of conflict, so Jesus has no choice but to refuse to accept such a situation...The Pharisees and Jesus speak on completely different planes. That is why they speak so curiously past each other, and why Jesus' answers do not appear to be answers at all, but his own attacks against the Pharisees, which in fact they are' (DBWE 6:311).

exists as one who, paradoxically, is the fulfillment of human being and yet is beyond human being in his divinity. His is an exteriority which exceeds the exteriority human beings provide to one another.

Despite the language of 'confrontation', the self's encounter with the transcendent Christ remains positive. For Bonhoeffer, in being oriented to the other joy is found; the self's orientation to the other conforms to Christ's orientation. As Christ is the consummate human being, conforming to Christ inaugurates the joy of being fully human.⁴⁵ Giving oneself for another, being for the other, recognises the limit placed against humankind. The other is a limit for the self and the transgression of that limit results only in hatred and murder (DBWE 3:145). However, the observation of the limit of the other is joy. Joy is the result of fulfilling one's calling, and in Bonhoeffer's case, this is a calling to existence with others. The emphasis on joy in the self-other encounter serves as a contrast to Levinas. For Levinas, enjoyment (*jouissance*) occurs in the egocentricity of the subject in itself. He writes, 'In enjoyment I am absolutely for myself. Egoist without reference to the Other, I am alone without solitude, innocently egoist and alone. Not against the Others, not "as for me..." – but entirely deaf to the Other, outside of all communication and all refusal to communicate – without ears, like a hungry stomach' (TI 134). Levinas contrasts this initial enjoyment with the 'horror' of the *il y a* (TI 143). This enjoyment forms the ether in which the I 'crystallizes', and from that unity the joy can be experienced as chance, or a stroke of luck.⁴⁶ However, Levinas is

⁴⁵ In the angelic announcement of Christ's birth he is described, himself, as being 'great joy' (χαράν μεγάλην). John Nolland writes that this statement has ties to eschatological fulfillment; Jesus ushers in both a new age and, following Bonhoeffer, a new humanity (Nolland, John, *Luke 1-9:20, Word Biblical Commentary* vol. 35A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 106).

⁴⁶ Levinas writes, 'The freedom of enjoyment thus is experienced as limited. Limitation is not due to the fact that the I has not chosen its birth and thus is already and henceforth in situation, but to the fact that

also clear that he does not favour fundamental opposition between the I and joy, or what he calls dereliction. Instead, he writes, 'To be I, atheist, at home with oneself, separated, happy, created – these are synonyms' (TI 148). This state of enjoyment, which provides a context for experiences of joy, is also the place for the I to wait upon revelation. Enjoyment is the condition for ethical encounter with the other (OBBE 74). For Bonhoeffer, however, the encounter with the other is a confrontation insofar as the self comes up against the other as a concrete boundary. The recognition of limitation calls the self into question. Yet, this calling of the self into question results in genuine freedom.

The significant difference is the order of selfhood and joy. For Levinas, 'joy' marks an experience of being at home in oneself. This being at home in oneself *prepares the way* for the revelation of the other. In contrast, for Bonhoeffer joy is the *result* of engagement with the other. The self experiences joy insofar as it participates in life conforming to the paradigmatic human being, Christ. Furthermore, for Levinas enjoyment and joy are found in relation to the self in itself. For Bonhoeffer, however, the self in itself attracts only solitude and despair. Joy is found in relation to others. This joy closely relates to freedom. The encounter with the other turns freedom 'from' the other into freedom 'for' the other. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Being free means 'being-free-for-the-other', because I am bound to the other. Only by being in relation with the other am I free' (DBWE 3:63). Bonhoeffer connects being-with-the-other with love: "love" does not exist as a human attribute but only as a real belonging-together and being-together of people with other

the plenitude of its instant of enjoyment is not ensured against the unknown that lurks in the very element it enjoys, the fact that joy remains a chance and a stroke of luck' (TI 144).

human beings and with the world, based on God's love that is extended to me and to them' (DBWE 6:241).

For Bonhoeffer, both Christ and the human other retain their exteriority. Despite the immanence of 'God with us', Christ remains fundamentally exterior to the self. What of the human other? Even if theology preserves a transcendent Christ, how does this theological commitment preserve the otherness of the human other? This section argues that Bonhoeffer strikes a middle position between Levinas's confrontational account of the self-other relation and Buber's (at least as read by Levinas) reciprocal account of the self-other relation. With Levinas, this reading of Bonhoeffer questions Buber's account of complicity between the self and the other. This middle position preserves the partially confrontational character of Levinas's self-other relation, while not overstating the absolute difference between the self and the other. Bonhoeffer's concept of Christological mediation makes this middle position possible.

Levinas's critique of Buber proceeds on two counts.⁴⁷ First, Levinas charges that Buber's interpretation of the self-other is one of symmetry rather than asymmetry. Buber's self-other relation is one of intersubjective reciprocity. Second, Levinas alleges that Buber's approach remains within the model of the self-positing I. Levinas addresses both of these critiques when he argues that, 'For if the self becomes an I in saying Thou, as Buber asserts, my position as a self depends on that of my correlate and the relation is no longer any different from other relations: it is tantamount to a spectator speaking of

⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida references a third critique of Buber by Levinas. According to Derrida, Levinas reproaches Buber for 'preferring preference, the "private relationship," the "clandestine nature" of the couple which is "self-sufficient and forgetful of the universe"' (Derrida, Jacques, *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2006), 402). However, Derrida defends Buber against Levinas on this third critique, suggesting that Buber's I-Thou is not as insulating as Levinas alleges.

the I and Thou in the third person. The formal meeting is a symmetrical relation and may therefore be read indifferently from either side' (LR 72). Buber, for Levinas, lacks the recognition of height which defines all self-other relations.

Bonhoeffer fits between Levinas's reading of Buber and Levinas's own account of the self-other relation. With Levinas, Bonhoeffer describes the encounter with the other in terms of confrontation. The emphasis on confrontation stems from both the height of the other who appears to the self and the limitation that other presents to the self. Both Levinas and Bonhoeffer recognise that the self wishes no limit on itself, and thus the obstruction of its desire the self perceives as confrontation. Selves are called into question by one asymmetrically related to them. For Bonhoeffer, Christ initiates this confrontation. The encounter with Christ is both a scandal and a being called into question. The absolute humility in which he appears to human beings constitutes the scandal of Christ. In contrast to metaphors of height used for God in the Hebrew scriptures, Christ appears to human beings as one who is destitute. It is precisely this collaboration of transcendence and humility which scandalises human beings.

Furthermore, the questioning of the self by the other represents the limitation of the self. As discussed in Chapter Two, Bonhoeffer depicts the encounter of Christ and the self as an interrogative encounter. Bonhoeffer writes, "The question of "who" expresses the otherness of the other. At the same time the "who question" interrogates the very existences of the one asking it' (DBWE 12:303). Christ's humble transcendence limits the self in mediating every human relation.

However, like Buber, Bonhoeffer promotes an element of reciprocity, particularly within the church-community. As Christ appears to the self as other, he also draws the self into

relation with the concrete other. Christ's mediation abrogates antagonism between the self and the other. The self's confrontation with the Christological counter-logos opens up the possibility of 'being-with' the other. This situation of being-with-the-other culminates in Christian community. With regard to community, Bonhoeffer follows the apostle Paul in describing the community as the body of Christ. As such a body, it operates completely in accordance with Christ.⁴⁸ Within the community, the self becomes part of a larger being, and thus wills 'beside' fellow believers. Here the self-other relation cannot be understood as antagonistic, since there is a common orientation and ground. The body orients itself to Christ.⁴⁹ As seen in *Sanctorum Communio*, the church-community takes up the individual without diminishing individual personality. Does the unified orientation of the body mean that in the final analysis Bonhoeffer leans in the direction of symmetrical reciprocity? Even here Bonhoeffer does not affirm a completely equal or reciprocal relation.

Bonhoeffer's depiction of communal guilt reveals the asymmetry of human relation. Christians take on guilt without limit, in terms of the guilt of the world (DBWE 6:136). Bonhoeffer affirms in this context, with Levinas, that the self takes on guilt that it has not 'earned.' Levinas writes, "The recurrence in the subject is...a matter of exigency coming from the other, beyond what is available in my powers, to open an unlimited 'deficit', in which the self spends itself without counting freely" (OBBE 125).

Bonhoeffer's comments resonate: 'I cannot pacify myself by saying that my part in all this is slight and hardly noticeable. There is no calculating here...Every sin of another I can excuse; only my own sin, of which I remain guilty, I can never excuse' (DBWE

⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:12 (NASB)

⁴⁹ This is not to say that only relations within the church-community are non-antagonistic. The self grounded in Christ finds all its relations mediated by Christ. For this reason there can be love and forgiveness for one's enemies.

6:137). In prohibiting the 'sidelong glance' of the Christian at another's sin, Bonhoeffer sets the self on a different plane than the other. Bonhoeffer's self always stands under guilt which is not entirely its own. Bonhoeffer affirms complicity of the church in the sin of the whole world. The church as *peccatorum communio*, or a community of sinners, awaits complete transformation into the *sanctorum communio*. This transformation occurs through the vicarious representative action of Christ.

Bonhoeffer's depiction of individual responsibility emphasises that concrete human beings relate to other concrete human beings. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Thus far we have come to understand that responsibility is always a mutual relation between persons, derived from the responsibility of Jesus Christ for human beings...' (DBWE 6:269-270). Although he affirms an asymmetrical relation between the self and other, Bonhoeffer also locates the self together with the other; this asymmetry does not compromise the partial intelligibility of the other. The other remains intelligible to the self not due to the power of the ego, as Levinas resists, but due to the mediation of Christ. The self recognises the other because Christ loves both the self and the other. Since the self can only genuinely encounter the other through the mediation of Christ, the other never becomes the possession of the self. Christ the mediator prevents human beings from immediately relating to, or possessing, the other. This Christological mediation also results in human community. Unity of orientation sets both the face of the other and the face of the self toward Christ. This orientation channels the self into the concrete circumstances of the other. Because Christ loves the other, the self is responsible for the other. Instead of Christ's sacrifice removing responsibility, Christ's sacrifice animates all responsibility. From the beginning Christ's love of communities existed simultaneously

alongside a love for individual human beings.⁵⁰ Reciprocity exists in the community in the form of orientation. Mutual service of one for another follows from the mutual mediation of, and orientation to, Christ.

3.4 Conclusion: Reading Bonhoeffer and Levinas Together

To return to the challenge with which the chapter began, Bonhoeffer does not succumb to Levinas's allegations against theology, reducing the other to the same. Instead Bonhoeffer offers a middle way between Levinas's absolute otherness and Buber's absolute reciprocity. In contrast to Levinas's accusation against theology, Bonhoeffer's theology does not thematise the transcendent God into a system intelligible to human beings. Although he maintains the immanence of Christ, in Christ Bonhoeffer also preserves alterity. Although he is the prototypical human being, Christ remains unavailable to human beings (DBWE 3:65). He stands with and for human beings while appearing to them as a transcendent boundary. Christ also preserves the alterity of the human other before the self. In contrast to Levinas's second claim, that Christian thinking absolves the self of responsibility, Bonhoeffer does not free the self from responsibility before God. If the mediation of Christ provides any change in ethical culpability, it renders the self complicit in the sin of others. Implicit in Bonhoeffer's concept of responsibility is the acknowledgement and acceptance of guilt. This recognition of guilt promotes kenotic responsibility for the other. Here again Bonhoeffer's treatment of Christ as the prototype instructs us. Christ does not stifle

⁵⁰ The foremost example of God's love for communities exists in the Hebrew scriptures. Although the biblical witness testifies to God's relationship with individuals, e.g. Abraham and Moses, these individual relationships are situated squarely in the midst of God's love for Israel. This communal love of God extends through the gospels as well, where Jesus speaks of the communal guilt of the religious authorities, as well as his desire to redeem the children of Israel (Luke 13:34, NASB).

responsibility; for Bonhoeffer, Christ is the impetus behind all human responsibility for the other. This is implied in the very structure of Bonhoeffer's responsible self, where following Christ means being for-the-other. In other words, the responsible self is a self who is ethically oriented to the other.

Chapter 4: *Being Seen as Well as Heard: Integrating Weil's 'Attention' into an Account of the Other-Oriented Self*

Introduction

The previous three chapters outline the concept of an ethically oriented self, existing in responsibility for another. That ethically oriented self emerges primarily from discourse between Bonhoeffer and Levinas on the character and limits of responsibility. In this chapter Weil's concept of attention adds greater specificity to the self's existence 'for' the other. The first section of this chapter outlines the contours of Weil's concept of attention, emphasising the place of attention within Weil's discussion of the self. Here the stress is placed not on attention as a metaphysical idea, but as an ethical one.¹ By invoking Weil's concept of attention in conversation with Bonhoeffer's being-for-others, a sympathetic, but not uncritical, interlocutor sharpens up the specifically *ethical* orientation of the self. The second section establishes points of contact between Bonhoeffer and Weil. The third section looks at the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan, elucidating the attentive disposition of the ethically oriented self. The fourth section, supported by Vladimir Lossky's portrayal of 'vigilance', provides *theological* justification for reading attention and responsibility alongside one another. The fifth section develops the interconnection between attentive responsibility and truthfulness.

¹ Murdoch also reads attention as a supremely ethical concept (Murdoch, Iris, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 2001), 33). Janet Martin Soskice, in her own discussion of attention, works from Murdoch's interpretation of Weil's attention (Soskice, Janet Martin, 'Love and Attention' in *Feminist Philosophy of Religion: Critical Readings* ed. Pamela Sue Anderson and Beverley Clack (London: Routledge, 2004). Soskice discusses attention to the mundane as a form of spiritual service. She writes, 'What we want is a monk who finds God while cooking a meal while one child is clamouring for a drink, another needs a bottom wiped, and a baby throws up over his shoulder' (Soskice 2004:204). Soskice's quote expresses a profound 'this-worldliness' not unlike Bonhoeffer's own account of life with God. Read with an eye towards an ethical concept of attention, one is left not with heroic acts of self-sacrifice, but a perpetual responding to the call of the other in the 'mundane' world.

The result of this Bonhoeffer-Weil conversation is a richer understanding of attentive responsibility as the process of coming to see and to stand on behalf of the concrete other.

Attention requires clarification before being integrated into an account of ethical orientation. The first task is to identify key elements of Weil on attention. The second task is to highlight common interests between Bonhoeffer and Weil. They both are concerned with curtailing the domination present for them in the philosophical 'I' or ego (GG 26-31).² To this end Weil understands attention as a passive action; it is a waiting which impedes the ego's natural expansion of itself in domination of things and persons. For Weil the opposite of attention, therefore, the *desiring of things*. This desiring of the ego is intrinsic to the human self and only attention can overcome it. Attention, as a contrast to egoistic human desire, means complete passivity and openness to potential suffering. Suffering indicates a non-egoistic stance of the self, since selves intrinsically avoid suffering. Those who suffer do not live from their own desire. The willing of the ego preoccupies the self, and therefore only a negation of that willing 'creates space' for the practice of attention. This creation of space allows the other to appear to the self as other.³ Only then can any sort of relationship exist between the self and other, without domination infecting the relation. Attention is, then, an ethical concept. Read through Bonhoeffer and Levinas, attention is the process through which the other comes to, and even confronts, the self. Attention conditions the

² Cf. Vetö, Miklos, *The Religious Metaphysics of Simone Weil* trans. Joan Dargan (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), 24-25. Vetö's analysis is the most accessible and complete systematic articulation of Weil's thought. Vetö interprets Weil's considerable notes, journals and philosophical works into a relatively comprehensible whole.

³ This wording betrays a debt to Levinas, since Weil's concern is not explicitly 'otherness'. Instead, she is more concerned about negating the philosophical 'I'. However, the two ideas, attention and otherness, resonate with one another.

self's response to the other, and so conditions the self in itself. Attentive orientation to the other constitutes the vocation of human beings.

4.1 *Explication of Attention*

Decreation and affliction crucially inform the ethical nature of attention (in Weil). This section will perform three tasks: (i) examine Weil's concepts of decreation and (ii) of affliction; (iii) discuss attention in relation to decreation and affliction. While decreation and affliction play instrumental roles within Weil's thought, their import for this thesis lies in their effect on attention. Connections between decreation and affliction reveal the possibilities and the limits of Weil on attention. Specifically, the kenotic and the other-oriented character of Weil's account of the self becomes critical for discussing Weil's contribution to Bonhoeffer's ethically oriented self.

4.1.1 *Decreation*

The first conceptual prerequisite for understanding Weil's attention is decreation. Decreation constitutes a major element of Weil's philosophy of the self. J.P. Little argues that decreation is the interpretative key to all of Weil's work.⁴ Miklos Vetö concurs, calling decreation Weil's 'fundamental intuition'.⁵ At the heart of decreation is the conviction that human beings serve as an obstacle to God's becoming. Weil understands

⁴ Little, J.P. 'Simone Weil's Concept of Decreation' in *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity* ed. Richard H. Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 32. Little also finds in Weil's concept of decreation a 'counterbalance to the tendency in some readers to see in Simone Weil a refusal of the physical, of incarnation in its most general sense, and a commitment to the abstract' (Little 1993:27). Little argues that decreation suggests a formation of the self through ceasing to be. In this sense, decreation in fact entails self-creation. However, Little does not show how decreation accepts, rather than refuses, the physical.

⁵ Vetö 1994:11.

God's creation of humankind as a renunciation, a renunciation of himself in order that something might exist outside of himself. Decreation is the response to God's act of creation and renunciation. The self renounces itself in order to restore to God his fullness of being. Weil writes,

He emptied himself of his divinity. We should empty ourselves of the false divinity with which we were born. Once we have understood we are nothing, the object of all our efforts is to become nothing. It is for this that we suffer with resignation, *it is for this that we act*, it is for this that we pray. May God grant me to become nothing. In so far as I become nothing, God loves himself through me (GG 34, emphasis in original).

Decreation names the process of repudiating one's 'false divinity' for the sake of returning to God that which is his.

Three elements of decreation bear mention. First, decreation entails detachment from objects. Decreation involves total orientation of the self towards God, rather than the self. This orientation necessitates a retreat from those objects which vie for the self's attentions. Decreation cannot occur when the self remains captive to loves other than God. The extreme edge of attachment Weil calls necessity. Weil writes, 'A man smokes opium in order to attain to a special condition, which he thinks superior; often, as time goes on, the opium reduces him to a miserable condition which he feels to be degrading, but he is no longer able to do without it' (WFG 132). Decreation, as the process of orienting oneself to God, disallows such attachments to transient things.

Second, decreation involves contemplation and passivity. Rather than needing objects or persons, decreation calls for a self which retains contemplative distance from

objects. This distance allows contemplation and appreciation of that object. Weil illustrates this with reference to friendship:

Friendship is a miracle by which a person consents to view from a certain distance, and without coming any nearer, the very being who is necessary to him as food. It requires the strength of soul that Eve did not have; and yet she had no need of the fruit. If she had been hungry at the moment when she looked at the fruit, and if in spite of that she had remained looking at it indefinitely without taking one step toward it, she would have performed a miracle analogous to that of perfect friendship (WFG 135).

This contemplation is a 'non-acting action' insofar as contemplation is an activity which makes no demands of its object. The self acts by focusing its gaze on a thing, but does nothing other than 'look'.⁶ The self does not seek to dominate or possess the object of contemplation. This contemplation as non-acting action resists the self's inclination towards manipulating the object it beholds.

Third, the decreed self exists in the present. This characteristic of the self echoes Weil's emphasis on self-limitation. Why is the present the only place for the decreed self? The past has already been completed, and thus cannot be changed even by the desires of the self. Furthermore, what has happened is entirely in accordance with the will of God (WFG 144-145). The decreed self desires only that God's will be done. This means embracing the past as it happened. To wish that the past occurred differently, or to regret, is to will something other than God's will. In addition, to look towards the future is to assume that one's personality will continue indefinitely. This future-

⁶ GG 65. Attention to the beautiful requires that the self not soil that beauty through attempts to manipulate it.

oriented look belongs to the expansion of the ego.⁷ The present is the only time for decreation. In her reflection on the Lord's Prayer, Weil articulates the present's relation to Christ. She writes, 'We can only ask to have him now. Actually he is always there at the door of our souls, wanting to enter in, though he does not force our consent. If we agree to his entry, he enters; directly we cease to want him, he is gone. We cannot bind our will today for tomorrow...' (WFG 146).

Understanding Weil's concept of decreation critically informs an ethical account of attention. Specifically, decreation's elements of detachment, preservation of distance and orientation toward the present inform the account of an attentive self in this thesis.

Decreation checks the self colorfully described by Vetö:

The whole sphere of the self is maintained by a centripetal force greedily sucking in reality, and the more one nears the center, the more powerful is the force. However, the center is nothing in itself; it is only aspiration. The self is a violent contraction paralyzing and crushing the beings and things it encounters. Such an attitude serves the purpose of destroying the world, leaving there a trace of the self...⁸

This self finds critics in both Bonhoeffer and Levinas as well as Weil.

4.1.2 *Affliction*

⁷ Vetö 1994:119. Vetö writes, 'All expansion is necessarily future; one therefore does not aspire toward the future because it is the "frame" for pleasures and profits, but because it is the "frame" for self-expansion.'

⁸ Vetö 1994:42.

The second conceptual prerequisite for understanding Weil's attention is affliction.⁹ Yet unlike decreation, affliction possesses a nebulous ethical character. Weil suggests that it can be both a positive and a negative force in human life. Affliction can both facilitate encounter with God and destroy the self entirely. Two characteristics of affliction merit mention with regard to attention. First, affliction entails confrontation with the reality of the self. Second, affliction incites revulsion in others. Affliction crushes the self by bringing the self and others face-to-face with the unreality of the self in itself. The discovery of the self's unreality is profoundly disturbing, even revolting.

Affliction exposes the unreality of the self. Human beings are only inchoately aware of this unreality. To the extent to which the self becomes aware of this nothingness, it covers it up with dreams and illusions.¹⁰ For this reason Weil warns against the future. The future frequently takes on the character of pure dreams. Every future is a utopian future because it buffers the self from its unreality in the present. Affliction, however, impedes the illusionary impulses of human beings through suffering. Weil writes, '[Affliction] is indifferent; and it is the coldness of this indifference – a metallic coldness – that freezes all those it touches right to the depths of their souls. They will never find warmth again. *They will never believe any more that they are anyone*' (WFG 73, emphasis

⁹ *Malheur* translates into English with difficulty. Emma Craufurd writes, 'Our word unhappiness is a negative term and far too weak. Affliction is the nearest equivalent but not quite satisfactory. *Malheur* has in it a sense of inevitability and doom' (WFG 67). Despair, a resignation before necessity, would seemingly describe *malheur*. Yet, despair does not communicate the panic of affliction. Weil writes, 'In affliction the vital instinct survives all the attachments which have been torn away, and blindly fastens itself to everything which can provide it with support, like a plant fastens its tendrils...That is where extreme attachment begins – where all other attachments are replaced by that of survival' (GG 28). Affliction might be understood as despair before what cannot happen any other way, and yet also a desperate clinging to life.

¹⁰ The flight of the self from reality has a theological impulse. Weil writes, 'It is not the pursuit of pleasure and the aversion for effort which causes sin, but fear of God. We know that we cannot see him face to face without dying and we do not want to die. We know that sin preserves us very effectively from seeing him face to face: pleasure and pain merely provide us with the slight indispensable impetus towards sin, and above all the pretext or alibi which is still more indispensable...I need God to take me by force, because, if death, doing away with the shield of the flesh, were to put me to face to face with him, I should run away' (GG 58-59).

added). Extreme affliction reduces the self to its unreality, where the I is destroyed. This is the destructive potential of affliction. This destructive potential leaves an afflicted self of undirected desire: 'An egoism without an 'I'' (GG 27). Decreation, however, prevents this total destruction of self from taking place; the decrelated self already understands its essential unreality.

In addition to exposing the self's unreality, affliction evokes revulsion in others. Weil writes, "There is not real affliction unless the event that has seized and uprooted a life attacks it, directly or indirectly, in all its parts, social, psychological, and physical. The social factor is essential. *There is not really affliction unless there is social degradation or the fear of it in some form or another*' (WFG 68, emphasis added). In addition, affliction is closely connected with humiliation. Weil links affliction with the experience of criminality (WFG 70,73). The afflicted human being is an affront to others, since the afflicted self exists as a reminder of humankind's nothingness. In the same way that God's presence causes the self to turn away, the unreality of the self revealed in affliction provokes both a fight and a flight response in others.¹¹ The revolting character of affliction plays an integral role in Weil's approach to the parable of the Good Samaritan.

4.1.3 *Attention in Light of Decreation and Affliction*

¹¹ Weil writes, 'Men have the same carnal nature as animals. If a hen is hurt, the others rush upon it, attacking it with their beaks. This phenomenon is as automatic as gravitation. Our senses attach all the scorn, all the revulsion, all the hatred that our reason attaches to crime, to affliction. Except for those whose whole soul is inhabited by Christ, everybody despises the afflicted to some extent, although practically no one is conscious of it' (WFG 71).

It is now possible to explain attention itself, in relation to both decreation and affliction. If decreation is the vocation of human beings, then attention facilitates that decreation.¹² Three qualities of attention require explanation. First, attention discloses reality, as in affliction. Second, decreed attention requires time and patience. Third, like both decreation and affliction, attention necessitates distance between the perceiver and perceived. These qualities of attention echo the central vocation of Weil's self. Attention is always a directing of the self's focus on something other than itself. This other-oriented focus stymies the self's expansion.

First, like affliction attention entails seeing oneself rightly, or in accordance with reality.¹³ Despite being a universal possibility, few engage in attention. Why not? Attention, like affliction, discloses the 'nothingness' of humankind. Human beings prefer to fill the void within themselves with illusion rather than face that reality. This is particularly true with regard to others. Vetö writes, 'attention violently turns away from wretchedness because it reveals our own nothingness in the fragility and vulnerability of another human being'.¹⁴ The revelation of nothingness, discovered through attention, calls oneself into question. In attention, 'illusions are scattered and the real becomes visible' (GG 120).

¹² Cf. Blackburn 2004. Blackburn's text is insightful and thorough, but she does not devote sustained space to attention as an ethical concept. She rightly characterises the crucial distinction between Weil and Bonhoeffer as one of 'vocation' (Blackburn 2004:15,147).

¹³ Weil writes, 'We live in a world of unreality and dreams. To give up our imaginary position as the center, to renounce it, not only intellectually but in the imaginative part of the soul, that means to awaken to what is real and eternal, to see the true light and hear the true silence. A transformation then takes place at the very roots of our sensibility...We see the same colors; we hear the same sounds, but not in the same way' (WFG 100). This chapter argues that this same perceptual transformation occurs with regard to the human other who engages the self. Whereas the self in itself is ethically blind, in encounter with Christ the self 'sees the true light and hears the true silence.'

¹⁴ Vetö 1994:83

Second, attention's unveiling of decreeted reality takes time and patience. Weil often describes attention in terms of expectant waiting and looking. Attention must, if undertaken over time and with patience, disclose reality.¹⁵ Only in attending to a piece of artwork, for example, over an extended period of time can the beauty of that art become real to the self. Weil writes, 'The beautiful is that which we can contemplate. A statue, a picture which we can gaze at for hours. The beautiful is something on which we can fix our attention...The attitude of looking and waiting is the attitude which corresponds with the beautiful' (GG 149-150). In the patient attending to an object, the self is drawn into the reality of that object. Therefore, attending to God draws the self into the truth of God. Weil writes,

Men feel that there is a mortal danger in facing this truth squarely for any length of time...They do not turn toward God. How could they do so when they are in total darkness? God himself sets their faces in the right direction. He does not, however, show himself to them for a long time. It is for them to remain motionless, without averting their eyes, listening ceaselessly, and waiting, they know not for what; deaf to entreaties and threats, unmoved by every shock, unshaken in the midst of every upheaval. If after a long period of waiting God allows them to have an indistinct intuition of his light or even reveals himself in person, it is only for an instant. Once more they have to remain still, attentive, inactive, calling out only when their desire cannot be contained (WFG 139).

Third, in addition to expectant waiting, attention requires distance. The perfectly decreeted self knows it has neither possessions nor claims of its own. In accordance with this reality, the decreeted and attentive self maintains detachment from all objects. Affliction also assumes critical distance between the self and the thing beheld, since distance corresponds with reality. Weil writes, 'As soon as we know that something is

¹⁵ For Weil, reality is what is good. She understands God to be the complete Good. Reality, then, is what God calls into being and maintains. Here there is a similarity with Bonhoeffer; both consider reality to be what is in accordance with God and his revelation (Vetö 1993:170, DBWE 6:49). Negatively, Weil understands reality as what actually presents itself to the self, rather than what the human imagination conjures up for its own pleasure and avoidance of pain (GG 51).

real we can no longer be attached to it. Attachment is no more nor less than an insufficiency in our sense of reality' (GG 14). Attention to the real and distance from the real exist together.¹⁶

Concepts of decreation and affliction clarify Weil's concept of attention. In addition, decreation and affliction address the self's relation to the other. Decreation and affliction can facilitate a particularly ethical interpretation of attention. Reading decreation through its detached and contemplative perspective in the present precludes any escape from the reality of the other. Understanding affliction as a limit to the self, an exposure of reality and a revulsion to others articulates the profoundly disjuncting capacity of the encounter with the other. In light of these concepts, attention can be read as real and expectant waiting on an other not possessed by the self. Interpreting Weil's conceptual framework in this way opens paths to Bonhoeffer and Levinas.

4.2 Points of Contact Between Bonhoeffer and Weil

Reading Weil and Bonhoeffer together constitutes the second task of this chapter. There are several points of thematic overlap between Weil and Bonhoeffer. First, they seek to perceive the reality of the self as it is. At every point the self must embrace reality.

Second, for both, the self in itself requires a limit. Attention, for Weil, limits the self.

Third, Weil and Bonhoeffer preserve a passive element in the self-other relation; they

¹⁶ Cf. Vetö 1994:102. 'Contemplation of the affliction of others is supernatural compassion; contemplation of the desirable is renunciation, the model for which is contemplation of the beautiful. In both cases, one must keep a distance. Not fleeing and not approaching prove acknowledgment and acceptance of reality. Beauty is the manifest presence of the eternal order of reality, whereas affliction is the most eloquent witness of the essence of our condition.'

resist a self which seeks to possess or dominate the other. In contrast to such a dominating self Weil preserves the self-direction of the other rather than dominating the other, even if the preservation of the other comes at cost to the self. Attention offers an alternative stance of the self towards the other.

First, attention's orientation to reality constitutes a point of contact for conversation between Weil and Bonhoeffer. Attention is the renunciation of a will which desires and consumes, without realising that what it consumes is an illusion. The contrary of attention is willing for what is not real (GG 50,118). Willing, for Weil, is a rapacious desire for what is, ultimately, non-being. Attention, on the other hand, is recognition of the Good. It is an expectant waiting for greater revelation of the Good; this expectancy reciprocally increases the self's capacity for attention. The attentive self orients itself to the real and is in turn conditioned by that reality. Attention guides the self from illusion to what is both more exciting and more real (WFG 69,70). This conditioning of the self to the real enables the self to recognise the true, the good and the beautiful in a way which otherwise would have been impossible.¹⁷

Bonhoeffer equally stresses the self's relation to reality. He emphasises the ethical connection between reality and Christ.¹⁸ Christ is the fully real human, the limit to the idealist self and the *telos* of redeemed humankind. The real human, Christ, is also the responsible self *par excellence* (DBWE 6:258-259). For Bonhoeffer, the reality of Christ

¹⁷ Weil writes, 'Quite from explicit religious belief, every time that a human being succeeds in making an effort of attention with the sole idea of increasing his grasp of truth, he acquires a greater aptitude from grasping it, even if his effort produces no visible fruit' (WFG 59).

¹⁸ Cf. DBWE 6:49. Bonhoeffer writes, 'The source of a Christian ethic is not the reality of one's own self, not the reality of the world, nor is it the reality of norms and values. It is the reality of God that is revealed in Jesus Christ...The question about ultimate reality already places us in such an embrace by its answer that there is no way we can escape from it. This answer carries us into the reality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ from which it comes.' Cf. also DBWE 6:266-267.

breaks into the human subject curved in on itself, in order to re-orient it to real life. Real life is both a communally experienced and a responsible life. Bonhoeffer writes, 'The attention of responsible people is directed to concrete neighbours in their concrete reality' (DBWE 6:261). Weil's insistence on the nothingness of humankind, as well as her reflections on illusion, follow from her emphasis on reality. Focus on reality, an integral component of genuine attention, allows the self to see things as they really are. Bonhoeffer and Weil both stress that reality is a fundamental orientation point for the self. Reality has ethical import for both. Although the process of coming to reality is different for each, reality constitutes a critical element of ethical life in the world for both. While Bonhoeffer offers Christ as the one who enables the self to live for others, Weil's attention accounts for *how* one then comes to encounter others.

Second, as a limit to the ego the concept of attention provides another point of contact with Bonhoeffer. Attention is a critical barrier, obstructing the ego from descending unchecked into itself. This need for a barrier follows from Weil's strong intra-personal dualism, where the self desires truth yet also inclines towards self-deception (GG 121).¹⁹ Such a duality echoes St. Paul's own recognition of his divided self 'I do that which I hate...' and the subsequent Protestant tradition predicated on the tension of *simul justus et peccator*.²⁰ Attention prevents the ego from losing itself in its illusions by orienting towards reality. This orientation towards reality, in attention, always entails detachment from objects. Detachment prevents objects from becoming necessary to the self, as goods. Elevation of objects to goods, for Weil, characterises both illusion and

¹⁹ Weil comments favorably on the dualisms of Mani and the Gnostic Cathars (LP 41,43, 64). Cf. Louis Dupré, 'Simone Weil and Platonism: An Introductory Reading' in *The Christian Platonism of Simone Weil* ed. E. Jane Doering and Eric O. Springsted (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 2004).

²⁰ Romans 7:15, NASB

idolatry (GG 51). Attention is not easy; the ego often works against true attention (GG 53). Weil writes,

The second condition [for attention] is to take pains to examine squarely and to contemplate attentively and slowly each school task in which we have failed, seeing how unpleasant and second rate it is, without seeking any excuse or overlooking any mistake...There is a great temptation to do the opposite, to give a sideways glance at the corrected exercise if it is bad and hide it forthwith (WFG 59-60).

Attention limits the consumptive ego. The quality of attention and the self's attentive capacity determines the strength of this limit.²¹ The quality and the capacity for attention follows from the self's desire for the real. This desire perpetually grows or diminishes.

Both Weil and Bonhoeffer emphasise the need for a limit to the self. For Weil, the idea of limit exists to check the expansion of the ego. Attention to reality limits the self's fantasies and illusions.²² Bonhoeffer's also stresses the idea of limit. He understands the self as a fundamentally *referential* being (DBWE 2:34,35). The self is governed and defined by the other who places a demand on the self. Since the self depends on the other, or something outside of itself, for understanding, the self is a referential self. The self's ultimate referent is Christ. Without referential limit the self descends into what Bonhoeffer calls idealism. In idealism the self succumbs to imprisoning and false representations of reality. Bonhoeffer writes,

²¹ Vetö 1994:44.

²² Bonhoeffer and Weil can be interpreted together on the point of reality as limit for the self. However, the content of that reality differs. While Bonhoeffer affirms reality as a limit to the self, he designates Christ as that reality. Weil makes no such designation.

It is clear now that, on its own, the I cannot move beyond itself. It is imprisoned in itself, it sees only itself, even when it sees another, even when it wants to see God. It understands itself out of itself, which really means, however, that it basically does not understand itself. Indeed it does not understand itself until this I has been encountered and overwhelmed in its existence by another. The I believes itself free and is captive; it has all power and has only itself as a vassal: that is what Protestant theology means by the corruption of reason. It is the ontic inversion into the self, the *cor curvum in se* (DBWE 2:45-46, emphasis in original).

Bonhoeffer's idealism bears a similarity to Weil's understanding of the ego's misapprehensions. However, Weil does not articulate *how* the self recognises the need for attention as a limit to the ego. She presumes that the self intuitively recognises a need for attention. In contrast, Bonhoeffer articulates how the idealist or egoist self transforms into a referential self for others.²³ The encounter with the transcendent other 'overwhelms' the self, leading to a reorientation of the self. Christ breaks into the self turned in on itself in a partial confrontation. Christ disturbs and awakens the self from its spiritual and ethical slumber. Weil's lack of an account of the self's transformation opens the way for an account which integrates Bonhoeffer's account of Christ who breaks into the self. Such an integrated account of the self can then engage a concept of attention which undermines the self's egoistic illusions.

Third, the passive element of attention serves as a contact between attention and responsibility. Both concepts advocate a form of waiting upon God before acting. For Weil, attention serves as a contrast to willing the expansion of one's ego. Rather than

²³ Bonhoeffer's self has been described as a referential self. This descriptor works equally well for Weil's self. She writes, 'Idolatry comes from the fact that, while thirsting for absolute good, we do not possess the power of supernatural attention and we do not have the patience to allow it to develop...All men are ready to die for what they love. They differ only through the level of the thing loved and the concentration or diffusion of their love. No one loves himself. Man would like to be an egoist and cannot...Man always devotes himself to an order. Only unless there is supernatural illumination, this order has as its centre either himself or some particular being or thing (possibly an abstraction) with which he has identified himself (e.g. Napoleon, for his soldiers, Science, or some political party, etc.)' (GG 60-61). The oriented character of human existence, and particularly its distorted possibilities, will be developed in Chapter Five with regard to Adolph Eichmann.

desiring to possess an object, attention waits on the object of attention.²⁴ Attention is passive in that it is predicated on waiting, and yet attention requires profound discipline and focus.²⁵ Humankind cannot completely refrain from willing. Humans are defined by their activities, their goals and their various loves, but they must address the direction of that willing. Humankind loves what it can grasp and control, but such provisional loves of the human person betray the appropriate object of desire: God. Humankind loves finite things instead of the God who is unavailable for human possession. Since for Weil God is ultimately unknowable, yet infinitely worth loving, attentive waiting is the only appropriate response.

There is an implicit place for expectant waiting in Bonhoeffer's account. Even though Bonhoeffer does not explicitly characterise responsibility as a practice of waiting, his emphasis on the other who comes to the self reveals a passive facet of responsibility. Bonhoeffer himself utilises a metaphor similar to waiting. Bonhoeffer emphasises the self's preparation for the hearing of the Word. This preparation is characterised by silence. It is this silence before the hidden God that constitutes a Bonhoefferian stance of 'waiting' (DBWE 5:85). For Bonhoeffer, 'To speak of Christ means to keep silent; to keep silent about Christ means to speak. When the church speaks rightly out of a proper silence, then Christ is proclaimed' (CC 1978:27). This statement suggests a sense of waiting, placed within the context of a communal and a humble silence. Furthermore, this 'speaking out of silence' occurs in the form of prayer. Weil also links prayer and waiting together (GG 117,119). With both thinkers a triad is formed consisting of

²⁴ Weil refigures willing in this way because of the role desire plays in her metaphysics. Human attention is fundamentally acquisitive and rapacious. Thus, to will something is to lust for its possession. In this she comes across as quite Augustinian. Vetö writes, 'Like the ego it represents so faithfully, desire wants to devour the world, all the while calculating with great application each of its aggressive operations' (Vetö 1994:48).

²⁵ Vetö 1994:42.

connections between prayer, silence and waiting. For Weil this triad is attention. Bonhoeffer obviously gives it no name. Yet, in his most mystical moments he too stresses the necessity of waiting upon God.²⁶

These three points, an emphasis on reality, the role of otherness as barrier to the self and the passivity of waiting all serve as areas of possible conversation for Weil and Bonhoeffer. They are, however, more than simply mutual interests; they offer a glimpse of how a responsible self might helpfully integrate an account of attention. Bonhoeffer stresses the concrete character of responsibility. Responsibility happens in concrete encounters with concrete selves; it is not an abstraction about encounter with the other. How does this responsibility appear to the self who exists in concrete life? If attention is the human faculty of beholding and participating in the affliction of others, then attention describes the self's response to the other. Attention describes a form of responsibility in the world.

Perhaps the most important connection to make is the connection between an attentive waiting and an other-oriented responsibility. Weil stresses that attention involves a type of waiting which teaches the self to perceive and to participate in the lives of those who suffer. Only then can the self aid those who need it. Likewise, Bonhoeffer identifies prayer, undertaken in silence, as the starting point for authentically Christian 'action' (LPP 300). Waiting prepares the way for responsible action. Since responsible action involves 'standing for others where they cannot', it can be said that both Bonhoeffer and Weil describe a self for others fueled by waiting (DBWE 6:257). If prayer and

²⁶ Bonhoeffer dialectically locates prayer, silence and waiting as both the precondition and the result of action (cf. De Lange, Frits, *Waiting for the Word: Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Speaking About God* trans. Martin N. Walton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995)). Consider also Bonhoeffer's account of 'preparing the way' (DBWE 6:163-164).

responsibility remain the two parts of a dialectic of authentic Christian life, Weil's own interpretation of attention as one which conditions the perceptive faculties of the self becomes more helpful. As prayer fuels responsibility for Bonhoeffer, so attention (which 'is' prayer) leads to the possibility of compassion for Weil (GG 117).

This chapter argues that Weil's account of attention can helpfully inform an account of the self for others. Why delineate between Weil's concept of attention and the rest of her theological anthropology? Despite Weil's attempts to limit the consumptive and acquisitive ego, it is unclear how her account of the self escapes the very problem she diagnoses. Even a self which seeks to limit itself remains oriented towards itself.²⁷ Since attention is part of a closed circle, meaning that the self alone is capable of attending, the ability to see the other is always a part of the self's possibility. This reading of Weil, through Bonhoeffer, returns Weil's account to a problematic place: if attention is always a potentiality within the self, what causes the self to transition from egoism to attentiveness? Both Bonhoeffer and Levinas suggest this process is initiated by the demand or call of an other. Bonhoeffer's own paradigm recognises the Christ who, as the most authentic human, speaks to the self and awakens it from its self-concerned slumber (DBWE 2:89). Only then does the dialectic between prayer and responsibility take hold. While Weil and Bonhoeffer can be interpreted similarly on waiting as a key characteristic of the self-other encounter, their respective accounts differ on *how* the self is drawn into that encounter. Bonhoeffer's critique of idealism can address a serious issue within Weil's understanding of the self, but Weil's concept of attention

²⁷ The boundary set for reason by reason is no boundary. Bonhoeffer makes this point in his critique of what he refers to as 'idealism'. G.W.F. Hegel makes a similar point about false boundaries. He writes, '[Reason] seeks its "other," while knowing that it there possesses nothing else but itself: it seeks merely its own infinitude' (Hegel, G.W.F. *The Phenomenology of Mind* trans. J.B. Baillie vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 233.

offers an attractive account of *how* one is addressed by, and is responsible for, the other in its midst.

Weil's interpretation of attention informs this account of the responsible self through the ethical metaphor of vision. Bonhoeffer privileges metaphors of sound over vision when describing the self-other relation.²⁸ Bonhoeffer's emphasis on preaching, 'hearing' the Word and God's own activity in 'calling' the self attest to this fact. In contrast, and in keeping with her own Neoplatonic affinities, Weil does the opposite. The self 'sees' the one who suffers, and the imprint of the divine is not encountered through sound, but through purity and light. Weil writes, 'It should be publicly and officially recognised that religion is nothing else but a looking. In so far as it claims to be anything else, it is inevitable that it should stifle everything in every other place it is found' (WFG 130). Weil's abiding interest in mathematics as a window into the divine life further testifies to her preference for vision as the fundamental metaphor for divine encounter. The biblical witness itself acknowledges both visual and aural metaphors as ways of perceiving the activity of God.²⁹ In light of this recognition, could not hearing and sight *both* play a role in ethical relation? The focus now turns to the use of visual metaphors to describe ethical orientation within the gospel witness.

4.3 *The Good Samaritan and Attending to the Other*

²⁸ This is unsurprising given his Lutheran and Barthian roots. This general elevation of sound over sight applies equally well to Levinas.

²⁹ This is not to suggest that God may be seen. The Hebrew scriptures stress that God has been seen by no person. Yet, instances occur throughout the biblical text where God is encountered through both voice and vision. For example, God appears to the prophets audibly as a 'gentle blowing' (1 Kings 19:12, NASB) and a voice from a burning bush (Exodus 3:4, NASB). God manifests himself visually through the three visitors at Mamre (Genesis 18:1-3, NASB), a cloud of fire (Exodus 13:21, NASB) and as sheer 'glory' (Exodus 33:18-21, NASB). While God is never fully available to humankind, at times he has manifested himself to humankind.

The New Testament is remarkably silent on the issue of ethical 'systems'. Yet, there is an abiding interest in interpersonal relationships. One sees a pervasive focus on the ways in which persons relate to one another. The gospel accounts of Jesus reflect this interpersonal concern. Furthermore, the emphasis in the gospels lies not on something so abstract as a duty to care for others, although this too has a place. Following Bonhoeffer's reading of the Incarnation, the gospel accounts share concern for the ways Jesus Christ, the most authentically 'human' being, relates to persons. In addition, the gospels are concerned for how those relationships are misunderstood by those who participate within them. For example, within the context of biblical antiquity lepers and poor occupy a precarious place in relation to the religious and economic elite.³⁰ The outcast may be seen, but not engaged. The idea of ethical attention, however, hints at exactly such *engagement* with the poor and the outcast. Jesus spends his time, according to the gospels, with the invisible ones within society. In his ministry to the poor and the outcast, Jesus reveals the profound poverty of those who dismiss or ignore this element of society. In Jesus one finds the exemplar for perceiving human need and acting compassionately in light of that need.³¹ Bonhoeffer recognises that in this focus on the other, Jesus reveals himself to be the *human* par excellence, the prime example of humanity's *telos* in God. Weil, for her part, describes how Christ is the perfectly attentive self. It is not coincidental that the New Testament represents encounter with

³⁰ Social structures protected lepers and poor to some extent. Almsgiving, for example, sustained the poorest of the poor and was considered a mark of righteousness (Acts 10:1-4, NASB, van den Hoek, Anniewies, 'Widening the Eye of the Needle: Wealth and Poverty in the Works of Clement of Alexandria' in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* ed. Susan R. Holman (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 68). 2008:68). The corollary to almsgiving is the recognition of beggars. The precarious position of the begging poor follows from their complete reliance on others. They were particularly vulnerable to the inclinations of others, for good or ill. Furthermore, the social protection provided by almsgiving did not elevate their social status. Only in voluntary poverty did begging possibly accomplish good apart from securing necessities (cf. Johnson, Kelly S. *The Fear of Beggars: Stewardship and Poverty in Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 48-49). Even given emphasis on the goodness of alms, the poor were not to be engaged as equals.

³¹ Ford, David F., *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 20. Ford privileges sound and call through his emphasis on 'cries'.

God as a revealing, a new awareness of reality.³² The parable told by Jesus about the Good Samaritan exemplifies these themes. With Weil, this thesis reads the parable as highlighting the ethical importance of attention. Alongside Weil and Bonhoeffer this section attempts a *theological* reading of Christian scripture.

Both Weil and Bonhoeffer explicitly draw on the parable of the Good Samaritan in their work. However, they stress different elements of the story. Read together, these different emphases contribute to a reading which helps articulate attentive responsibility. Weil focuses on the self's ability to perceive the neighbour, particularly emphasising the visual aspect of perception. Bonhoeffer stresses two elements of the parable: first, he speaks about the encounter in terms of responsibility as a spontaneous act of love, based out of a perceived need. Second, he emphasises the nature of the question put to Jesus which results in the parable. The act of seeing or engaging with the other may seem simple, but the recognition of other persons as 'neighbours' is not as straightforward as it initially appears. The scribe's question to Jesus, 'But who is my neighbour?' reveals the ease with which one can miss the point.

4.3.1 *Weil's Reading of the Good Samaritan*

The Good Samaritan parable is central to Weil's ethical account of attention. In the Good Samaritan, the reader has the clearest example of how attention functions with regard to *other persons*. Specifically, here one sees how attention relates to the other who suffers. For Weil, true attention to other people, and particularly those who suffer, is a miracle. It is the ability to authentically say with the other person, 'what are you going

³² Cf. Luke 24:31, Acts 9:17, NASB

through?' (WFG 64). Weil describes the participatory character of attention through the example of the Good Samaritan. The gospel of Luke reports the parable as follows:

And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?' And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' And He said to him, 'You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.' But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied and said, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you." Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell into the robbers' hands? And he said, 'The one who showed mercy toward him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do the same.'³³

The Samaritan recognises the beaten man, fixes his gaze upon him and treats him as himself. Furthermore, he does so with little regard for himself, in anonymity. It is notable that the anonymity goes both ways; the Samaritan does not draw attention to himself for the act, and he helps one whom he knows nothing about. This two-fold anonymity is crucial to the authentic attentiveness Weil espouses (WFG 50). In the identification of the neighbour with one who is anonymous, Christ's parable extends this attentive responsibility universally. It is not limited only to those with kinship or political bonds. This selfless steadying of the gaze on the other is, for Weil, a fundamentally creative act; it is a re-giving of selfhood to a broken victim, the one who is '...a little piece of flesh, naked, inert, and bleeding beside a ditch; he is nameless; no

³³ Luke 10:25-37, NASB

one knows anything about him' (WFG 90). The gift of existence is the response of the self which 'effaces itself completely before reality.'³⁴ The Samaritan sees truthfully the naked reality of the beaten man, one who desperately needs the creative love of attention. Through the parable of the Good Samaritan Weil addresses three integral characteristics of attention; first, the linking of suffering and attention, second, the anonymous nature of attention and third the creative possibilities inherent in the act of attending. These three characteristics will be addressed in turn.

4.3.2 *Suffering and Attention*

Attention is a learned discipline; the ability to attend to others does not simply emerge from an otherwise unconcerned person. It is the fruit of consistent and challenging work. In 'Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God', Weil indicates the intentionality of attention by likening it to the exercises necessary to perform academic work well (WFG 57-66). In the same way that one attends to certain problems, formulations or information, so one attends to life with others, including participation in the suffering of others. The developmental element of attention implies that while everyone can be attentive, some are more attentive than others. Weil references the universal possibility of attention when she writes, 'All human beings, whatever they are doing and wherever they are, should be able to have their eyes fixed, during the whole of each day up on the serpent of bronze [Christ]' (WFG 130).

Following the connection of attention with metaphors of vision, the self learns to see the truth of the other, and a new ethical horizon opens up before the self.³⁵ Drawing on

³⁴ Vetö 1994:102

³⁵ See also Purcell's account of ethical 'awakening' in Chapter One.

Levinas, the horizon which opens is one of otherness. The self learns to see the other who confronts the self.³⁶ One cultivates the ability to see the other for whom they are responsible.

This new ethical horizon does not, for Weil, come about as a joyous revelation. Rather, it is inextricably linked with suffering, or more specifically affliction. The creative attending displayed by the Samaritan is only possible, for Weil, when one has tasted affliction themselves (WFG 90). In this way the participatory character of attention and affliction is again revealed. Perhaps the most critical element of the attention-affliction relationship is the potential transferal of selfhood. For Weil self-direction is a determining element of personhood.³⁷ Affliction robs the self of self-direction. The self who regains its ability to determine its own course regains its personhood (WFG 91). For this reason attention orients towards the affliction of the other. Attention to the other restores this self-direction at significant cost to the self. Weil writes, 'To wish for the existence of this free consent in another, deprived of it by affliction, is to transport oneself into him; it is to consent to affliction oneself, that is to say to the destruction of the self. It is to deny oneself. In denying oneself, one becomes capable under God of establishing someone else by creative affirmation' (WFG 91). This redemptive

³⁶ While decreation suggests a strong teleological emphasis within Weil's comments on how one approaches ethical responsibility, there is also a eudaimonistic character formation involved. The other approaches the self, but the self's ability to engage that other depends on its orientation to the Good.

³⁷ Power is integral to Weil's philosophical framework. Power determines selfhood through self-direction. Those with power command their destinies. Those without power exist at the mercy of those in power. For this reason, the limitless power of necessity hangs like Damocles's sword over all humankind. Weil illustrates her conception of power through Thucydides' account of war between Athens and Sparta. The people of Melos become collateral damage in the conflict, requesting mercy from Athens but receiving none. For Weil those apart from God have no conception of justice, and are incapable of acting with genuine mercy. Power dictates human relations, unless one possesses the supernatural virtue of mercy. This virtue appears in those who orient themselves to God. Weil writes, 'He who treats as equals those who are far below him in strength really makes them a gift of the quality of human beings...this [generosity] is the most Christian of virtues' (WFG 88). For Weil's reading of Thucydides's 'men of Melos', cf. WFG 86-88.

possibility inspired Weil to enter into the world of the French working class labourers; they exemplified selves manipulated and crushed by the wheels of necessity (SWA 153). This overburdening by necessity results in affliction and loss of selfhood. Attention is not simply a cognitive perception of another's suffering; it is a participation in another's suffering through a renunciation of one's own personhood on behalf of the afflicted. The connection of attention and affliction means that the Samaritan does not just physically aid the wounded man; he enters into his brokenness and through his participation gives to the man some of the Samaritan's own being.³⁸ The Samaritan restores to the traveler his ability to direct himself, and thus his humanity. He allows the beaten man to give himself back to God.

4.3.3 *Anonymity and Attention*

The self-giving character of attention requires anonymity. Anonymity undermines the ego; entering into another's affliction does not garner the praise of others. If attention earned acclaim for the self, attention would become that which it by definition cannot be: an expansion of the ego. This remains true even if the self dies for the other; attending to others to the point of death is not a martyr's death (WFG 73). If one recalls that personhood is contingent on self-direction, and self-direction is in turn contingent on self-willing, then the person is the one who wills. At issue is *how*, and towards what, one wills. In the parable there are three possibilities for willing. First, in the beaten traveler, one sees a self crushed under affliction. He has no potential for willing of any kind. His affliction demands relief. Second, in the attending Samaritan, one finds a self

³⁸ Although, as we will see, the possession and giving of being is an amorphous concept for Weil (cf. WFG 90). This position resonates for Bonhoeffer's own idea that the being of humankind is precisely being-for-others.

which gives of its own personhood to another through participating in another's affliction. The self, patterned after the Samaritan, attends to Christ through the traveler. In committing to help the broken man, the Samaritan both sacrifices his own self-establishment by participating in the sufferings of the traveler and abandons his immediate goals in order to attend to someone else. A seemingly minor detour is in fact a profound statement of self-renunciation. This willing self-renunciation gives oneself to another, since through the sacrifice of his goals, the Samaritan enables the beaten man to eventually regain his selfhood.³⁹ The third outcome of the willing self is embodied by both the priest and the Levite, each of whom will some other good over attending to the broken man. In their faulty elevation of other goods, they demonstrate themselves to be idolaters (GG 60,61).

4.3.4 *Creativity and Attention*

The giving of oneself for another discloses the creative potential of attention. Free of the egoistic compulsion to establish itself over against the other, Weil's attentive self is then free to offer love and charity to the other.⁴⁰ Such an offering is not to be taken lightly, since such charity both re-creates the personhood of the wounded person and requires

³⁹ Bonhoeffer would likely take issue with this idea. Cf. DBWE 4:96.

⁴⁰ As for Levinas, for Weil love and charity are possible only where need for the other does not exist. When selves need other selves, they will do whatever necessary to preserve themselves. Weil writes, 'When a human being is in any degree necessary to us, we cannot desire his good unless we cease to desire our own. Where there is necessity there is constraint and domination. We are in the power of that of which we stand in need, unless we possess it. The central good for every man is the free disposal of himself. Either we renounce it, which is a crime of idolatry, since it can be renounced only in favor of God, or we desire that the being we stand in need of should be deprived of this free disposal of himself' (WFG 132). The Samaritan can attend to the traveler because the Samaritan does not need him. The Samaritan is not defined over against the beaten traveler. Bonhoeffer's referential self is equally free from compulsive need. Even though, for Bonhoeffer, the self is in a sense defined by the other, the other-oriented definition of the self proceeds from prior orientation to Christ. The self does not care for the other to establish itself; this is, for Bonhoeffer a return to idealism. Instead, in Christ the self is drawn to the other in free and joyful responsibility.

the self to enter into the other's affliction.⁴¹ Whereas before the vulnerable person was the avenue through which others violently achieved their goals, he is restored through attention to being self-determined and free to exist as a person. In addition, he is now able to attend to the affliction of others. In the language of the parable, attention is not perceiving the wounded one and lamenting his fate, but bandaging his wounds and paying for his care. In attending to the wounded man, the Samaritan allows the man to become what he was meant to be, a creature who exists only to freely give that existence back to God. Whereas before his affliction was forced upon him, now his affliction may be undergone as a gift to God. In this way attention is concretely linked with Weil's understanding of the will of God.⁴² Furthermore, here one can see a powerful link between attention, creativity and human becoming.

4.3.5 Bonhoeffer's Treatment of the Good Samaritan

Bonhoeffer also draws explicitly on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Bonhoeffer writes in *Sanctorum Communio* that the Samaritan does not help the victim in order to introduce him into the Kingdom of God, but rather simply because 'sees a need' (DBWE 1:168). Bonhoeffer argues that authentic Christian love need not have ulterior motive to act. The responsible act is the primary consideration, above any secondary and spiritual end. Bonhoeffer emphasises the concrete reality of the other who is loved, rather than God present in the other (DBWE 1:170). This emphasis reiterates Bonhoeffer's concern for the actual person, rather than the assumed spiritual value of the other. In addition,

⁴¹ Bonhoeffer affirms the participatory and creative element of ethics when he writes, 'Christ was not concerned about whether 'the maxim of an action' could become 'a principle of universal law,' but whether my action now helps my neighbour to be a human being before God' (DBWE 6:98-99).

⁴² God, for Weil, wills that we be disabused of our pretensions of having being. The chief end of humankind is decreation. Weil likewise asserts that affliction serves as a possible vehicle for decreation. Therefore, affliction undertaken as a gift to God can be read as God's will.

responsibility conducted in love is spontaneous and guided by God's will, rather than prior philosophical commitments. This is a subtle distinction, but a relevant one: in the situation of the Samaritan, the first thought for Bonhoeffer is the need of the other person, rather than a consideration of moral calculation or spiritual ends. In this way the action of the Samaritan is 'simple' responsible action. The priority on simple, responsible action in reality opposes complex and abstract deliberation.⁴³ This theme of responsible, direct and simple action in *Sanctorum Communio* presages Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Samaritan found in *Discipleship*.⁴⁴

In *Discipleship* Bonhoeffer addresses the parable of the Good Samaritan as Jesus's protest against the question posed by the scribes: 'who is my neighbour?'. In contrast to his reading in *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer places emphasis on the *question* as the primary problem, rather than the *actions* of the priest and the Levite. Bonhoeffer connects the question of the scribe in the Good Samaritan to the 'rich young man' portrayed in the Synoptic gospels. The latter questions Jesus but goes away when he hears what discipleship entails (DBWE 4:74-75).⁴⁵ They are connected, says Bonhoeffer, insofar as their question is not truly geared to understand what is required of them; this they already know. Rather, in their question they evade responsibility (DBWE 4:75). As in *Sanctorum Communio*, in *Discipleship* Bonhoeffer emphasises the need for decisive action rather than retreat into endless consideration of all possible options. This

⁴³ Bonhoeffer is clearly not against deliberation, but he is wary of the idealist model of reflection which retreats from concrete reality in favour of abstraction. The dichotomy of idealist abstraction and concrete action owes much to Bonhoeffer's commitment to reality. Weil also privileges reality; it serves as that which calls the self from illusive pleasure towards the reality of the good. In contrast the pleasure of illusion, Weil envisages the good as often tightly interwoven with suffering (cf. GG 53).

⁴⁴ A third observation from Bonhoeffer's account of subjectivity in *Sanctorum Communio* notes the role of the Holy Spirit in acclimating the selfish will to the will of God (which is, again, to love the neighbour).

⁴⁵ Cf. Matthew 19, Luke 18, Mark 10, NASB

temptation to evasion renders the seemingly benign question ‘who is my neighbour?’ into a cancer which erodes the possibility of true responsibility (DBWE 4:75).

Bonhoeffer’s reading of the Good Samaritan offers insight into his understanding of responsibility. It is primarily oriented not to an ultimate or a spiritual end, but to the concrete other. In addition, responsible *action* is volitional. It is, as Bonhoeffer puts it, a ‘willing with’ the other, rather than willing against the other or for the self (DBWE 1:88). The Samaritan in Jesus’s parable elects to help the wounded traveler, fueled by a sense of compassion for him in his immediate need. The Samaritan epitomises unquestioning responsiveness to a need. The Protean context of responsibility demands an account of ethical discernment to consider what responsibility might look like in a given situation. Bonhoeffer does not advocate an emotional or a purely intuitive grasping of ethical demand.⁴⁶ To the contrary, the discernment of the will of God (which can be thought hand-in-hand with responsibility) is far more complex than mere intuition or unthinking adherence to ethical principles (DBWE 6:321). Bonhoeffer calls discernment of God’s will ‘deeper’ than the simple poles of intuition (heart) or intellect (mind). Following either pole in exclusion of the other manifests the fragmentation of the ethical life. Here one sees within Bonhoeffer a continued interest in the unity of self which comes about in the redemptive work of Christ.

Even casting the question of response as an issue of discerning the will of God only adds another layer to the question. How does one discern the will of God? How one is to be responsible? Bonhoeffer suggests that discernment of God’s will be understood through

⁴⁶ Bonhoeffer expresses ambivalence about pietist and charismatic Christianity. In addition, a purely intuitive approach to God’s will sends the self back into its own reflection. For Bonhoeffer this re-establishes the reflectivity of the idealist self. Cf. LPP 190 for Bonhoeffer’s interpretation of pietism.

the biblical image of renewing one's mind, following Romans 12:2.⁴⁷ This renewal of the mind means overcoming the form of fallen human being through Christ. The one who discerns the will of God is the one who exists in the unity of Christ, beyond the realm of simply discerning 'good and evil' (DBWE 6:322). Bonhoeffer's argument relies on his understanding of Jesus as, to borrow Nietzsche's phrase, 'beyond' good and evil. In Bonhoeffer's theological account of Genesis 1-3, it is this potential knowledge of good and evil which lures Adam and Eve into tasting the fruit. Their desire is to be like God in the knowledge of good and evil (DBWE 3:117). This knowledge skewers Adam and Eve on the opposition of good and evil. This opposition threatens the self who attempts to discern the perfectly good or right choice in every circumstance. Not only is it impossible to always choose the good act, since for Bonhoeffer one often chooses between two evil options, but it is unclear that persons can even discern what the authentically good or evil option actually is (DBWE 6:79-80). Consequently, attempts to perfectly understand nebulous ethical options end up forcing murky choices onto a Procrustean bed of good and evil. Despite Bonhoeffer's bleak portrayal of ethical decision, in the person of Christ, there re-emerges the possibility of unity for the person. This is a unity which does not aspire to be *sicut deus* in the knowledge of good and evil, but rather exists in the already-enacted unity offered by Christ. Such unity in Christ is faith (DBWE 6:278). Faith is the basis for the disciple, one not trusting in their own estimation and participation in good, but recognising that authentic good exists only in Christ. Only in this orientation to Christ can concrete responsibility fully exist for the other. The self acts with confidence not due to exhaustive knowledge of moral principles, but due to faith in and orientation to Christ who exists for others.

⁴⁷ 'And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.' (NASB)

Bonhoeffer's reading of the self in itself as unable to discern, much less make, the best decision reveals the amorphous character of ethical deliberation. Yet, Bonhoeffer's solution to this problem remains tentative. One possible response to Bonhoeffer's indictment of the ethical life would be a rejection of ethical deliberation, since it is virtually impossible to discern the right choice. One resolves never to worry about the ethical life at all. This is an understandable response to Bonhoeffer's position. How does one respond to the claim that Bonhoeffer leads to a sort of ethical nihilism?

Bonhoeffer's account of the ethical life is attractive due to its recognition of the pervasiveness of human sin, even to the point of colouring humanity's ability to discern the good. In light of postlapsarian inability to clearly discern the good, the Christian is compelled to cast itself on the mercy of Christ. The weight of freedom bearing down on the ethical decision-maker is to make the best decision possible, and then fully recognise that even well-intended ethical responses remain inadequate, even evil. Bonhoeffer himself, returning to the idea of conforming to Christ, admits that there is some kind of guidance within the ethical discernment process (DBWE 6:93). Yet, it is unclear how this possibility of discerning comes about. How does one conform to the mind of Christ? It is at this point that Weil's concept of attention becomes particularly instructive.

4.4 The 'Vigilant' Self

This chapter has suggested that Bonhoeffer's account of a self, immersed in a quest to become like Christ, is a self which actively engages in responsibility for the other. This responsibility responds to the demand of the other. Such a project is more feasible

when augmented with an account of *how* one is responsible for the other.⁴⁸ Weil's concept of attention addresses this lacuna. Yet, differences remain. For one, Weil's attention is a general possibility within humankind, whereas Bonhoeffer's own theological anthropology follows his Lutheran and Barthian roots in discounting any possible movement from fallen humankind to a true knowledge of the ethical. In addition, both Bonhoeffer and Weil draw on metaphors of response, highlighting activity (compassion) in light of passivity (being called). Yet, they stress the passivity of the self in different degrees. How does an account of an attentively responsible self, drawing on both Bonhoeffer and Weil, negotiate this difference?

Vladimir Lossky's Orthodox approach to theology offers a third perspective on the 'passive activity' of human life. Lossky's account emphasises the passive activity of ascent to God. He writes,

...the way of union is not a mere unconscious process, and it presupposes an unceasing vigilance of spirit and a constant effort of will...In order to overcome in this struggle our attention must be constantly directed towards God...The evangelical precept to watch, not to allow oneself to be weighed down by sleep, is a constant theme of Eastern asceticism, which demands the full consciousness of the human person in all the degrees of its ascent towards perfect union.⁴⁹

Lossky's mystical theology, read alongside Weil and Bonhoeffer, describes the human being through the metaphor of 'vigilance'. Vigilance, or the intentional discernment of the self, enables one's feeble attention to become a searing beam. Vigilance for Lossky is always initiated by God. His account contributes to a robustly *theological* reading of

⁴⁸ This question looks suspiciously like the question of evasion Bonhoeffer rails against (cf. CC 30). Yet, what this thesis proposes is a cogent description of how responsibility casts the self back onto the call of God towards the other.

⁴⁹ Lossky, Vladimir, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 202.

attention. Lossky's approach accounts for Weil's insistence that everyone has the potential to attend to others, and also accounts for the transformational character of faith. With Weil, one can say that attention is a universal possibility. With Bonhoeffer, one can say that the transformative encounter with the other is always a divinely-initiated encounter. If vigilance is a theological waiting for God's work in human life, then attention describes the self's relation to the one God draws to the self.

This section addresses two issues. First, it facilitates the grafting of Weil's concept of attention into Bonhoeffer's theological account of the responsible self. This renders Bonhoeffer's account more persuasive, as it gives flesh to the concept of concrete responsibility. Second, a progressive account of attentive responsibility matches the progressive account of humankind Bonhoeffer offers in both *Ethics* and *Letters and Papers from Prison*. These later texts present humankind, both individually and as a whole, as engaged in the process of becoming like Christ. In this reading Bonhoeffer's work does not become less orthodox in prison; it recognises Christ who stands at the centre of *all* human life. Attention to Christ the centre furthers the self's becoming like Christ. Weil describes how attention facilitates relation with the object of attention. As attention draws the self into what is beheld, so attention to Christ draws the self into Christ. The self attending to God is received, through decreation, back into God. Attention can be integrated into Bonhoeffer's account of the self which participates in the *conformatio Christi*. Reading these two ideas together, the self attends to Christ in the world and is taken up into Christ in the world.

Lossky emphasises that life lived in God is neither contemplative nor active. He writes, 'The human spirit, in its normal condition, is neither active nor passive: it is vigilant.'⁵⁰ The metaphor of vigilance offers an additional theological facet to an account of attention. Lossky suggests that such vigilance is universal, inasmuch as it is the 'normal condition' of the human spirit. Such a model would be in accord with the visual metaphors prevalent within the New Testament accounts of the life of faith.⁵¹ Lossky's concept of vigilance provides an alternative to the active/passive paradigm within attention. He writes of vigilance: 'This is 'sobriety', 'the attention of the heart', the faculty of discernment and of the judgment in spiritual matters, which are characteristic of human nature in its state of wholeness'.⁵² Two elements of Lossky's account are worth noting here. First, his account of attention as more than a purely active or purely passive endeavour is helpful when considering Weil. Second, he links concepts of attention and human wholeness, which points back to Bonhoeffer's own assertion that responsibility can only occur out of the unity of human persons (DBWE 6:276).

First, Lossky avoids the strict dualism of the active and the passive through the concept of sobriety. Sobriety closely corresponds with vigilance. Both metaphors describe an orientation or stance of the self. This stance contains both active and passive elements. Similarly, Weil's account of attention stresses attention's active passivity.⁵³ Attention integrates an element of activity within a disciplined waiting. The self neither acts without waiting nor is acted upon without being called to action. The concept of vigilance describes the self's way of being in the world; a way of being which waits for

⁵⁰ Lossky 1976:203.

⁵¹ Cf. Mark 4:25-27, Luke 8:1-15, NASB

⁵² Lossky 1976:203

⁵³ Weil writes that 'unmixed attention is prayer' (GG 117) and that prayer in the soul has a sense of 'non-acting action' (GG 119).

God's action in that world. Returning to Bonhoeffer, God's way of being in the world is demonstrated by Christ, the quintessential human being for others (DBWE 6:157). The human being conformed to Christ vigilantly looks for ways to be responsible within the world Christ affirms. The responsible (and attentive) self both waits and asserts at appropriate times; times appointed by God.⁵⁴ The knowledge of propriety follows from 'the faculty of discernment and...judgment' as described in Lossky's concept of vigilance. The self allows others to unfold and become as they are meant to be (DBWE 6:98-99). Vigilant attention acknowledges the self's limit before God's own time. It is this attentive and responsible self who prepares the way for the coming of grace. In this way, an account of the attentive and responsible self can helpfully integrate Lossky's own insight on vigilance.

Second, Lossky's connection of wholeness and of attention provides additional ground for reconsidering Bonhoeffer's depiction of responsibility. Both responsibility and attention draw on the image of wholeness. For Bonhoeffer, Christian ethics' most insidious danger is the possibility of separation from one's origin and goal (DBWE 6:49). Bonhoeffer writes, 'Human beings are indivisible wholes, not only as individuals in both their person and work, but also as members of the human and created community to which they belong' (DBWE 6:53). The absolutising of any ethical paradigm apart from the singular reality of Christ separates what should not be torn asunder.⁵⁵ Consider the example of what Bonhoeffer calls 'private virtuousness' (DBWE

⁵⁴ This concept of waiting for the appropriate time follows from the biblical idea of *καιρός*, or God's appointed time. In Mark 13:33 Jesus warns the disciples, 'Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time (*καιρός*) is' (NASB). In this case *καιρός* refers to the Markan apocalyptic expectation. This concept of appointed time, however, retains critical importance for an account of responsibility which emphasises waiting and acting in response to God's initiative in the world.

⁵⁵ Bonhoeffer writes, 'Good is no longer an evaluation of what exists, for instance my essence, *my moral orientation*, my actions, or of a state of affairs in the world' (DBWE 6:50, emphasis added). Why does this

6:80). For Bonhoeffer, the desire to remain ethically blameless can result in an approach to life which eschews responsible action in favor of an individualistic preservation of one's own purity. In contrast, genuine responsibility requires the self to enter into guilt on behalf of the other (DBWE 6:80). Entering into guilt on behalf of the other demonstrates a genuine love for the other person over the preservation of one's innocence. Bonhoeffer writes,

Those who, in acting responsibly, seek to avoid becoming guilty divorce themselves from the ultimate reality of human existence; but in so doing they also divorce themselves from the redeeming mystery of the sinless bearing of guilt by Jesus Christ, and have no part in the divine justification that attends this event...Because of Jesus Christ, the essence of responsible action intrinsically involves the sinless, those who act out of selfless love, becoming guilty (DBWE 6:276).

Bonhoeffer resolves this tension between personal virtuousness and guilt by re-defining the purpose of the ethical life. Rather than maintaining one's personal righteousness, the ethical life embraces completely the will of God, which requires the whole self to exist concretely on behalf of the one who has need. This existence for the other may entail taking on another's guilt. There is no self-justification for the self because there can be no claim to righteousness. In consequence, conscience, as the faculty of justifying oneself before God through adherence to the Law, is overcome.⁵⁶

not undermine the argument that Christian ethics draws on a rich biblical metaphor of orientation? To be 'for' the other does not calcify the command of Christ into a series of principles for ethical life. The self cannot trust once and for all any inclination, even that of existing 'for' the other. In contrast, the self's orientation is always towards Christ. As the command of Christ for the self is not static, so the ethical implications of that command are not static. Within the context of relation to otherness, with Bonhoeffer the self must always attempt to discern 'who is Christ for us today?' ethically. The contours of responsibility are always dynamic, as is the work of God in the world. In addition, even a commitment to moral orientation remains the initiative of the self. It is not simply moral orientation which is ethical; it is relational orientation to Christ which refracts the self's orientation to the other. In 'ethical orientation to Christ' the ethical emphasis falls on 'Christ' rather than 'ethical orientation'.

⁵⁶ In *Ethics* Bonhoeffer understands conscience as the penultimate form of discernment; it is predicated on judgment of good and evil which we have already established is based on a postlapsarian existence (DBWE 6:308). Furthermore, conscience accepts all that has not been prohibited, and is thus a sign of

Understanding one's guilt and responsibility follows from existence of the whole self before Christ. Instead of a self torn apart by conflicting desires for personal righteousness and justice, the self is unified by a commitment to Christ's presence in the world. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Jesus Christ has become my conscience. This means that from now on I can only find unity with myself by surrendering my ego to God and others. The origin and goal of my conscience is not a law but the living God and the living human being as I encounter them in Jesus Christ' (DBWE 6:278). This commitment to Christ in the world obviates the need for the personal righteousness of natural existence. In Bonhoeffer's words, Jesus Christ is my conscience (DBWE 6:278).

Like Bonhoeffer, Weil too stresses unity of self. Unity of self informs attention. If attention is a function of the whole self, affliction characterises the self, in Bonhoeffer's terms, 'separated from its origin and goal.'⁵⁷ Weil describes with grisly detail the dislocating properties of affliction. As a 'mutilation' or 'leprosy' of the soul, affliction 'is a device for pulverizing the soul; the man who falls into it is like a workman who gets caught up in a machine. He is no longer a man but a torn and bloody rag on the teeth of a cogwheel' (SWA 70,71). An affliction which 'mutilates' the self undermines the possibility of attention.⁵⁸ Reading Weil through Bonhoeffer, affliction is the human condition of being torn away from one's ground and origin. Affliction exposes the entire

disunity since it cannot deal with God's positive commandment (307). Bonhoeffer does not go so far as to totally condemn conscience, and recognises that acting against one's conscience invites despair (276-277), but that conscience alone can be nothing more than 'godless self-justification' (278).

⁵⁷ Cf. DBWE 6:53. Bonhoeffer writes, 'It is this indivisible whole, that is, this reality grounded and recognised in God, that the question of good has in view. "Creation" is the name of this indivisible whole according to its origin. According to its goal it is called the kingdom of God. Both are equally far from us and yet near to us, because God's creation and God's kingdom are present to us only in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ.' In Christ the self finds its origin and *telos*.

⁵⁸ Weil speaks of affliction with an almost surgical tenor. Weil writes, 'Affliction is anonymous before all things. It is indifferent; and it is the coldness of this indifference – a metallic coldness – that freezes all it touches right to the depths of their souls' (WFG 73). Affliction is invasive and indifferent in the extreme. It is a rending of the whole person.

person to necessity. This exposure reveals the ephemeral character of the self apart from its origin and *telos*. The self, torn away from its ground, or Christ, cannot attend.

4.5 *Truthfulness and Attention*

Truthfulness crucially informs attention as an ethical concept. If attention is always attention to reality, or the Good, and attention to reality unveils the ‘truth’ of the human condition, then truthfulness with oneself and others is of critical concern. Only on the basis of seeing oneself and others rightly can one then say ‘what are you going through’ and enter another’s suffering with them (WFG 64). For Weil, one of the greatest threats to attention is illusion. Illusion tempts all persons who have not recognised their ‘nothingness’ before God (GG 34). Truthfulness takes a larger role when placed alongside strains of Christian tradition describing self-deception as a prominent outworking of human sin.⁵⁹ Self-deception obscures the self’s perception of the other and foments self-justification. The parable of the Good Samaritan is again instructive on both points. The Good Samaritan demonstrates how attention requires both ethical response and understanding of oneself. This section engages three elements of the connection between truthfulness and attention. The first subsection looks at Jesus as truth over against the partial truths of the religious authorities as depicted in the gospel accounts of the New Testament. The second subsection looks briefly at the forms of self-deception present in those religious authorities. The third subsection looks at the core truth of human beings, with particular emphasis on Weil’s perspective.

⁵⁹ Jenson locates the paradigm of sin-as-falsehood in both Augustine and Barth (cf. Jenson 2006:22ff, 164ff.).

4.5.1 *Jesus and Truth*

At the heart of Christian proclamation is the belief that in the person of Christ is *the truth*. Two examples illustrate the centrality of truth for the Christian witness. First, from the very beginning of his ministry Jesus understood his mission as one of revealing the truth. From Simeon's testimony that Jesus is 'the light of the revelation' at his birth (Luke 2:32, NASB) to the Jesus' own confession, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' (John. 14:6, NASB), Jesus is repeatedly represented as a source of truth. Jesus's engagement with the religious authorities discloses his integral relationship to truth. Rather than avoiding conflict with the power structures of the day, Jesus's example is one of raw, even brutal, truth-telling. Bonhoeffer interprets the encounter between the religious authorities and Jesus as one of conflict, with the authorities presenting to Jesus insoluble 'ethical' questions (DBWE 6:310-312). As opposed to acting in the unity and the simplicity of obedience, the Pharisees resist truth by attempting to draw Jesus into their disunity. Although the religious authorities are a key example of resistance to the truth, they are not the only ones to miss the truth of Jesus's message. In the parable of the rich young man, Jesus brings to light the fact that although the young man desires to fulfill the Law, he is unable to do so due to his partial commitment to the truth of which Jesus speaks. His self-justification is comical, in that he suggests to Jesus that he has fulfilled the Law all of his life.⁶⁰ His claim demonstrates precisely that he has misunderstood either Jesus or the Law (or both). Such misunderstanding is of utmost importance to Christian ethical reasoning.

4.5.2 *Evasion and Self-Justification*

⁶⁰ Mark 10:20, NASB

The religious authorities in the New Testament are characterised, fairly or unfairly, as misunderstanding Jesus. Their misunderstanding can be interpreted as both intentional and unintentional self-deception. The parable of the Good Samaritan, posed to Jesus by 'an expert in the law', might demonstrate this intentional and unintentional self-deception. The priest and the Levite, knowing full well the contours of the Law, refuse to aid the beaten man. They deceive themselves insofar as they believe the beaten man demands no ethical response from them. Twinned with the deception of evading response is the idea of self-justification. It is not coincidental that the one who posed the question to Jesus 'who is my neighbour?' (the question resulting in the parable of the Good Samaritan) sought to justify himself to Jesus.⁶¹ However, attempts at justification are not intrinsically unreasonable. The priest and the Levite possessed rational justifications for their decision to bypass the man attacked by robbers. They perhaps rightfully feared that they too might be attacked, having no knowledge of whether or not the perpetrators were still in the vicinity. They might have also wondered if the beaten man himself was a ruse to lure them to stop their journey. These are natural responses and are not ostensibly evil or morally depraved. At most they exhibit a general callousness to the human condition. Why then does Jesus excoriate them?

Self-deception is at the core of this reading of the Good Samaritan. There are two possible forms of self-deception which can be read into the parable. The first form of self-deception is what Bonhoeffer calls evasion. The second form is the wrong orientation of self Weil calls sin. The first self-deception denies the call of the other

⁶¹ Luke 10:29, NASB

upon the self, despite the other's concrete presence. Resisting the demand of the other upon the self, one avoids the gaze of the other. This evasion is self-deception insofar as the self does not acknowledge both the reality of need and the self's responsibility to respond to that need.⁶² In the story of the Samaritan, the priest and the Levite clearly saw the victim: '...and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side' (Luke 10:31, NASB). It is a self-deception which desires what is good, but is unable to envision, and thus enact, mercy, compassion and responsibility. An example of this is the rich young man, who cannot comprehend the discipleship to which Jesus calls him. His love of wealth obscures his ability to envision an alternative existence. This self-deception results from a poverty of vision and imagination.⁶³ The self evades the other, because to engage the other results in a seismic shift of orientation, a shift which cannot be imagined and inspires fear.

The second self-deception derives from misdirected desire. For example, the priest and the Levite may have elevated cleanliness (the beaten man would likely not have been considered clean according to the Law) over mercy.⁶⁴ According to the Law, it is unquestionably good to preserve purity. Their commitment to obey God through purity would have been entirely reasonable grounds to avoid the victim. For this reason the second type of untruthfulness is more insidious. This self-deception stems from a fundamental confusion over the true aim of one's goals. Such misapprehension of one's *telos* could be described as a lack of self-knowledge. Here again Jesus judges the

⁶² Slavoj Žižek attests to this human capacity for self-deception when he writes, 'The experience that we have of our lives from within the story we tell ourselves in order to account for what we are doing, is fundamentally a lie – the truth lies outside, in what we do' (Žižek, Slavoj, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile Books, 2009), 40).

⁶³ A fuller account of the ethical imagination is developed in Chapter Five.

⁶⁴ Fitzmeyer, Joseph, S.J., trans. *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV* in *The Anchor Bible* vol 28A (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 883.

religious authorities as prime candidates for such self-deception.⁶⁵ 'But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are things you should have done without neglecting others. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love chief seats at the synagogues and the respectful greetings of the marketplaces' (Luke 11:42-44, NASB). At the core of Jesus's invective is the suggestion that not only has the religious establishment forgotten justice, but they have loved the respect of persons more than the persons themselves. Yet, surely the Pharisees themselves would have disputed such an interpretation of their motivations; to not contest Jesus's words would require the confession of serious wrongdoing. The Pharisees, as presented by the New Testament, misunderstood themselves in various ways and to various degrees. Some knew precisely that the Law required compassion but simply avoided the gaze of those who called out for that compassion. Others very likely intended righteousness and were mistaken about its nature. In either case, at the heart of the problem is a profound level of self-deception about oneself and the obligation one bears for the other.

Charles Bellinger writes in *The Trinitarian Self: The Key to the Puzzle of Violence* that the state of humankind is one of hypocrisy.⁶⁶ He defines hypocrisy as the pervasive human tendency to 'to accuse others of doing wrong when they themselves are doing wrong.'⁶⁷ Like Bonhoeffer, Bellinger cites the knowledge of good and evil as a curse; it is 'Satan's gift' to humankind. This knowledge allows the self to justifiably accuse others of misdeeds. This accusative tendency reveals the self-deceptive capacity of humankind.

⁶⁵ Consider again Weil's insistence on reality rather than illusion. Illusion diverts the self from its goal of decreation. Cf. note 13 above.

⁶⁶ Bellinger, Charles K., *The Trinitarian Self: The Key to the Puzzle of Violence* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 148.

⁶⁷ Bellinger 2008:148.

While ignoring one's own misdeeds, the self accuses another. Such accusation makes the self decisive and righteous, or to use Bonhoeffer's phrase, *sicut deus*. Bellinger's solution to the problem of hypocrisy is acknowledgement of said hypocrisy, with a subsequent emphasis on humility.⁶⁸ Out of humility comes an opportunity for forgiveness and grace. Bellinger's claim is partially correct; in many ways hypocrisy describes fallen and deceived humankind. However, hypocrisy describes only one type of self-deception. Hypocrisy accounts for self-deception like that of the Pharisee who presumes his own righteousness while avoiding justice. Bellinger's account of hypocrisy-as-self-deception, therefore, does not go far enough. Bellinger does not account for the self which desires ethical existence, but misunderstands the content of that ethical existence.⁶⁹ In addition, the religious authorities from the New Testament demonstrate that hypocrisy is rarely overtly clear to the self. Only in blatant instances of hypocrisy can the self understand itself as hypocritical. Consequently, it is more difficult than Bellinger suggests to diagnose one's own hypocrisy. Even this self-evaluation requires the coming of the other to the self and the attentive relation of the self to that other. The self requires another to expose its hypocrisy.

4.5.3 *The Truth of the Human Being*

Truthfulness constitutes a crucial element of attention. Only when the self approaches reality in truth can ethical relation with the other occur. This ethical relation evolves

⁶⁸ Bellinger 2008:151.

⁶⁹ Bellinger writes, 'Selfhood is also not the starting point for ethics. As selves we need to learn to become ethical as a life task; we do not start off with ethical maturity as our default setting' (Bellinger 2008:88). While one can agree with Bellinger that the ethical task is indeed progressive, this does not mean that selfhood is not the starting point for ethics. Selfhood *is* the starting point for ethics, precisely in that in understanding oneself as both oriented to another and limited makes it possible for one to grow in understanding of oneself as a responsible and obligated being.

through continued attention to the realities of the self's responsibility for the other. The immense responsibility the self bears for the other represents a burden which can only be borne on an understanding of the self which acknowledges itself as an offering, a contingent and transient gift for another. Both Bonhoeffer's 'being for others' and Weil's decreation suggest that the self is contingent and not an end in itself. Yet to say that humankind does not bear ultimate value does not mean humankind has no value. How does an account of an attentive and a responsible self deal with *kenosis*? In different ways Bonhoeffer and Weil suggest selves which give of themselves for others. Does this giving of oneself for another require or result in a complete diminution of oneself?

For Weil, God creates humankind from his own being, a creation which effectively 'takes' from God. She writes, 'On God's part creation is not an act of self-expansion but of restraint and renunciation. God and all his creatures are less than God alone...God accepted this diminution. He emptied a part of his being from himself' (WFG 89). Following Weil's comments, how is one to understand the act of creation? Weil's answer is one which effectively makes humankind a mistake, since God alone is worthy of his being.⁷⁰ Her logic is clear; if humankind possesses being, and if this human possession of being takes from the fullness of God's own being, then human existence cannot be justified. Over against God as the perfect Good, humankind does not deserve to have being. In light of Weil's concepts of creation and decreation one may more fully appreciate the importance of and limits to the idea of *kenosis* within a theological account of responsibility.

⁷⁰ Weil writes, 'I am not, and I consent not to be; because I am not the good, and I desire that only the good should be' (FLN 102).

As the theological correlate to the philosophical question, 'why is there something rather than nothing?' the question of why God created at all has a long history within both Christian and Jewish theological speculation.⁷¹ Maurice Blanchot points out that Weil's own answer to this question looks remarkably similar to what, in Jewish mysticism, is called *tsimtsum*.⁷² In light of God's infinitude this approach affirms that in order to create something 'outside' of himself, creation requires a fundamental renunciation of God's infinite being.⁷³ Following God's own renunciation in the act of creation, humankind renounces its illusory claim to being. The *kenosis* that Weil envisions for the self is not a partial giving, but a total *kenosis*. This *kenosis* is a giving of the self to non-being. Weil writes, 'God created because it was good, but the creature let itself be created because it was evil. It redeems itself by persuading God, by the power of prayer, to destroy it' (FLN 123).⁷⁴ This idea of pure self-negation requires revision.

Blanchot notes that Weil diverts from the mystical idea of *tsimtsum* by her negative, even nihilistic, view. Isaac Luria, the initial proponent of *tsimtsum*, posited a movement of unfolding along with renunciation.⁷⁵ Weil's philosophical approach to *kenosis* robs her account of human life of vitality; the vocation of human life is to cease being. This is surprising given Weil's care for the concrete human existence of those around her. As David McLellan attests, Weil's concern for the workers in France inspired her to join

⁷¹ John Milbank echoes this question in his *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon*. Milbank, however, understands the issue as a fundamental *aporia* within Christian tradition (Milbank, John, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003), 63). Milbank locates in Anselm an overly aggressive attempt to frame the problem in terms of an economic transaction. This same critique could apply to Weil. She attempts, in the face of the *aporia*, to reconceive being as a commodity to be traded between God and humankind (FLN 123).

⁷² Blanchot, Maurice, *The Infinite Conversation* trans. Susan Hanson (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 116. See also Dupré 2004.

⁷³ Blanchot 1993:116-117.

⁷⁴ Weil writes, 'God created me as a non-being which has the appearance of existing in order that through love I should renounce this apparent existence and be annihilated by the plenitude of being' (FLN 96).

⁷⁵ Blanchot 1993:118.

their ranks; her desire for solidarity with the suffering also led her to the front lines of the Spanish civil war.⁷⁶ Weil's kenotic account is so extreme as to incur allegations of nihilism. In her refusal to draw on a rich Christian affirmation of created life, Weil's account could be characterised as *insufficiently* Christian.⁷⁷ These perplexing tensions bolster the attractiveness of Bonhoeffer's own account of the responsible self within concrete life. An account of responsibility requires a robust reading of creation as good, despite the pervasive influence of human sin.⁷⁸

Attentive responsibility facilitates the coming to fullness of the self through Christ. This attentive responsibility takes place within the context of a created world. In contrast to Weil, this account of the self requires a world which is called good. Yet, this good creation is fallen, including human beings. The fallenness of human beings manifests itself through hypocrisy and self-deception. The other who comes to the self challenges this self-deception, and opens the possibility of an alternative existence. For selves awakened from ethical slumber, attention focuses the self on the other in responsibility. The perpetual recognition of limit serves as a critical facet of this development of the self. The process of coming to being for the other, rather than for the self, forms the self oriented to Christ. It is difficult to see how Weil could affirm this account, given her

⁷⁶ Cf. McLellan, David, *Utopian Pessimist: The Life and Thought of Simone Weil* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

⁷⁷ Vetö suggests that this is not different than the Pauline statement, 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me' (Vetö 1994:41-42). However, does following Christ require the overcoming of human personality? Paul is clear elsewhere that each are given different charisms from the Holy Spirit, which surely are dependent in some degree on the personality of the beneficiary. If this is true, then following Christ does not entail the removal of personality. In contrast, it seems that Weil's mystical vision involves exactly this sort of personal removal. Consider, 'Perfection is impersonal. Our personality is the part of us which belongs to error and sin. The whole effort of the mystic has always been to become such that there is no part left in his soul to say 'I' (SWA 55). The only way in which Weil speaks positively of human personality is in contrast to political systems and other entities which crush the possibility of human flourishing. Therefore, as a political concept Weil might support human personality, but not as a mystical or theological concept.

⁷⁸ Vetö also describes Weil's project as one concerned with human sin, but, as has already been hinted at, the content and form of that 'sin' differs considerably for both thinkers.

understanding of human life as first a 'fiction' (FLN 218), and perhaps, following Augustine's understanding of evil as privation, evil itself.⁷⁹

To what extent can the idea of attention, explicitly taken from Weil, be intelligible when divorced from its conceptual context? Is attention without complete decreation possible? Weil's principle adversary is the philosophical ego, the fundamental idol of human existence. To say 'I', for Weil, is to falsely buy into the reality of the self. To establish the self in anything other than God is to base oneself on falsehood. The I fails to recognise the transience of human being. In order to prevent the 'lie' of saying I, one is decreate oneself (FLN 132). Since Weil explicitly connects decreation and self-annihilation, this is a provocative claim.⁸⁰ However, curtailing self-idolatry does not necessarily require self-annihilation. Attention is the *vehicle* for decreation in Weil's account.⁸¹ This does not mean, however, that attention *must* end in Weilian decreation. Attention, as a stance of the self in non-acting action, can nonetheless be affirmative of human existence.

4.6 Conclusion

Interpreting attention as an ethical concept provides a valuable component for the emerging account of an ethically oriented self. Responsibility read through attention helpfully describes the orientation of the self 'for' the other. The parable of the Good Samaritan depicts this attentive responsibility. For Weil the parable illustrates both the perceptive and the creative capacity of the attentive self. For Bonhoeffer the parable

⁷⁹ Weil writes, 'The self is only a shadow which sin and error cast by stopping the light of God, and I take this shadow for a being' (WFG 40).

⁸⁰ Vetö 1994:11.

⁸¹ Vetö 1994:41.

demonstrates the immediate character of response and evasion of responsibility. This chapter has drawn on both Bonhoeffer and Weil to argue that the parable supports a certain ethical orientation of self. Moreover, this orientation requires truthful appraisal of oneself. This truthfulness integrates awareness of limitation with awareness of existence within a concrete world.

Beyond noting similarities between Weil and Bonhoeffer, this chapter has suggested that Weil's concept of attention addresses a point of ambiguity within Bonhoeffer's account of ethical life. Bonhoeffer argues that the ethical life is not determined by a knowledge of good and evil, since such knowledge is an essential marker of the self's disunity (cf. DBWE 3:90,92; DBWE 6:314). This claim, however, destabilises all deliberation about good and evil within human life. What then helps adjudicate between alternatives in concrete human existence? How does one make any ethical decision? Bonhoeffer argues that the answer to this question is simple obedience to the will of Christ (DBWE 6:320). However, Bonhoeffer does not indicate that this simple obedience absolves one from all reflection. He writes,

The will of God may lie very deeply hidden among many competing possibilities. It is also not a system of rules that are fixed from the outset, but always new and different in each life circumstance. That is why it is necessary to discern again and again what the will of God is. Heart, intellect, observation and experience must work together in this discernment (DBWE 6:321).

Bonhoeffer's account is more helpful in eliminating false forms of discernment, rather than identifying what discernment looks like. This, too, he acknowledges (DBWE

6:323).⁸² Bonhoeffer's attempt to articulate the character of discernment returns, finally, to an image of discernment as orientation of the self. In both self-examination and discernment, the Christian 'looks only at Christ' (DBWE 6:325). The self-examination of the one oriented to Christ paradoxically focuses exclusively on Christ, while remaining self-examination. This orientation towards Christ calls for complete surrender of the self to Christ's judgment, rather than the judgment of the self.

Bonhoeffer writes, 'Our self-examination cannot provide us with this or that evidence of our reliability and faithfulness, for we no longer have at our disposal a criterion by which we can judge ourselves; or rather, our only criterion is the living Jesus Christ himself' (DBWE 6:325).

Here again, Bonhoeffer's depiction of self-examination and discernment is helpful, but far from conclusive. Drawing upon Weil's concept of attention does not completely remove all ambiguity from a Bonhoefferian account of ethical discernment. What it does offer, however, is a fuller account of what this orientation to Christ looks like in the world. Specifically, it expresses concern for the self's way of being in a world where Christ appears in the form of the other. Whereas Levinas primarily stresses the approach of the other, Weil describes the self's stance towards the other. From Levinas the thesis engaged Bonhoeffer's own description of the approach of otherness, manifest chiefly in Jesus Christ. From Weil the thesis engaged Bonhoeffer's description of the self's response to that other. To borrow a phrase from the previous chapter, Weil's concept of attention magnifies certain characteristics of Bonhoeffer's own account.

⁸² Bonhoeffer writes, '...it is now necessary to actually discern what the will of God may be...Under no circumstances must one count on or wait for unmediated inspirations, lest all too easily one fall prey to self-deception. Given the matter at hand, an intensely sober attitude will govern the discerning' (DBWE 6:323-324). It is not unimportant that here Bonhoeffer contrasts self-deception and sobriety in discernment. Attention, as articulated in Weil, invokes a similar contrast. For both, sobriety in focus on the good disarms self-deception.

Three brief examples of such magnification help identify the contribution of Weil to this account of the self.

First, the concept of attention highlights the distinctively *ethical* character of orientation to Christ. In attending to Christ, one is drawn into ethical relation with others. For Weil, this ethical relation is characterised by vision into the very souls of those who suffer (WFG 59). Like Christ, the self enters into the suffering of others. With that heightened ethical perception one learns to 'give back' personhood to the other.⁸³ Second, the concept of attention stresses the *humility* of orientation to Christ. Those who are oriented to Christ emulate his humility. They must maintain their focus on Christ even when affliction strikes them. Weil writes, 'A blind mechanism, heedless of degrees of spiritual perfection, continually tosses men about and throws some of them at the very foot of the Cross. It rests with them to keep or not to keep their eyes turned toward God through all the jolting' (WFG 73). Third, the concept of attention emphasises *truthfulness* in orientation to Christ. Only detachment from things facilitates seeing the world as it is. Christ is the only appropriate one to whom the self may be attached. This attachment negates all others. Weil writes, '...perfect detachment alone enables us to see things in their naked reality, outside the fog of deceptive values' (GG 52). Only attachment to Christ allow for truthfulness, as the full recognition of reality, to come to the self.

⁸³ Weil writes, 'Not only does the love of God have attention for its substance; the love of our neighbor, which we know to be the same love, is made of this same substance...The love of our neighbor in all its fullness simply means being able to say to him: "What are you going through?" It is a recognition that the sufferer exists, not only as a unity in a collection, or a specimen from the social category labeled "unfortunate," but as a man, exactly like us, who was one day stamped with a special mark by affliction. For this reason it is enough, *but it is indispensable, to know how to look at him in a certain way. This way of looking is first of all attentive. The soul empties itself of all its own contents in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, just as he is, in all his truth*' (WFG 64-65, emphasis added). This 'taking in' of the self is not the possessiveness of the ego described by both Levinas and Bonhoeffer. In Miklos Vetö's words, attention is '...always an empty attention waiting for something to appear, reveal itself, become manifest' (Vetö 1993:42).

None of these emphases are foreign to Bonhoeffer's thought; they are, however, understated in comparison to his development of the supreme other, Christ, who approaches the self.⁸⁴ For this reason this staged conversation yields fruit; there are striking resonances which demand extrapolation. This is the task this chapter has undertaken, with the result being an account of ethical orientation which emphasises not only the approach of Christ, but the stance of the self to whom Christ comes. This attentive stance is one of humble and truthful engagement with the other.

The attentive and responsible self depends on a core concept of truthfulness.

Truthfulness requires an account of reality. For Bonhoeffer, the real is the revelation of Jesus Christ. For Weil, what is real is the Good, or God. Things in the world are only good to the extent that they point to, and obey, God. In both accounts, reality is closely linked with ethics. The self can only attend to reality. All other orientations lead the self into illusion. However, while both seek the truthful character of the self, their respective accounts of the self's context differ. For Bonhoeffer, the encounter with God sends human beings back into the world. Bonhoeffer writes, "The difference between the Christian hope of resurrection and the mythological hope is that the former sends a man back to his life on earth in a wholly new way...This world must not be prematurely written off; in this the Old and New Testaments are one" (LPP 336-337).⁸⁵ In contrast,

⁸⁴ An exception is made with regard to truthfulness, which is accordance to reality. As this thesis has already argued, reality is a central theme for Bonhoeffer. However, Weil makes much more of self-deception as the contrast to truthfulness. Her emphasis on the danger of self-deception will be useful in addressing Adolph Eichmann in the following chapter.

⁸⁵ What Bonhoeffer calls 'mythological hope' he connects with 'redemption myths'. These redemption myths characterise religions of antiquity outside of the Old Testament (LPP 336). Bonhoeffer observes that such redemption myths misunderstand the nature of life in the world. In contrast, Weil emphasises such religions of antiquity over against the Old Testament. She writes, 'If Osiris is not a man having lived on earth while remaining God, in the same way as Christ, then at any rate the story of Osiris is a prophecy

Weil's emphasis on decreation as an 'annihilating' enterprise renders her account of the self in the world much more ambiguous. Nevertheless, Weil offers crucial insight into the ethical life. Weil's contribution of attention to Bonhoeffer's account of responsibility results in an ethical model combining several rich strands of theological anthropology and ethics. This reading of the self through Weil and Bonhoeffer culminates in a self unquestionably responsible for the other, while not dominating or being dominated by the other.

The final chapter of this thesis will examine these themes of responsibility and attention through the figure of Adolph Eichmann as presented by Hannah Arendt. The argument of the ensuing chapter relies both on an account of attention as an ethical concept and an account of truthfulness. Specifically, Eichmann's failure is not just a failure of personal ethics, although he does ethically fail in this way. In addition to ethical failure, Eichmann fails as a self for others. This failure to be a self for others brings the relation between truthfulness and self into the foreground. Eichmann does not truthfully engage with reality. This chapter develops these themes with an eye towards providing the ethical 'lens' through which the example of Eichmann will be considered. To his example the thesis now turns.

infinitely clearer, more complete and closer to the truth than everything which goes by that name in the Old Testament' (LP 19).

Chapter 5: *Embracing Pontius Pilate: Adolph Eichmann as Personification of Inattention*

Introduction

This final chapter presents Adolph Eichmann as depicted by Hannah Arendt and in light of the conclusions of the previous chapter. More precisely, Arendt's Eichmann personifies an ideal which is the opposite of Weil's attentive self;¹ and Arendt's Eichmann would also never be, in Bonhoeffer's terms, 'responsible as a human being' (DBWE 6:165). Consider three aspects of this personification.

First, the self captured in Arendt's account of Eichmann is unable to escape vapidness and shallowness.² This self enclosed upon itself will be treated here as a manifestation of Bonhoeffer's *cor curvum in se*. The self's enclosure is more than merely a passive state of being; it is also volitional. The biblical metaphor of hardness of heart characterises the chosen closure of the self to the other. Eichmann could never be described as a self for others. Instead his 'self', as Arendt demonstrates, presents an extreme challenge to ethics.

Second, the actions of Eichmann demonstrate the ease in which an ethical paradigm is misused. For example, while Eichmann explicitly claims to follow Kant's categorical imperative for his moral direction, Arendt claims that he misuses Kant (Arendt 2006:135-136). While Eichmann disregards the role of judgment in Kant's practical

¹ Arendt, Hannah, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 2006). Hereafter cited in text.

² Cf. Augustine 2008:144. Augustine writes in the *Confessions*: 'But while [Ponticianus] was speaking, Lord, you turned my attention back to myself. *You took me up from behind my own back where I had placed myself because I did not wish to observe myself (Ps. 20:13), and you set me before my face (Ps. 49:21)* so that I should see how vile I was, how twisted and filthy, covered in sores and ulcers' (emphasis mine).

philosophy, Arendt maintains that anyone who follows Kant's categorical imperative must think for himself (Arendt 2006:145). In fact, Eichmann admits that 'he had ceased to live according to Kantian principles' (Arendt 2006:136). Arendt notes that Eichmann is unable to think and so, he is an unthinking self. Although able to conduct day-to-day operations, Eichmann is singularly unable to make reflective judgments.

Third, the example of Eichmann (under the second point above) showed his inconsistency and, in this sense, a failure to think. But more than this, Arendt presents the complete lack of ethical awareness in Eichmann, in being unable and unwilling to perceive the claim of the other upon himself. So, closed in on himself, he is inattentive to the other. But far from acting like a 'monster' the actions of Eichmann are banal.³

This chapter argues that inattentiveness and hardness of heart result in a lack of ethical orientation. An ethical self oriented to the other and, for Bonhoeffer, to Christ would avoid the danger of self-contradiction and would not evade human responsibility.⁴ This

³ Arendt's writes, 'Behind the comedy of the soul experts lay the hard fact that his [Eichmann's] was obviously no case of moral let alone legal insanity...Worse, his was obviously also no case of insane hatred of Jews, of fanatical anti-Semitism or indoctrination of any kind' (Arendt 2006:26). The complication this statement provides is considerable. Eichmann was undoubtedly complicit in the worst crimes of the 20th century, and yet he was terrifyingly *normal*. His example is one which rightly inspires fear and trembling because as a human being he is intelligible, even while his actions (or rather, inactions) led to horrific evil.

⁴ Žižek also notes the possibility of profound ethical self-deception. Speaking of ideological defenders of Soviet communism, he writes, 'Isn't it the very illusory nature of their belief that makes their subjective stance so tragically sublime?...This leads us to a radical and unexpected conclusion: it is not enough to say that we are dealing here with a tragically misplaced ethical conviction, with a blind trust that avoids confronting the miserable, terrifying reality of its ethical point of reference. What if, on the contrary, such a blindness, such a disavowal of reality...is the innermost constituent of *every* ethical stance?' (Žižek 2009:44, emphasis in original). However, in contrast to Žižek this thesis argues that orientation to Christ, who inhabits but transcends the world, grounds an ethical stance that does not have to end up in self-deception. Instead, such orientation draws the self into fullest reality. Bonhoeffer argues that the fullest measure of reality is not the status quo, or 'things as they are', but the reality of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer writes, 'The question about ultimate reality already places us in such an embrace by its answer that there is no way we can escape from it. This answer carries us into the reality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ from which it comes' (DBWE 6:49). It is this reality which *forms* the responsible acts of human beings (DBWE 6:222). Orientation to Christ places the human being fully in accordance with both reality and responsibility. This orientation alone negates self-deception by allowing engagement with otherness.

would be in Bonhoeffer's terms, a 'single-minded' person (DBWE 6:81). In contrast, it would have to be said that Arendt's Eichmann is in Bonhoeffer's terms 'double-minded'.

Bonhoeffer's double-minded person is a disunited and fragmented self. It can never 'venture the free and responsible action' of a single-minded person. Following Bonhoeffer, this thesis contends that the attentively responsible human being embraces the *freedom* inherent in Christian life.⁵ Such freedom opens the way for genuine ethical agency, while also allowing for the passive and responsive elements of Christian ethics. However, the self imprisoned within itself has neither the creative resources to think beyond his circumstances, nor the will to hear the cries from those around him.

5.1 *The Challenge of Eichmann for Ethics*

The challenge Eichmann provides for Christian ethics is multifaceted. Arendt's account of him challenges contemporary theological ethics through its remarkable banality; that is, normality. It is with some difficulty that Arendt identifies the precise error of Eichmann's ways. Obviously his enthusiasm for the Final Solution provokes disgust. However, throughout *Eichmann in Jerusalem* Arendt notes the chaotic circumstances which culminated in an incredible lack of perspective on the part of both perpetrator and victim.⁶ Furthermore, if Eichmann indeed did not kill anyone (Arendt 2006:22),

⁵ Cf. DBWE 6:221: 'To act out of concrete responsibility means to act in freedom – to decide, to act, to answer for the consequences of this particular action myself without the support of other people or principles. Responsibility presupposes ultimate freedom in assessing a given situation, in choosing, and in acting.'

⁶ Commentators on *Eichmann in Jerusalem* criticised Arendt for blaming Jews for their own demise. In the introduction to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Amos Elon writes, 'Nor did she, as was frequently maintained, make the victims responsible for their slaughter "by their failure to resist"' (Arendt 2006:ix). However, Arendt does note the inability of the Jews to react as one would expect, resisting their demise at every turn. Instead, in 'arriving on time at the transportation points, walking on their own feet to the places of execution, digging their own graves, undressing and making neat piles of their clothing, and lying down

gave no direct order to kill anyone (Arendt 2006:22) and possessed no particular antipathy for Jews (Arendt 2006:26), what then was Eichmann's specific and egregious transgression? His great transgression was being, and remaining, complicit in a system predicated on the negation of otherness. As Arendt illustrates, to act differently required moral resources that few possessed. Even those who did manage some form of resistance did so in sectarian, and largely ineffective, ways (Arendt 2006:98ff.).

For Arendt, the incongruity of Eichmann's trial wrestled precisely with the chasm between the prosecution's attempt to portray Eichmann as a devilish sadist, while Eichmann himself appeared no more than a pawn in a larger game.⁷ He was not a psychopath; he was even described by psychiatrists before trial as 'normal': "More normal at any rate, than I am after having examined him," one of them was said to have exclaimed' (Arendt 2006:25). Another said Eichmann's mental state was 'not only normal but most desirable' (Arendt 2006:26). The minister who visited him in prison said he was 'a man of very positive ideas' (Arendt 2006:26). The incongruity of the portrayals hints at the ethical challenge provided by Eichmann's example. The gulf between Eichmann's alleged evil character, or the evil manifest by his person, is incommensurate with the evil consequences of his actions. Arendt observes the effect of this chasm in the judges' responses to Eichmann:

side by side to be shot' the Jews demonstrated the dehumanising and disillusioning power of the Nazi machine.

⁷ Arendt notes the wildly differing accounts of Eichmann's mental states. In contrast to the favorable evaluations conducted before the trial, the attorney general alleged that psychiatrists painted a more sinister picture of Eichmann. In Arendt's words: 'Eichmann, we are now told, had been alleged by the psychiatrists to be "a man obsessed with a dangerous and insatiable urge to kill," "a perverted, sadistic personality"' (Arendt 2006:26). These additional claims against Eichmann Arendt approaches with some scepticism. She notes that if this were indeed the case, Eichmann's proper place would be the insane asylum. Furthermore, Eichmann demonstrated none of these darker qualities during the trial.

And the judges did not believe him, because they were too good, and perhaps too conscious of the very foundations of their profession, to admit that an average, “normal” person, neither feeble-minded nor indoctrinated nor cynical, could be perfectly incapable of telling right from wrong. They preferred to conclude from occasional lies that he was a liar – and *missed the greatest moral and even legal challenge of the whole case* (Arendt 2006:26, emphasis added).

Eichmann’s working knowledge of basic Kantian philosophy heightens this tension (Arendt 2006:135). How could someone who, even mistakenly, relates to Kant’s philosophy as a moral guide remain complicit with, and even supportive of, such policies? If Eichmann’s ethical failure is due to sheer ignorance of ethical paradigms, education resolves the challenge. However, when pressed, Eichmann ‘to the surprise of everybody...came up with an approximately correct definition of the categorical imperative...’ (Arendt 2006:136). He was, relatively speaking, far from ignorant about the *idea* of ethics. In a sense, Eichmann was even *ethical*. Even if, as Arendt alleges, he inappropriately interpreted Kant’s philosophy, this too could have been remedied by instruction.⁸ Instead, Eichmann admitted ‘he had ceased to live according to Kantian principles, [and] that he had known it...’ (Arendt 2006:136). Consequently, a lack of ethical awareness by Eichmann goes deeper than a mere misunderstanding of ethical paradigms. This chapter contends that Eichmann is not oriented to others. Eichmann is portrayed, in light of Bonhoeffer’s theology, irresponsible. Eichmann is not a self for others which, for Bonhoeffer, is a necessary condition of the ethical self.

5.1.1 *The Challenge of Selfhood*

⁸ Most persons, even profoundly ‘ethical’ persons, have little to no knowledge of ethical paradigms. Nevertheless, they have a deep sense of ethics. Therefore, Eichmann’s interpretation of Kant cannot be the culprit for his actions. Had Eichmann been a more sophisticated reader of Kant, he would still not have been ‘ethical’.

Bonhoeffer conceives ethical selfhood as being single-minded and ‘whole’ (τέλειος). The single-minded person ‘keeps in sight only the single truth of God’ (DBWE 6:81). The single truth is revealed in Christ; and, for Bonhoeffer, Christ is the human being *par excellence*. Crucially, Christ as the whole human being has a complete relation to others; and this is the ‘ethical’ relation, that is, ‘a self for the other.’ This, then, is the wholeness (τέλειος) of human being.

From the above, it should be clear that the wholeness of the self lies in its orientation to the other.⁹ Eichmann does not appear to be a self for others and so not wholly related to the other; his ‘self’ lacks, in Bonhoeffer’s sense, wholeness. This is a misdirected self which necessarily fails to be, in Bonhoeffer’s terms, ‘ethical’.

Bonhoeffer develops the idea of the self as either whole (τέλειος) or double-minded (δίψυχος). These twin images emerge beginning in *Discipleship*, where Bonhoeffer writes that τέλειος means ‘being determined, focused on a single goal; not simultaneously aiming for two goals; it means not being δίψυχος’ (DBWE 4:278 n. 93). This theme continues through the *Ethics* where wholeness connects with both reality and sociality. Christ is the measure of reality and so the one who confesses Christ partakes in that reality. Bonhoeffer writes,

⁹ The self is not a possession. One does not *have* a self, but one *is* a self. Despite the common phrase ‘being self-possessed’, the self is not a garment the I wears. Selves are not accepted or rejected according to circumstances. Instead, Bonhoeffer’s *self* refers to the *whole* self, the unity of the self in its orientation to itself or the other. Even the scriptural witness, when speaking of putting on the ‘new self’ (Ephesians 4:24, NASB), refers to the whole person, τὸν ἄνθρωπον. Ephesians 4:24 also notes that this self is created ‘in God’; it is not the work of the person. Bonhoeffer writes, ‘For we are God’s work, *created in Christ Jesus for good works*, for which God has prepared us beforehand to be our way of life’ (DBWE 4:278, emphasis in original). The human being, unified by and through Christ, can make no claim to its own possession of itself.

Whoever confesses the reality of Jesus Christ as the revelation of God confesses in the same breath the reality of God and the reality of the world, for they find God and the world reconciled in Christ. *Just for this reason the Christian is no longer the person of eternal conflict. As reality is one in Christ, so the person who belongs to this Christ-reality is a whole* (DBWE 6:62, emphasis mine).

Having a vision of reality, based on relation to Christ, grounds the whole self. Only that wholeness prevents the tearing apart of the self, due to 'eternal conflict' or the injustice of the world (DBWE 6:80). For the person justified by their own private virtue, only self-deception can prevent them from being destroyed by their own unwilling complicity in the injustice of the world. The choice they face is either self-deception or eternal conflict within themselves. Over against the person justified by their own power, Bonhoeffer offers the example of person of simplicity and wisdom. He writes,

Only the person who combines simplicity with wisdom can endure...A person is simple who in the confusion, the distortion, and the inversion of all concepts keeps in sight only the single truth of God. This person has an undivided heart, and is not a double-psyche, a person of two souls...The single-minded person...is able, free and unconstrained, to see the reality of the world (DBWE 6:81).

If wholeness is inextricably linked with reality, it is likewise linked with sociality in the form of the church-community. As Christ determines reality for the Christian, so Christ also constitutes the church-community. This church-community in Christ presents the truest measure of human being. As the measure of human being, the church is concerned with 'whole human beings in all their relationships' (DBWE 6:97). Here again, however, the church-community is only the measure of human being *because it partakes in Christ*. Without Christ, the church-community becomes only a collective of individuals rather than the place where 'Christ has taken form'. In *Letters and Papers from Prison*, Bonhoeffer draws on Stifter's *Witiko* to emphasise the sociality of the whole

self in relation to Christ and to others. In contrast to the double-minded (άνήρ δίψυχος) person the whole or perfect person (άνθρωπος τέλειος) looks to Christ's reality in community. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Witiko "does the whole" by trying to find his way to real life, always listening to advice from experienced persons...One becomes "a whole person" not all by oneself but only together with others' (DBWE 8:278).

Bonhoeffer's distinction between the whole and the double-minded persons becomes increasingly useful for considering the apparent self-contradiction in Eichmann.

Bonhoeffer's terms not only provide the language for considering 'the responsible human being', but for considering whether Eichmann is 'a whole person'. A lack of wholeness would be an ethical matter in Bonhoeffer's sense of not being 'together with others'. It seems to follow that the self of Eichmann is likely to be 'irresponsible' – and the next subsection will explore this view.

5.2 *Eichmann and the Responsible Human Being*

Arendt makes it patently clear that Eichmann does not relate to the vulnerable other; and here this raises the question of what it is to be a whole person and a human being. As seen above, Bonhoeffer contends that the single-minded person is wholly oriented to Christ who is the human being *par excellence*. This means not only that Christ is the human being for others but that those who have been conformed to Christ are also responsible for all others. The single-minded person is therefore responsible as a human being. In this light, Eichmann would appear to have no affinity with either the whole person or the responsible human being.

Again, in Bonhoeffer's terms, an orientation to oneself self would preclude rather than promote human responsibility; in Levinas's terms, it is the other that makes a claim on the self to be responsible; and finally, in Weil's terms, the *telos* of the human being is to attend to the other. So, a self which is unable to perceive the other attentively, to respond to the needs of the other ethically and to think consistently are decisive incapacities, preventing Eichmann from being called responsible.¹⁰ A lack of any sense of ethical responsibility or wholeness will render Eichmann incapable of resisting complicity in horrific evil.

The first subsection (below) will connect the self made whole in Christ to the self oriented to seeing (the other) and thinking (responsibly). The second subsection will consider seeing and thinking as ethical capacities. The third and fourth subsections return to Bonhoeffer and to Weil. Each of them stresses the orientational character of ethical seeing and thinking.

5.2.1 *Wholeness and Fragmentation in Bonhoeffer*

Central to Bonhoeffer's discussion of the human being is the concept of wholeness. He writes, 'There can only be understanding [of the self] from a firm point of unity [wholeness]...Unity of man means first that his existence is really concerned, and secondly that this existence can be envisaged in continuity' (DBWE 10:390).

Bonhoeffer's abiding concern is the real person; the unified and concrete human being within time and history (DBWE 10:393-394). The whole person suggests continuity;

¹⁰ The term 'inconstant' is Paul Ricoeur's. Ricoeur's project of presenting a self destabilised but esteemed is a helpful one. Cf. Ford 1999:89, Ricoeur 1992:168.

otherwise the self dissolves into fragments of particularity. A model of infinite particular moments renders concepts of 'history' and 'narrative' problematic. If the church is the community of those who are oriented towards Christ, then history and narrative provide the context for that orientation. Those who follow the incarnate Christ participate in the narrative of his own participation within history. The unified self, oriented to Christ, is necessarily a self within time and history, but this unity within time and history follows neither from history nor from the self. This unity follows from Christ's own affirmation of, and participation with, the world (DBWE 6:223).

For Bonhoeffer, either the self recognises itself as a limit to itself, or as 'fundamentally accessible and transparent' to itself. The former position recalls Bonhoeffer's positive appraisal in *Act and Being* of 'genuine transcendental thinking'. The latter designates the misunderstood interpretation of human self-knowledge found in idealism. For Bonhoeffer, this latter misunderstanding of the self is the assumption of philosophy, or 'the work of man par excellence' (DBWE 10:391).¹¹ In contrast to the purely philosophical self, the theological self perpetually exists in relation to genuine transcendence. Bonhoeffer writes, 'The nature of man lies not in immanent, quiescent possibilities, but in the restless reference to his own limitations' (DBWE 10:391). Bonhoeffer asserts that no genuine, transcendent limitation comes from the self's reflection on itself.

From where does this limitation come? Bonhoeffer affirms the role the other plays as a genuine limit; one of the principal results of sin is the reduction of the neighbour. He

¹¹ Despite his designation of philosophy as providing a false answer to 'the question of human being', Bonhoeffer displays a persistent willingness to engage with philosophy. Rather than a rejection of philosophy *per se*, which would disallow philosophical engagement, Bonhoeffer only rejects the idea of philosophy insofar as it explains humankind's 'question' in isolation from theology.

cites with relative approval the philosophy of Eberhard Grisebach and the theology of Friedrich Gogarten, both of whom emphasise the role the Thou plays in the formation of the self (DBWE 10:398,402). Yet, Bonhoeffer avoids rendering the other absolute. Even the making absolute of the other, as a function of the self's own reflection, transgresses against genuine alterity (DBWE 10:399). Although the human other unquestionably plays a crucial role in human self-understanding, it cannot *only* be the other which enables the possibility of the whole person.¹² Every attempt to locate transcendence within the self is humankind's immanent reflection on itself, in which no genuine transcendence may be found.

As early as *Sanctorum Communio* Bonhoeffer resists the conclusion that personhood originates solely from the encounter with the human other.¹³ Bonhoeffer cites two objections. First, if individuals become persons solely through encounters with other human beings, then effectively persons 'create' one another. For Bonhoeffer this is an 'intolerable' thought. Second, if human beings possess the power to facilitate personhood in another, then they equally have the power to destroy or subjugate that other. If the self has immediate access to the other, either with good or with evil intent, then the other is no longer genuinely exterior to the self. Bonhoeffer, like Levinas, rejects immediacy in the self-other relation.

¹² Bonhoeffer writes in critique of Grisebach, 'But Grisebach succeeds in it only by making the Thou absolute in place of the I and by giving it a position which can only be God's. Thus the I makes the other person absolute, recognises him as its concrete absolute limit, only in the end to let itself be given back its absolute nature by the absolute Thou' (DBWE 10:398-399).

¹³ Cf. DBWE 1:54. Bonhoeffer writes, 'The whole person, who is totally claimless, is claimed by this absolute demand. But this seems to make one human being the creator of the ethical person of the other, which is an intolerable thought.'

Despite these objections, Bonhoeffer holds out a privileged place for the other, or the neighbour, in the fullness of human existence.¹⁴ He admits that Grisebach comes closest (among the philosophers) to representing accurately the role the other plays in the emergence of the unified self. Given Grisebach's emphasis on the critical function of the Thou for the I, to say that Bonhoeffer retains a significant role for the other in self-formation does not overstate the case. Bonhoeffer argues in contrast to Grisebach that to the extent that the *human* other enables selfhood, this enabling occurs through the animation of the *divine* other. He writes, '*God or the Holy Spirit joins the concrete You; only through God's active working does the other become a You to me from whom my I arises*' (DBWE 1:55, emphasis in original). While this formulation receives no further attention from Bonhoeffer in *Sanctorum Communio*, it is worth developing in greater detail.

The idea of the divine other animating the human other as a source of ethical selfhood both preserves the concrete context of human selfhood and prevents persons from becoming the creator of other persons. God remains the creator of whole human persons, while the role of the concrete other in self-formation retains importance. Ethical selfhood is not an achievement of humankind. Instead, because the self always exists in relation to another, its formation entails passivity, or waiting. This thesis argues that a certain *orientation* of the individual facilitates ethical selfhood. This orientation is partially a function of human will. The self *chooses* to wait expectantly for the other. In this expectant waiting, the self conforms to Christ and thus resembles its *telos*. The self does not will itself into being, for that would be a return to the

¹⁴ Bonhoeffer writes, 'Thus the individual exists only in relation to an 'other'; individual does not mean solitary. *On the contrary, for the individual to exist, 'others' must necessarily be there*' (DBWE 1:51, emphasis in original).

philosophical self Bonhoeffer rejects. Instead, the self humbly wills to be open to and responsible for the other. Such openness acknowledges the contingency of human selfhood, the integral importance of relationality to selfhood and the inadequacy of the self to substantiate itself.

To what extent is this 'open orientation' possible given Bonhoeffer's development of the *cor curvum in se*? Bonhoeffer stresses that the self is 'turned in on itself', unable to open itself to exteriority. Bonhoeffer writes, "The I really remains in itself and that is not its credit, but its guilt. The thought imprisoned in itself, is the true expression of man questioning himself *in statu corruptionis*' (DBWE 10:400). Only with the inbreaking of God is an outward turn possible. The most that can be said, then, of humankind's capabilities to turn towards exteriority is that the self can be cognisant of genuine limitation. Human beings recognise their limit insofar as they taken from themselves and placed before God without qualification. It is the response of the self to this placement before absolute exteriority that conditions whether the self's orientation is directed towards the genuine other.¹⁵ Consequently, all human beings have the potential to recognise limitation, even if all cannot immediately choose outward orientation.

Eichmann appears to be oriented towards himself. He might be dependable insofar as he can be expected to exist for himself. Arendt admits that at times and in a non-ethical sense Eichmann was relatively consistent in his dealings with others (Arendt 2006:131). His instability follows from his lack of single-minded orientation.

¹⁵ Consider the biblical example of the rich young man in the gospel of Mark. His person was capable of approaching the genuine limit of Christ. The ruler's response, however, resulted in a turning away from an orientation of his life towards Christ. In a similar way, human beings can recognise genuine limits. The subsequent response dictates whether or not they can wait expectantly for the inbreaking of otherness.

Eichmann's double-mindedness prevents him from having stable ground from which to engage the vulnerable other. Here, however, it results in his lacking the wholeness of self to resist seductive Nazi ideology.¹⁶ He cannot envision his ethical obligation as anything other than blind obedience.¹⁷

5.2.2 *Seeing and Thinking as Ethical Capacities*

Eichmann is not a self for others. This is apparent in two key ways. First, Eichmann will be shown to lack an ethical vision.¹⁸ Only for those 'with eyes to see' does the other appear as one who beckons to the self. Second, while Eichmann is far from intellectually incompetent, he is, in a certain sense, *unable to think*. In this context, thinking possesses genuine ethical significance. The first section emphasises the transformative potential of vision. The second section highlights Weil's 'Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God' and introduces the role attention plays in terms of the self's ability to think. The third section wrestles with Martin Heidegger's essay 'What Calls for Thinking' and explores the claim that genuine thinking requires more than problem-solving. Genuine thinking assumes self-understanding. Read alongside

¹⁶ Cf. Kierkegaard, Søren, *Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening* ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 33-34. Kierkegaard states. 'Surrounded by hordes of men, absorbed in all sorts of secular matters, more and more shrewd about the ways of the world – such a person forgets himself, forgets his name divinely understood, does not dare to believe in himself, finds it too hazardous to be himself and far easier and safer to be like the others, to become a copy, a number, a mass man'.

¹⁷ Eichmann considered himself virtuous due to his unquestioning obedience. Arendt writes, quoting Eichmann's final statement, 'His guilt came from his obedience, and obedience is praised as a virtue. His virtue had been abused by the Nazi leaders' (Arendt 2006:247).

¹⁸ When Arendt describes Eichmann's account of events as 'distorted, of course, but not wholly devoid of truth' (Arendt 2006:40), she intimates both the scandal of Eichmann's person and the role vision plays in ethics. Rather than the overt, radically evil personage expected by the judges, it is Eichmann's distorted thinking and partiality which contributes to his irresponsibility. It is the banality of this 'distortion' of partial truth that renders Eichmann's example so chilling, insofar as many, if not most persons distort the truth to their benefit. In addition, the distortion of ethical vision will serve as a key component in developing the idea of attention as a contrast to Eichmann's inattentiveness.

one another, Bonhoeffer, Weil and Heidegger offer insight into the ethical possibilities of seeing and thinking.

The lack of wholeness of Eichmann prevents him from ethically seeing the other. As already discussed in relation to Weil, the metaphor of sight denotes more than physical perception. Beyond the physical possibility of seeing another human being, there is ethical sight, a perception of others in responsibility. One can affirm Emmanuel Levinas's dictum, 'Ethics is the spiritual optics' (TI 78). This 'spiritual optics' does not originate within the human self initiative. Instead, ethical vision emerges through reference, or orientation, to Christ. Christ operates as a lens through which the self relates to others.¹⁹ However, Christ is not simply a vehicle for the preservation of otherness. For Bonhoeffer, to 'behold Christ' is the primary purpose of the whole human being. The preservation of alterity is a derivative of that primary purpose.²⁰

5.2.3 Bonhoeffer and the 'Image of Christ'

¹⁹ One possible analogy here would be the effect of glasses on vision. Although philosophy can affirm the importance of the other (as Grisebach and Levinas demonstrate), it is through Christ that theology sharpens this emphasis on otherness. The distorted ethical vision of the human self can be 'corrected' to recognise clearly the other who exists before the self. Yet, this clarity is not to be confused with domination. Despite his concept of 'ethics as spiritual optics', Levinas is skeptical of the philosophical tradition which privileges sight and light. Levinas writes, 'Vision moves into grasp...Vision is not a transcendence. It ascribes a signification by the *relation* it makes possible. It opens nothing that, beyond the same, would be absolutely other, that is, in itself...In fleeing itself in vision consciousness returns to itself' (TI 191, emphasis in original). For Levinas vision-based models privilege the total disclosure of otherness to the harsh exposure of the self's own lights. In contrast, otherness refracted through Christ remains otherness as far as the self is concerned. The self holds no claim over the other.

²⁰ Bonhoeffer's portrayal might be called a distinctly Christological beatific vision. For Bonhoeffer, as in Catholicism, the end of human beings is to behold God. However, Bonhoeffer privileges a vision of Christ as representative of God. Catholic teaching, on the other hand, stresses the vision of God in his transcendence. This vision of God can only be realised if God gives human beings 'the capacity for it' (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* Rev. Ed. (London: Burns and Oakes, 1999), 234, cited hereafter as *Catechism*). This vision is the 'goal of our journey here below' (*Catechism* 41). See also the opening paragraphs of the papal encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, where visual metaphors of light and vision are prevalent: '...man is constantly tempted to turn his gaze away from the living and true God in order to direct it to idols' (Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1993), 3).

Can Bonhoeffer contribute to an account of ethical vision? As Ernst Feil notes, it is unusual for a Protestant theologian to privilege the visual component of engagement with Christ.²¹ Yet, in *Discipleship* Bonhoeffer references the visual aspect of the self's relationship to Christ in two ways. First, he describes how relationship with Christ results in a *conformatio Christi*. The self, to the extent that it relates to Christ, becomes like Christ in his humanity. It is the transforming gaze of Christ which changes the self.²² Bonhoeffer states, 'But God keeps on looking at God's lost creature. For the second time, God seeks to create the divine image in us...Since fallen human beings cannot recover and assume the form of God, there is only one way to find help. It is none other than God, who assumes human form and comes to us' (DBWE 4:282-283). Second, he stresses how 'looking on Christ' transforms the self. In this model, only hinted at by Bonhoeffer, the self's gaze towards Christ conditions the self. Bonhoeffer writes, 'The image of the risen one will transform those who look at it in the same way as the image of the crucified one. Those who behold Christ are being drawn into Christ's image, changed into the likeness of Christ's form. Indeed, they become mirrors of the divine image' (DBWE 4:286).

Although Bonhoeffer preserves the complete initiative of Christ who approaches human beings, the self plays a role in this transformation. That role is one of orientation. The disciple orients towards Christ, with 'eyes to see'. In Hebrew scripture, the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel chastise a people who 'have eyes but do not see'.²³ These verses imply a volitional element to being transformed by God; the people do not see because

²¹ Feil writes, 'It is surprising, therefore, that at the end of the book there should be language about image, about seeing and unmediated contemplation...' (Feil 1985:81). Feil does not elaborate more, however, on the implications of Bonhoeffer's emphasis on vision.

²² Attention to Christ, for Weil, performs a similar function. As the self attends to the reality of Christ, the self is taken up into that reality. Cf. also Chapter Two, 'Being in Christ'

²³ Ezekiel 12:2, Jeremiah 5:21, NASB

they are a 'rebellious house'.²⁴ It is indeed possible to avoid the gaze of Christ, or for one's spiritual and ethical vision to atrophy. This volitional facet of vision works alongside Bonhoeffer's insistence that God comes to humankind (DBWE 4:284-285). Bonhoeffer writes, 'The image of Jesus Christ, *which is always before the disciples' eyes*, and before which all other images fade away, enters, permeates, and transforms them...' (DBWE 4:281, emphasis mine). The image of Christ perpetually exists before the disciples; they choose to gaze upon, or ignore, Christ. Their decision results either in transformation by Christ or ethical blindness.

To the extent that Bonhoeffer allows the metaphor of vision a place in the self's becoming, how is this an ethical concept? The transforming power of Christ's image draws the self into wholeness. This whole, or full, self is a self completely beholden to Christ, and thus takes on the nature of Christ. As Christ is completely *pro me*, the self in Christ becomes free 'for the other'.²⁵ In *Discipleship*, participation in Christ means that 'our new humanity now also consists in bearing the troubles and the sins of all others' (DBWE 4:285). The transforming power of Christ changes the self into a self for others in creaturely responsibility. Such responsibility subverts the dominating tendencies of human beings. The self which gazes on Christ is a self which both exists for the other and preserves the genuine alterity of the other.

5.2.4 Weil's 'Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies for the Love of God'

²⁴ Ezekiel 12:1-3, NASB

²⁵ Cf. DBWE 12:315, DBWE 3:63.

Weil's 'Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God' provides an account of attention which provides a bridge between the seeing self and the thinking self. For Weil, attention is a 'way of looking' (WG 65).²⁶ Attention is a faculty of the human person. It is also fundamentally intertwined with the non-action action of thought (WG 62). Two qualities of attention ground further consideration of how the unified self sees and thinks. First, attention requires the orientation of the whole self. This wholeness indicates a wholeness of focus encompassing intellect, emotions and will. Recalling Bonhoeffer's distinction between the single and the double-minded person, attention requires the whole self rather than the double-minded self. Second, although this shift of orientation is volitional and active, it has prominent receptive and passive qualities. These two characteristics of attention bridge Bonhoeffer's account of the seeing self and Heidegger's concept of thinking in 'What is Called Thinking?'

First, Weil characterises attention as an orientation of the whole self. Partial or incomplete attention undermines itself. Weil suggests considerable *theological* potential of attention when she links attention to prayer. Prayer is 'the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable toward God' (WG 57). Even if not intended for prayer, attention 'of a lower kind' directs the self in study. Even in its lowest form, Weil states that 'Never in any case whatever is a genuine effort of the attention wasted' (WG 58). Genuine attention, for Weil, never fails to illuminate the soul. Weil writes, 'If there is a real desire, if the thing desired is really light, the desire for light produces it. There is a

²⁶ In Chapter 3 of this thesis, it is noted that phenomenology is concerned with objects' mode, or way, of being in the world. In conjunction with that claim, this chapter suggests that the self must participate in a certain way of being towards the world in order to see the way of being of what presents itself to thought. One must wait in a certain way to see what comes to the self. Only such waiting allows the self to see and engage the other who appears within the world.

real desire when there is an effort of attention' (WG 59). Yet, this desire for light only occurs in truth where 'all other incentives are absent' (WG 59). These quotes demonstrate the jealousy of attention; it permits the soul no other lovers. A multiplicity of desires results in the loss of genuine attention and even the degeneration of the self into illusion.²⁷ Weil depicts attention as a product of desire. Attention requires the full desire and the will of the self in order to transform, or more appropriately illumine, the soul. This amplifies the volitional and active element of attention. The self wills to attend. This will-to-attention follows from a genuine joy in what is being attended to. Specifically with regard to academic studies, Weil writes, 'The intelligence can only be led by desire. For there to be desire, there must be pleasure and joy in the work. The intelligence only grows and bears fruit in joy. The joy of learning is as indispensable in study as breathing is in running' (WG 61).²⁸ The joy that facilitates attention in study also facilitates joy in ethical relation to another. Ethical being-for-another incorporates a deep sense of joy, as both the impetus and the result of Christian responsibility.²⁹

Second, in addition to the active component of attention, Weil also emphasises the passive character of attention. Even within school study, the gaze of the self attends to that which comes to the self. Weil remarks, 'When we force ourselves to fix the gaze, not only of our eyes but of our souls, upon a school exercise in which we have failed through sheer stupidity, a sense of our mediocrity is borne in upon us with irresistible evidence. No knowledge is more to be desired' (WG 60). Attention is active insofar as one may

²⁷ Weil unfailingly refers to the soul in visual terms, drawing heavily on her Neoplatonic framework. In one of her most profound examples of how attention works, she writes, 'The useless efforts of the Curé d'Ars, for long and painful years, in his attempt to learn Latin bore fruit in marvelous discernment that enabled him to see the very soul of his penitents behind their words and even their silences' (WG 59).

²⁸ Weil's concept of joy does not entail ease or freedom from suffering. Weil's decreated self takes joy in its reality, even if that reality is revealed through affliction.

²⁹ For further discussion of joy and responsibility, see Ford 1999:219ff.

choose whether or not to attend to the exercise, but it is passive insofar as the school exercise, the cause for uncomfortable self-recognition, is an exterior object. It comes to the self and only then does the attentive self go out to it. She writes, 'We do not obtain the most precious gifts by going in search of them but by waiting for them' (WG 62). One cannot initiate recognition of mediocrity; this knowledge can only be *received*.

Attentive thinking is not simply a 'furrowed brow' and an attempt at intense focus of thought. Instead, attention is an orientation to what is being studied; it is a giving of oneself to the subject at hand. Although this intrinsically involves certain acts of study, it also remains an act of detachment (WG 62). The lack of such detachment has significant consequences. Weil writes:

All wrong translations, all absurdities in geometry problems, all clumsiness of style, and all faulty connection of ideas in compositions and essays, all such things are due to the fact that thought has seized upon some idea too hastily, and being thus prematurely blocked, is not open to the truth. The cause is that we have wanted to be too active; we have wanted to carry out a search....This is the way with all essential truths (WG 62).

This waiting for the truth of school studies also applies in ethics. The 'letting be' of thought in study corresponds with the ability to wait upon the other in human ethical life. Attention in study and thought clears the way for attention oriented to the love of God. As Weil observes, this attentive love for God is the same as attentive love for one's neighbour (WG 64). Whether in study, thought or ethics, attention plays a significant role. Attention orients the self towards its object of attention, while not attempting to possess or to acquire that object. At every point it is the contemplative work of orientation. The attentive self sees truly and thinks without attempting to grasp its object of its attention.

5.2.5 Heidegger's 'What Calls for Thinking?'

The importance of thinking for the self finds another proponent in the work of Martin Heidegger. In his 1951-1952 lectures, titled 'What Calls for Thinking', he stresses that thinking is more complicated than most assume. He writes, 'Therefore thinking itself is man's simplest, and for that reason hardest, handiwork, if from time to time it would be accomplished properly' (Heidegger 1993:381). Thinking requires more than simply rational capability; true thinking also requires something *worth thinking about*.

Furthermore, the self must 'incline towards what addresses itself to thought' (Heidegger 1993:381). Heidegger provides an account of a self which remains passive before what addresses itself to thought, but is active in orientation towards what is worth thinking about.

For Heidegger, the problem of thought in human beings is not that persons have not thought hard enough. The problem is that what is most thought-provoking has turned away from humankind (Heidegger 1993:381).³⁰ Heidegger describes this turning away as a withdrawal from human beings. Being resists all attempts at disclosure; the self cannot fully understand 'what must be thought about'. The only appropriate response is

³⁰ It should be noted that here Heidegger does not specify Being as what is most thought-provoking. Instead, what is most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking. However, there is reason to think that Being is what is most thought-provoking. Only thinking may discover the essence of philosophy, which is what thinking is supposed to do (Heidegger 1993:382). Philosophy, for Heidegger, is concerned with the meaning of beings. Heidegger writes, '...what is philosophically primary is not a theory of concept-formation in historiology, nor the theory of historical knowledge, nor even the theory of history as the object of historiology; what is primary is rather the interpretation of genuinely historical beings with regard to their historicity' (Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), 10). If philosophy is centrally concerned with the being of beings, and philosophy is also a primary realm of thinking, then it stands to reason that what is most thought-provoking is the meaning of being. For the purposes of this section, however, what is critical is that Heidegger develops a *way* of thinking. This way of thinking situates his account within a similar discourse as is being developed through Bonhoeffer and Weil.

one of inclining toward what must be thought: 'As we are drawing toward what withdraws, we ourselves point toward it. We are who we are by pointing in that direction...' (Heidegger 1993:374). As air rushes in to fill a vacuum, the person inclined towards thinking follows after what is 'food for thought'. What, then, is the proper orientation of human beings? The human being can only be inclined towards thinking and wait to be taken up into the withdrawal of what is thought-provoking, or Being. For this reason Heidegger writes, 'All through his life and right into his death, Socrates did nothing else than place himself into this draft, this current, and maintain himself in it. This is why he is the purest thinker of the West' (Heidegger 1993:382).

For Heidegger, 'to call' is to 'make way for' or 'invite' (Heidegger 1993:386,387). What is thought-provoking invites the self to genuine thinking. Yet, the self is responsible for maintaining oneself in that invitation. This self-maintaining, as seen above, involves inclining oneself towards what invites thought. In this regard, Heidegger's account confirms the importance of self-orientation. While emphasis on self-orientation is implicit in both Bonhoeffer and Weil, Heidegger does not stress the consequences of not thinking with the same intensity as Bonhoeffer and Weil. What, for Heidegger, is the consequence of a lack of thought? Heidegger observes that 'Most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking' (Heidegger 1993:370). For Heidegger, people philosophise but do not *think*. They speak about things, including Being, but do not place themselves before things and Being. They do not wait to be taken up into Being. In the speaking and philosophising about Being, people actually prevent the unfolding of Being. In their philosophising they believe themselves to be thinking without actually doing so. The

problem with the absence of thought, then, is one of illusion.³¹ Furthermore, this illusion is universal; Heidegger writes that all are not yet thinking.

There are three insights gleaned from this sketch of Heidegger's account. First, Heidegger accentuates the importance of thinking for selfhood. Second, Heidegger stresses the passive character of human thinking before Being. Third, Heidegger emphasises the orientational character of human being and thought. The authentic thinking self, for Heidegger, thinks Being rather than of beings (Heidegger 1993:234). This distinction between thinking Being and of beings serves as a crucial question for subjectivity. The self, for Heidegger, is determined not by ethical or relational categories, but by thought.³² Only the thinking self, the self which thinks and waits upon

³¹ In 'Letter on Humanism' Heidegger notes that 'When thinking comes to an end, by slipping out of its element it replaces this loss by procuring a validity for itself as *technē*, as an instrument of education and therefore as a classroom matter and later a cultural concern' (Heidegger 1977:221). The consequence of inadequate thinking is a calcification of genuine thought; such calcification results in a retreat from the mystery and 'the truth of Being' (Heidegger 1977:223). At risk, then, is the opportunity for human beings to dwell before Being. Heidegger envisions more tangible consequences of not thinking in 'The Question Concerning Technology'. Here lack of genuine thinking before Being results in a stance of domination and control. This stance, for Heidegger, manifests itself in the elevation of modern technology. This elevation of technology invites 'enframing'. Heidegger defines enframing as '...a destining that gathers together into a revealing that challenges forth' (Heidegger 1977:336). Key to this definition, for the purposes of this chapter, is the language of 'revealing' and 'challenge'. In these two words the acquisitive and dominating characteristic of modern technology manifests itself. Rather than a 'letting be' of the natural world, modern technology facilitates the human desire for 'standing reserve' (*Bestand*). Standing reserve defines the world mastered and exploited for humankind's own purposes. In addition, technological ratiocination understands the relation of human beings with the world as one of causality. This causal view engages the world primarily as fuel for humankind's purpose of crafting. While the causal interpretation of the world has a place, there are severe consequences for restricting human existence to mechanisms of causality. In addition to the obvious ecological implications, Heidegger notes theological problems as well. He writes, 'He then becomes even in theology the God of the philosophers, namely, of those who define the unconcealed and the concealed in terms of the causality of making, without ever considering the essential provenance of this causality' (Heidegger 1977:331). When read together, these essays suggest that the proper orientation of the human being is one of relative detachment. Instead of appropriating thought for itself, which in turn results in the appropriation of the natural world, the self exists in an attitude of waiting. Heidegger writes, 'But if man is to find his way again into the nearness of Being he must first to exist in the nameless...Before he speaks man must first let himself be claimed again by Being, taking the risk that under this claim he will seldom have much to say' (Heidegger 1977:223).

³² Of course, it is precisely on this basis that Levinas criticises Heidegger. Heidegger states clearly that authenticity and inauthenticity are not 'moral-existential' or 'anthropological' categories (Heidegger 1977:236). In contrast, for Levinas humankind can *only* be thought of in an ethical way.

Being, resists becoming ensnared in the everyday and losing itself in distraction.³³ In addition to self-awareness, thinking clears space for Being. Heidegger writes of Being, 'The self-giving [of Being's truth] into the open, along with the open region itself, is Being itself' (Heidegger 1993:238). Thinking clears space for Being to appear.

Second, for Heidegger thinking is a passive endeavour. Even when the self thinks Being, Being does not always disclose itself to the self. Thinking being only clears space for Being.³⁴ Heidegger warns against the pretentiousness of human being's attempt to expose and possess what is ultimate. Heidegger writes, 'When philosophy attends to its essence it does not make forward strides at all...Progression, that is, progression forward from this place, is a mistake that follows thinking as the shadow that thinking itself casts' (Heidegger 1993:238). Like Weil's account of attention, what is worth attending to remains distant from human beings.

³³ Krell notes that inauthenticity, or the failure to think being, can also be described as the human tendency to 'forget what is most its own' (Heidegger 1977:236). Insofar as this forgetfulness can be thought of as distraction, here one sees overlap with Weil. Like Heidegger, Weil sees a principal problem within subjectivity in the tendency of the self to gravitate towards distraction. The distraction of the self directs the self's gaze away from the God. For Weil, this distraction is willed; the self cannot bear being before the truth. She writes, 'Men feel there is a mortal danger in facing this truth [that no true good below] squarely for any length of time...Such knowledge strikes more surely than a sword; it inflicts a death more frightening than that of the body' (WG 139). Here a significant contrast is revealed between Weil and Bonhoeffer on the one hand, and Heidegger on the other. For the former, the truth towards which the self inclines destabilises the self. Whether this is due to Christ, as in Bonhoeffer, or God's purity, as in Weil, both stress that being before God is a *provocation*. The self is irrevocably different after the encounter with the truth. For the latter, human beings come to dwell in Being. It is described as a place of familiarity, a 'homeland' (Heidegger 1977:242). Rather than being called into question by Being, 'Man is the shepherd of Being' and 'the neighbour of Being' (Heidegger 1977:234,245). This is not a polemical distinction. Although Bonhoeffer couches the encounter with the divine other as, in part, one of provocation, he also understands Christ as reality. Reality, as the opposite of illusion, is the proper 'dwelling' place of human beings. In this way, even Bonhoeffer and Weil, for whom it has been argued that existence before the truth is a provocation, can say that existence before the truth is *where human beings belong*. What constitutes a genuine difference between the thinkers is the nature of the coming to a place of human belonging. Bonhoeffer, Levinas and Weil depict coming before the truth, or reality, as discomfiting and even disturbing. In contrast, Heidegger characterises this coming before Being largely as a 'destiny', or welcoming of the self.

³⁴ Heidegger notes, 'Thinking attends to the clearing of Being in that it puts its saying of Being into language as the home of ek-sistence. Thus, thinking is a deed. But a deed that also surpasses all *praxis*. Thinking towers above action and production, not through the grandeur of its achievement and not as a consequence of its effect, but through the humbleness of its inconsequential accomplishment' (Heidegger 1977:262).

Third, while Being cannot be summoned to appear before human beings, Heidegger's self orients itself towards Being. Although the self cannot summon Being, it is the stance of the self which invites Being to appear. This is the orientational structure of Heideggerian thinking. The focus on Being instead of the multiplicity of beings indicates the ideal sort of orientation. The expectant stance of the self in thinking Being resonates with Weil's own insistence on expectant attending before God. Both accounts stress active and passive characteristics of existing before reality, while emphasising in different ways the exclusivity of that orientation.

5.2.6 *Closing Remarks Eichmann's Irresponsibility*

Eichmann's irresponsibility seems to follow, in Bonhoeffer's terms, from a lack of wholeness. This lack of wholeness precludes ethical orientation of oneself towards the other. Lack of orientation towards the other removes the possibility of expectant, or attentive, waiting. For Bonhoeffer, the disciple waits upon Christ for transformation, all the while gazing upon Christ. Weil attends to God and the other, which purifies the self. Heideggerian thinking prepares the way for the presencing of Being. These accounts require a self which is attentive and aware. They are expectant, insofar as they wait for what has not yet come. Eichmann, in these terms, has no such expectancy.³⁵ His only

³⁵ There are parallels here with Kierkegaard's diagnosis of despair-as-possibility/necessity in *Sickness Unto Death*. He writes, 'Therefore, the tragedy is not that such a self did not amount to something in the world; no, the tragedy is that he did not become aware of himself...' (Kierkegaard 1980:36). This is the danger of existing in possibility. The self chases a false reality which is not in accord with actuality, or necessity. This lack of self-awareness results in the inability to return to one's real or actual self. Eichmann's existence is possible insofar as his self-estimation far exceeds his reality. Arendt notes his tendency to self-inflation through bragging (Arendt 2006:46-48). In his desire to be something that the historical record shows he was not, Eichmann demonstrates both his despair and his lack of ethical selfhood. However, Eichmann embraces necessity insofar as he is fatalistic about his ability to be other than he is. For example, his main reason for not resisting the Final Solution was that 'he could see no one,

hope is for himself, for his advancement within the Nazi party. A lack of expectancy obscures ethical vision and casts oneself onto its own possibility. Unable to bear the weight of his disunity, Arendt's Eichmann evades reality.³⁶ Arendt makes it clear that regarding himself, Eichmann was nothing if not delusional. She writes, 'That such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together which, perhaps, are inherent in man – that was, in fact, the lesson one could learn in Jerusalem' (Arendt 2006:288). Arendt returns repeatedly to Eichmann's contradictory statements as evidence of his thoughtlessness. Eichmann's penchant for contradiction is egregiously demonstrated in his final remarks. Arendt writes:

He was in complete command of himself, nay, he was more: he was completely himself. Nothing could have demonstrated this more

no one at all, who actually was against the Final Solution' (Arendt 2006:116). Eichmann could not envision another way of being outside of his immediate context. Rather than existing between possibility and necessity, as Kierkegaard proposes, Eichmann exists on the extreme poles of each category.

³⁶ A colorful example of the illusory self is popularly communicated by Lewis's *The Great Divorce* (Lewis 2002). Lewis tells of a spirit visiting 'the valley of the shadow of life'. Foreshadowing this chapter's connection between the self and repentance, the guiding spirit playing Virgil to the protagonist's Dante says, 'The question is whether she is a grumbler, or only a grumble. If there is a real woman – even the least trace of one – still there inside the grumbling, it can be brought to life again...and yourself, in a dark hour, may will that mood, embrace it. Ye can repent and come out of it again. But there may come a day when you can do that no longer. Then there will be no you left to criticise the mood, nor even to enjoy it, but just a grumble itself going on forever like a machine' (Lewis 2002:77-78). This description resonates with Weil's own claim that affliction can render the self an 'egoism without an I'. This story suggests that a self may not be present at the end of a lifetime of disunity. However, a similar, but ultimately different example of Lewis's might be that of the dwarf and the tragedian. In this tale, Lewis describes a conversation between an angelic woman and her husband from when she was alive. As the narrative progresses, it becomes clear that the husband is a shadow of his former self, overwhelmed by his persona as a tragedian. He is represented as a dwarf, chained to an actor who speaks for him. This actor, the Tragedian, dramatises and twists everything which his wife says to evoke pity and guilt on her behalf. The image drawn is one of a person struggling against what it knows to be true. Lewis writes, "Frank! Frank!" she cried in a voice that made the whole wood ring. 'Look at me. *Look* at me. What are you doing with that great, ugly doll? Let go of the chain. Send it away. It is *you* I want. Don't you see what nonsense it's talking.' Merriment danced in her eyes. She was sharing a joke with the Dwarf, right over the head of the Tragedian. Something not unlike a smile struggled to appear on the Dwarf's face. For he was looking at her now. Her laughter was past his first defences. He was struggling to keep it out, but already with imperfect success' (Lewis 2002:126-127, emphasis in original). Unlike the first tale, this second story describes how a self can *change*, rather than simply be present or absent. The question is not whether or not one is a self, but what sort of self one is, fragmented or whole. As this tale illustrates, the husband remains a fragmented self, chained to himself in a cycle of self-love. Only the encounter with an other, in this case an encounter with joy, can possibility liberate him.

convincingly than the grotesque silliness of his last words. He began by stating emphatically that he was a *Gottgläubiger*, to express in common Nazi fashion that he was no Christian and did not believe in life after death. He then proceeded: "After a short while, gentlemen, *we shall all meet again*. Such is the fate of all men. Long live Germany, long live Argentina, long live Austria. *I shall not forget them*" (Arendt 2006:252 emphasis in original).

Eichmann's proclivity for contradiction might be inconsequential. However, Eichmann's commitment to bragging, his inability to 'see things from the other's point of view', his love of 'officialese' and his blatant contradictions all suggest, for Bonhoeffer, a fundamental lack of wholeness (Arendt 2006:48). From this disunity genuinely responsible action appears impossible.

5.3 *Eichmann's Irresponsibility: Hardness of Heart*

If Eichmann's lack of wholeness renders him virtually *unable* to see and to respond to the other, then Eichmann's ethical failure consists of his *unwillingness* to respond to the claim of the other upon himself (Arendt 2006:49). Closure to others, and thus responsibility, is what the biblical witness calls 'hardness of heart'. Although the self relies wholly on the inbreaking of exteriority in order to move beyond itself, the self possesses an ability to remain open to what is exterior. Relating Eichmann's closure to exteriority to this idea of hardness of heart opens the way for fruitful reflection on the biblical text and highlights the volitional character of responsibility.

Two forms of hardness of heart implicitly exist in the biblical text; in diverse ways Eichmann personifies both forms. Hardness of heart represents not only the resistance to genuine exteriority, but also the evasion of the demand which appears to the self in the form of the other. Resistance and evasion, therefore, characterise the two forms of

being hard of heart. In both the resistance to and evasion of ethical relation, the self seeks to remove the provocation of the other. This removal of the other as provocation to the self echoes the claims of both Levinas and Bonhoeffer; the self either responds to the claim of the other or attempts to remove that claim by force. In addition to closing oneself from ethical relation, hardness of heart resonates with Bonhoeffer's concept of disunity of self.³⁷ As the self insulates itself against the claim of the other, the self loses the ability to recognise and to respond to genuine otherness.

Eichmann's inability to, 'look at anything from the other fellow's point of view' becomes an unwillingness to exist before the demands of others. Arendt writes,

The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to *think*, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such (Arendt 2006:49, emphasis in original).

Arendt's Eichmann both insulates himself against the call or vision of the other and demonstrates an unwillingness to face the other for whom one is directly responsible. This avoidance of otherness, and thus responsibility, renders Eichmann's irresponsible. Eichmann's evil also does not consist solely of heinous acts.³⁸ His irresponsibility follows from his negation of otherness, through both resistance and evasion. The first two subsections of this section tease out concepts of ethical resistance and evasion based on

³⁷ The New Testament presents the Pharisees as being hard of heart (Matthew 19:8). They persistently set themselves over against others. Bonhoeffer writes that the Pharisee is 'the epitome of the human being in the state of disunion' (DBWE 6:310). Disunity, or being torn in between competing orientations, results in either self-deception about one's righteousness or hardness of heart. Eichmann embodies both alternatives (DBWE 6:80).

³⁸ As suggested above, Eichmann's transgression is systemic, rather than individual. He facilitated large-scale genocide, but did not personally oversee murders.

the biblical text. The second two subsections take gleaned insights from the text and integrate those insights into the discussion of Eichmann's irresponsibility.

5.3.1 *Hardness of Heart: Resistance*

The biblical witness attests to the phenomenon of being hard of heart *only in relation to others*. Within the context of Hebrew scripture, hardness of heart frequently describes one's relationship to God. The setting of oneself against God occurs both on a personal and a corporate level.³⁹ Despite the occasional occurrence of personal rebellion, the majority of biblical instances of hardening of heart reference Israel's relationship to God. Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah and Zechariah all reference Israel's hardening of heart towards God. In the context of the New Testament, the gospel of Matthew references the Pharisees' hardness of heart.⁴⁰ The gospel of Mark locates the hardness of heart in the disciples who doubt Jesus's preaching to the multitude.⁴¹ Ephesians cites Gentiles as being hard of heart.⁴²

These texts share an emphasis on the relational character of hardening one's heart. The Pharisees' hardness of heart towards God results in a compromise of the Law regarding divorce. This compromise reduces penalties for divorce, further destabilising the already precarious situation of women in the first-century world. Jesus's restriction of divorce supports the woman as other in a patriarchal social and religious context. In contrast to the disciples' hardness of heart, Jesus offers a feast for the other in the form of the poor multitude. In contrast to the hardness of heart found in the Gentiles, the

³⁹ Cf. 2 Chronicles 36:11-14 for the biblical account of Zedekiah's personal resistance to God.

⁴⁰ Matthew 19:8, NASB

⁴¹ Mark 6:52, 8:17, NASB

⁴² Ephesians 4:18, NASB

readers of Ephesians are to 'speak truth each one of you with his neighbour...be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other...' (Ephesians 4:25,32, NASB). The biblical metaphor of hardening one's heart reflects the setting of oneself against both the divine and the human other.

The phenomenon of being hard at heart, as far as the biblical witness is concerned, is a *relational* and an *ethical* idea. It does not reference a state of being in isolation; to be hard of heart is to resist the ethical relation to another.⁴³ Resistance to the other is volitional insofar as it signifies a conscious turning of oneself away from another. In the book of Exodus, Pharaoh's hardening of heart suggests more than a simple inability to hear the pleas of the Israelites. Instead, Pharaoh's actions indicate an intentional turning against the oppressed. Fielding Moses's request for time to retreat into the wilderness to sacrifice to God, Pharaoh not only denies Moses's request, but increases the Israelites' labour (Exodus 5:7-11, NASB). He steels himself against the Israelites, in order that he might be vindicated against them.⁴⁴ The Israelites in Exodus embody the poor and the oppressed; they are completely at the mercy of the Egyptians. Pharaoh's example in Exodus serves, for the purposes of this argument, as the archetypal account of hardening one's heart. Again, however, the biblical witness does not speak monolithically on this idea. As indicated in Ezekiel, the metaphor of hardening one's heart characterises the relationship between God and Israel as much as it does Israel and her foes. The biblical text consistently emphasises the role the other plays in the

⁴³ Ezekiel 36:26 depicts God announcing to Israel that he will 'remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh' (NASB). In being given a heart of flesh, the people are identified as being the people of God. The people are not given a heart of flesh in isolation. They are given the heart of flesh as part of a relational encounter. The passage continues: 'You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; *so you will be my people, and I will be your God*' (emphasis mine). In contrast, having a heart of stone represents the deafening of the self to the other.

⁴⁴ Exodus 8:15,32 NASB

hardening of one's heart. The self is always engaged by another; hardening of heart indicates a response to that engagement.

The metaphor of hardness of heart extends into the New Testament. In Matthew 13, when questioned by the disciples regarding why he speaks in parables, Jesus responds by quoting Isaiah, 'In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; for *the heart of this people has become dull*, with their eyes and their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes...But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear"' (Matthew 13:14-16, NASB, emphasis mine).⁴⁵ Although this text speaks to a communal context (i.e. Israel's failure to believe), the metaphor possesses ethical significance on a smaller scale. As in Exodus, the failure of the self to be open to the other, to have a 'heart of flesh', prevents the self from being responsible for the other. As hearts can become dull, so human beings can become more or less attentive to the other. With every decision for or against the other, the attentive possibility of the self grows or diminishes. In extreme circumstances, selves may become so turned in on themselves they are virtually beyond change. What begins with resistance to the claim of the other ends with an inability to do otherwise.

5.3.2 *Hardness of Heart: Evasion*

⁴⁵ The New International Version of the bible translates ἐπαχύνθη as 'calloused', while Hagner renders it 'grown hard' (Hagner, Donald A., *Matthew 1-13. Word Biblical Commentary* vol. 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 370). Luz translates 'was made impervious' (Luz, Ulrich, *Matthew 8-20, Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* ed. Helmut Koester trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 274). Albright and Mann translate 'grown dull' (Albright, W.F. and C.S. Mann, *Matthew. The Anchor Bible* vol. 26 (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 164). Harrington translates 'grown fat' (Harrington, Daniel J., *The Gospel of Matthew. Sacra Pagina Series* ed. Daniel J. Harrington vol. 1 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 193). Regardless of the precise translation, these variations follow Hagner's assessment that the biblical intention is to communicate insensitivity (Hagner 1993:370). In addition, Hagner and Luz helpfully point out that in this passage suggests a 'willful' hardening of heart, rather than an instance where God hardens hearts (Hagner 1993:373, Luz 2001:247).

Hardness of heart manifests itself in evasion as well as resistance. If resistance is active initiative against the other, as in Exodus's depiction of Pharaoh, then evasion is the passive possibility of hardness of heart. This too is implied in the biblical text.⁴⁶ First, this subsection deals with the biblical witness regarding evasion. Second, it develops Bonhoeffer's own account of evasion in *Discipleship*. In both, evasion possesses ethical importance. Evasion is turning away from one's responsibility; it is a fleeing from the presence of another.

In the New Testament, Luke 9 illustrates both the call to the Kingdom of God and the response to it of those who hear. Specifically, Luke 9 offers insight into the form evasion takes in the world. The gospel of Luke depicts two persons who respond positively to Jesus's call to proclaim the Kingdom of God, but postpone that proclamation in light of other obligations. Jesus's response is decisive. To the man who wanted to bury his father, Jesus says, 'Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God' (Luke 9:60, NASB). To the man who wanted to say goodbye to his family, Jesus says, 'No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God' (Luke 9:62, NASB). Luke Timothy Johnson notes with regard to kingdom 'fitness' that the text suggests this is a category of direction, rather than ethical aptitude. He writes, 'For [preaching the kingdom of God], a

⁴⁶ There are many instances in the bible of persons avoiding the call of God. Exodus chapters 3 and 4 depict Moses as reticent to undertake the task given to him by God. Although he eventually agrees, the text indicates clearly that Moses wishes someone else to be chosen (Exodus 4:13,14, NASB). The prophet Jonah provides a particularly glaring example of such evasion: "The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, "Arise, go to Ninevah the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord so he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord' (Jonah 1:1-3, NASB). The example of Jonah highlights the role ethical orientation plays in evasion. Evasion is not simply being irresponsible, although evasion does imply a failure of responsibility. It is fleeing from another's presence.

sense of direction and concentration is required.⁴⁷ Johnson implies both the orientational and the attentive structure of relating to the kingdom. It is precisely this attentive orientation to the other that allows acknowledgement of the self's presence before the other. It is also the character of this presence before the other which initiates, in Levinas's terms, either responsibility for the other or murder (TI 198).

If evasion is understood as fleeing from the presence of the other, to where does one flee? There are several possible answers to this question. First, the self can negate entirely the presence which calls it into question.⁴⁸ Second, the self can seek physical flight from its obligation, in terms of solitude from the other. Third, the self may seek a higher obligation to override the demand placed upon it by the other. All three of these approaches have been touched on in this thesis. The first possibility, or other-negation, characterises the approach Levinas describes. In the face of a responsibility for another which is an 'accusation' and a 'persecution', the self may attempt to negate that responsibility through the negation of the other (OBBE 112). Levinas writes, 'Murder alone lays claim to total negation...To kill is not to dominate but to annihilate; it is to renounce comprehension entirely' (TI 198). If, however, the other who comes to the self is the divine other, then this first evasion is impossible.

Second, evasion may take form through physical flight from the other. The biblical example of Jonah embodies this evasion. As Jonah seeks freedom from the obligation

⁴⁷ Johnson, Luke Timothy, *The Gospel of Luke. Sacra Pagina Series* ed. Daniel J. Harrington vol. 3 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 163.

⁴⁸ It may be objected that negating the source of otherness belongs under the category of resistance rather than evasion. This is a fair point. The difference, however, lies in the intention. Hardness of heart as resistance implies that the self stands defiantly before the other. This defiance objects to the call of the other upon the self. One form this defiance takes might be self-justification. In contrast to a self-justification which defiantly stands against the demand of the other, negating otherness seeks *release* from the presence of demand. It is analogous to making an argument against the position of another (resistance) or avoiding the person who makes the counter argument altogether (evasion).

placed upon him by 'the word of the Lord', the self flees from the obligation placed on it the presence of the other. Again, if the divine other is the source of the demand, then physical flight is almost comically ineffective. As the Psalmist writes, 'Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there' (Psalm 139:6,7 NASB). What of the human other? Even with regard to the human other, complete isolation is impossible.⁴⁹ It is for this reason that Levinas can speak of responsibility as prior to all decision; responsibility stems from encounter with the other who cannot be avoided. Despite the impossibility of physical evasion of otherness, it is often attempted in human life. The New Testament presents avoidance of otherness in the story of the Good Samaritan.⁵⁰ Here the priest and the Levite pass over to the other side of the road to avoid encounter with the Samaritan other. Of course, this phenomenon is not limited to the biblical context. Wendy Mayer writes of Christian life in Constantinople that, 'The common reaction to people who begged for food, money, or clothing ranged from simple avoidance to hostility and suspicion.'⁵¹ This reaction to otherness, particularly in the form of the poor, extends into the contemporary context. Kelly S. Johnson argues that this fear of otherness extends into philosophical discussions of begging. She writes:

People have a visceral reaction to beggars, and not merely to stench or disfigurement, but to begging itself...If the gap in ethics generally were not remarkable enough, the fact that Christian ethicists have not addressed the problem recently is even more noteworthy...Beggars stand in an untidy

⁴⁹ Even the desert mothers and fathers of early Christian tradition recognised the reality of others. Moreover, this reality required a response, even from those seeking retreat from the world. For example: 'A brother came to a hermit: and as he was taking his leave, he said, "Forgive me, abba, for preventing you from keeping your rule." The hermit said, "My rule is to welcome you with hospitality, and to send you on your way in peace' (Ward, Benedicta, trans. and ed. *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks* (London: Penguin, 2003), 136).

⁵⁰ Cf. Luke 10:25-37. See also Chapter Four of this thesis on Bonhoeffer and Weil's appropriation of the Good Samaritan parable.

⁵¹ Mayer, Wendy, 'Poverty and Generosity Toward the Poor in the Time of John Chrysostom,' in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* ed. Susan R. Holman (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 150.

corner of ethics. The presence of beggars, particularly those who beg as a theological act, raises questions that those societies would sometimes prefer not to address.⁵²

Third, the attempt to elevate other goods over the demand for responsibility before the other is perhaps the most seductive. This is the evasion illuminated by Jesus in Luke 9. Jesus's words to the prospective disciples highlights the single-mindedness required for the Kingdom. Yet, as Joseph A. Fitzmeyer notes, the evasion of the man who desires to bury his father is an honest one.⁵³ The man has a justifiable obligation to see his father honoured. However, the man mistakenly places his rightful obligations to his father over that of Jesus's command. The evasive capacity of the hardened heart is further depicted in the story of the rich young ruler. Mark 10:17-31 records an episode where a man approaches Jesus, questioning Jesus about what must be done to inherit eternal life. Jesus lists off familiar obligations, which the young man quickly affirms he has done. Jesus, however, 'felt a love for him' and asks him to give all he owns to the poor: 'But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property' (Mark 10:22, NASB). This response evades the concrete demand of the other. Christ challenges the young man, but it is a challenging invitation to wholeness. This is a particularly tragic story insofar as it evokes an unusually emotive response from the Markan narrator. Jesus 'feels love' for the young man, and the young man is

⁵² Johnson 2007:3-4. In addition, it is worth noting that both Mayer and Johnson identify negative responses towards poverty in *Christian* circles. Despite this reading of Christ as both the consummate other and the impetus behind all other-orientation, Christians seemingly resist otherness with the same intensity as non-Christians.

⁵³ Fitzmeyer, Joseph A., *The Gospel According to Luke*. The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 835. Fitzmeyer writes, 'According to later rabbinic tradition, the obligation of burying dead parents fell even on Nazirites, priests, and the high priest himself, even though contact with a dead body was normally considered a source of defilement...It [Jesus's command] stands in opposition to Jewish morals and piety...' In the parable the man not only wants to follow Jesus, but wants to 'do right' by his family. Such a concession, to bury his father, is not an outrageous request. Yet, it is precisely the placement of his filial obligation above the demand of the kingdom which Jesus rejects. Johnson (1991) echoes this point.

'saddened' to leave Jesus. Yet, his love of money has hardened his heart to the point of unwillingness to see the superior good of following Jesus.

5.3.3 *Eichmann's Hardness of Heart: Resistance*

The biblical metaphor of hardness of heart informs Eichmann's irresponsibility. If, as suggested above, hardness of heart is both resistance to the other and evasion of the other, then specifying the content of irresponsibility becomes easier. Eichmann's resistance to otherness manifests itself through both his encounters with a Jewish acquaintance, Berthold Storfer, and his resistance to Heinrich Himmler's 'moderate' turn at the end of the war. These two examples suggest that Eichmann was not only blinded by his orientation to himself, but resisted every opportunity to change his course.

Eichmann's hardness of heart first appears in his relationship to Storfer, a prominent representative of the Jewish community who was initially immune from deportation due to his status as a 'Jewish functionary' (Arendt 2006:51). Despite his apparent safety, Storfer attempted to escape from Germany and went into hiding. He was discovered and subsequently sent to Auschwitz. Arendt recounts Eichmann's telling of his meeting there with Storfer:

'I went to Auschwitz and asked Höss to see Storfer. 'Yes, yes [Höss said], he is in one of the labor gangs.' With Storfer afterward, well, it was normal and human, we had a normal, human encounter. He told me all his grief and sorrow: I said: 'Well, my dear old friend, we certainly got it! What rotten luck! And I also said: 'Look, I really cannot help you, because according to orders from the Reichsführer nobody can get you out' ...It was a great inner joy to me that I could at least see the man with whom I had worked for so

many long years, and that we could speak with each other.' Six weeks after this normal human encounter, Storfer was dead – not gassed, apparently, but shot (Arendt 2006:51).

Eichmann does not resist the other, in this case Storfer, with outright hostility. His encounter with Storfer is not antagonistic. To the contrary, Eichmann describes it in wholly positive terms. It was a 'normal', 'human' encounter. How then, is Eichmann hard of heart towards Storfer? All the metaphors for hardness of heart, in the biblical sense, indicate a *lack of sensitivity*. Eichmann has not 'steeled himself' over against Storfer, but Eichmann is clearly callous to the plight of the other man. The tenor of their conversation, as Eichmann depicts it, is one of two friends commiserating about life over drinks. Eichmann, however, is oblivious to the precarious reality of Storfer's situation. Perhaps because Eichmann does not appreciate Storfer's imminent danger, he can think of nothing better than to instruct Höss that Storfer will only be required to sweep gravel paths and 'he has the right to sit down with his broom on one of the benches' (Arendt 2006:51). His insensitivity contributes to a striking lack of moral initiative.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Arendt suggests a fissure between truth and reality within the German consciousness. This point is echoed in a slightly different way by Bonhoeffer. Arendt writes, '...German society of eighty million people had been shielded against reality and factuality by exactly the same means, the same self-deception, lies, and stupidity that had now become ingrained in Eichmann's mentality...it is sometimes difficult not to believe that mendacity has become an integral part of German national character' (Arendt 2006:52). Both she and Bonhoeffer attest to the strangeness of life in the Third Reich. Arendt writes that 'only "exceptions" could be expected to react "normally"' (Arendt 2006:26-27). In his letter 'After Ten Years' Bonhoeffer writes, 'Who would deny that in obedience, in their task and calling, the Germans have again and again show the utmost bravery and self-sacrifice...But in this [the German] misjudged the world; he did not realise that his submissiveness and self-sacrifice could be exploited for evil ends. When that happened, the exercise of the calling itself became questionable, and all the moral principles of the German were bound to totter' (DBWE 8:41). While Arendt and Bonhoeffer rightly suggest that life in the Third Reich was unlike any other in German history, it does not suffice to reduce Eichmann's hardness of heart solely to his historical situation. Beyond simply existing in a confused historical context, Eichmann is a particularly striking example of the self 'turned in on itself.' He is unable to see past his own 'joy' at being able to converse with Storfer. Furthermore, his joy has little to do with Storfer himself, as indicated by Eichmann's apparent acceptance of Storfer's impending death. This acceptance is all the more striking given that Eichmann is both knowledgeable about what Auschwitz entails (death) and able to remove persons from Auschwitz with sufficient motive. In the end, Eichmann is unable and/or unwilling to move beyond himself to the other. Only such a move beyond himself could further motivate him to consider radical action against his 'duty'.

Eichmann's resistance to the other also appears in his dissatisfaction with Himmler's 'moderate' turn at the end of the war. Once Germany's eventual defeat was assured, Himmler ordered that the Final Solution be halted, in order to preserve the Jews as collateral for negotiations with the Allies (Arendt 2006:138,234).⁵⁵ Eichmann did not approve of this change in course. Arendt writes, 'When Himmler became "moderate," Eichmann sabotaged his orders as much as he dared, to the extent at least that he felt he was "covered" by his immediate superiors' (Arendt 2006:145). That Eichmann, someone so devoted to following orders, would explicitly undermine a superior indicates his profound distaste for the shift in policy. Unlike his colleagues however, Eichmann was apparently uninterested in the financial possibilities of offering Jews their freedom. Instead, Eichmann was aware that it was still Hitler's wish to continue towards the Final Solution (Arendt 2006:147). Why fanatically follow Hitler's orders, rather than Himmler's? Himmler's change of course could have provided Eichmann with some soothing of conscience, should he have desired it.

Both Arendt and Eichmann attest that he was not a fanatical anti-Semite. Rather than being a strict believer in Nazi ideology or as Arendt puts it, 'Nazi metaphysics', Eichmann believed in success (Arendt 2006:27).⁵⁶ In addition to unwavering admiration for successful individuals, Eichmann's desire for his own success and advancement animated his actions. Arendt writes,

⁵⁵ Arendt writes that 'Himmler was then giving orders right and left that the Jews be treated well – they were his 'soundest investment' ...' (Arendt 2006:138).

⁵⁶ It is on the basis of success that Eichmann admired Hitler. Hitler's meteoric rise to power, from a lance corporal to the Führer of the Third Reich, provided inspiration for Eichmann.

Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his own personal advancement, he had no motives at all...*He merely*, to put the matter colloquially, *never realised what he was doing*. It was precisely this lack of imagination which enabled him to sit for months on end facing a German Jew who was conducting the police investigation...[and explain] that it had not been his fault he was not promoted (Arendt 2006:287, emphasis in original).

Here Arendt connects two seemingly disparate facets of Eichmann's self: his desire for advancement and his lack of imagination. These two qualities are joined insofar as they both prevent him from attending to the other. Eichmann pursues advancement even at great cost to the other; this orientation to advancement further insulates him against the claim of the other. He cannot conceive of the demand of the other upon him, and is unwilling to sacrifice his desire for advancement.

Like his experience with Storfer, Eichmann's resistance to Himmler's moderation at the end of the war indicates a fundamental resistance towards the other. Had Eichmann had a genuine crisis of conscience Himmler's change of approach could have provided an opportunity for Eichmann to act on that crisis of conscience. Instead, Eichmann vociferously protests Himmler's orders, despite his acknowledged lack of anti-Semitic and murderous impulses. Eichmann's resistance to the other, manifest as insensitivity, prevents him from being able to empathise with another. Eichmann's fervent desire for success and lack of imagination both exacerbate this lack of empathy (Arendt 2006:287).

5.3.4 *Eichmann's Hardness of Heart: Evasion*

In addition to active resistance to the other, Eichmann also *evades* responsibility for the other. Only when this evasion is forced to failure does Eichmann then engage in open

resistance to otherness on the basis of duty, nationalism or self-advancement.⁵⁷ There are two facets to Eichmann's evasion. First, Eichmann evades the other through physical avoidance. This is evidenced by his attempt to avoid seeing the results of his work.⁵⁸ Second, Eichmann evades the other through an invocation of duty. These two aspects of Eichmann's evasion offer sobering contributions to an image of the self which insulates itself against the other.

To what extent did Eichmann come face to face with the consequences of his administration? To what extent did he avoid those consequences? These two questions are critical and yet difficult to answer. To the former, it can be said that Eichmann did indeed have moments where he was made acutely aware of the bitter fruit of his labour. Arendt notes that Eichmann first went to Lublin (which would become Treblinka) where he was informed about the inner workings of a death camp. This informative tour was for Eichmann 'monstrous' (Arendt 2006:87). Next, he visited Chelmno where he witnessed mobile gassing vans at work. Eichmann testified, 'I then drove along after the van, and then I saw the most horrible sight I had thus far seen in my life. The truck was making for an open ditch, the doors were opened, and the corpses were thrown out, as

⁵⁷ It has been said that Eichmann was not particularly concerned with Nazi 'metaphysics'. How does this fit alongside the declaration of Eichmann's nationalism? Arendt makes it clear that Eichmann's motivation for joining the Nazi party had less to do with anti-Semitism or Nazi ideology than it did with the fact that Eichmann was a 'joiner' and had few other options for employment (Arendt 2006:32). Arendt writes, 'At any rate, he did not enter the Party out of conviction, nor was he ever convinced by it – whenever he was asked to give his reasons, he repeated the same embarrassed clichés about the Treaty of Versailles and unemployment...He had no time and less desire to be properly informed, he did not even know the Party program, he never read *Mein Kampf*' (Arendt 2006:33). Yet, despite his lack of appreciation for the finer points of Nazism, Eichmann apparently did believe in the superiority of German culture. 'His conscience rebelled not at the idea of murder *but at the idea of German Jews being murdered*' (Arendt 2006:96, emphasis mine). Eichmann's open complicity with the murder of non-German Jews exemplifies hardness of heart as resistance. Faced with the genuine other, Eichmann chooses to annihilate (or rather, facilitate the annihilation of) that other rather than recognise their claim upon him.

⁵⁸ That is, until after the war. Even though he did not desire to see the fruit of his labour initially, after the war he was happy to magnify his role in the death of Jews across Europe. As much as he might have disliked the brutality of the war, he nevertheless bragged afterwards about having sent 'five million Jews' to their demise (Arendt 2006:47).

though they were still alive...' (Arendt 2006:88).⁵⁹ Despite the power of this experience for Eichmann, it was neither the worst he would see, nor would it result in him questioning his mission. When Eichmann visited Lwów he was 'shown the sights', despite his attempts to excuse himself. As a result, he was exposed yet again to the carnage of the death squads. Eichmann's final exposure to his handiwork came at Treblinka. There he watched as 'a column of naked Jews filed into a large hall to be gassed' (Arendt 2006:89). This became the new 'most horrible' thing Eichmann had seen.

Eichmann knew, explicitly, the lethal implications of the Final Solution. Arendt writes, 'He saw just enough to be fully informed of how the destruction machinery worked: that there were two different methods of killing, shooting and gassing; that the shooting was done by the *Einsatzgruppen* and the gassing at the camps, either in chambers or mobile vans; and in the camps elaborate precautions were taken to fool the victims right up to the end' (Arendt 2006:90). How does one with an admittedly low tolerance for violence silence these 'horrific' experiences and knowledge of mass murder? Eichmann accomplished this feat in two primary ways. First, he absolved himself of responsibility through 'going with the crowd'. Eichmann could see no one who overtly objected to the Final Solution. Second, he avoided the real manifestations of that violence. Planning the Final Solution, for Eichmann, remained fundamentally separated from seeing it in action. As he wrote to Müller, he was 'not "tough enough" for these sights; he had never

⁵⁹ As part of this account, Eichmann uses an interesting turn of phrase. During the visit to Chelmno, a 'physician' instructed Eichmann to actively view the gas at work through a hole in the door of the van. Eichmann refused; he says, 'I refused to do that. I could not. I had to disappear' (Arendt 2006:88). Eichmann's refusal to see his work performed, his refusal to even *be* in the presence of that work attests to the evasive character of Eichmann's hardness of heart towards the other. The language of disappearance recalls what has been said about Eichmann's lack of self. His inability to endure before his own action, his inability to take responsibility for his role in the deaths of the victims, indicates the ephemeral character of his self. He would rather 'disappear' than exist before the concrete other who calls him into question.

been a soldier, had never been to the front, had never seen action, that he could not sleep and had nightmares' (Arendt 2006:89). Höss spared Eichmann from as much of the violence as was possible on Eichmann's regular visits to Auschwitz (Arendt 2006:89). Consequently, Eichmann managed to avoid the brutality of Auschwitz, even though he travelled there regularly.

This knowledge of his work had strikingly little impact on Eichmann. Despite his superlative-laden descriptions of these experiences, they had no tangible effects on his work. How can such 'horrific' experiences leave one unchanged? The evasive character of hardness of heart offers a possible answer. Eichmann's desire to hide himself from his work demonstrates his awareness of its depravity.⁶⁰ It also partially explains how he is able to remain relatively unaffected by his experiences with mass killing. Here a connection between the metaphors of the heart turned in on itself and of hardness of heart becomes clearer. In Bonhoeffer's terms, Eichmann is insulated within himself insofar as he relates what he sees solely to himself. Paradoxically, this insulation within himself leads not to wholeness, but to disunity. When Eichmann was commissioned to go to Minsk, 'he went, and at first it seemed as though he would be lucky, for by the time he arrived, as it happened, "the affair had almost been finished," which pleased him very much...Still, he saw, "and that was quite enough for me, a woman with her arms stretched backward, and then my knees went weak and off I went"' (Arendt 2006:88).

Due to his abiding preoccupation with himself, Eichmann's concern is not for the people

⁶⁰ The metaphor of evasion of oneself, or in this case, of one's acts, resonates with the biblical account Adam and Eve before God. In the biblical account, Adam and Eve 'heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife *hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden*' (Genesis 3:8, NASB, emphasis mine). Their awareness of wrongdoing fuels their desire to hide. This resonates with Eichmann's own aversion to violence and his avoidance of the results of his work. Consider Eichmann's remark about his viewing of the column of Jews at Treblinka: 'I kept myself back, as far as I could, I did not draw near to see all that' (Arendt 2006:89). Eichmann must refuse to draw near, otherwise his self-exposure will begin in earnest. This refusal is a refusal of being before the other. It is an attempted evasion of the face-to-face relation entirely.

whose murder he witnesses. The only personal reference from his comments deals with the woman who made *his* knees go weak. Her appearance is an affront to him.⁶¹

Eichmann does not make the obvious connection between his role in her death and his own nausea at her contorted figure. He does not realise he is responsible for his own disgust. He is only able to quell that nausea by escaping the presence of the woman. Her contorted body lies as a testament to his irresponsibility.

Eichmann flees from responsibility through a concept of duty. His understanding of duty protects him from the claims of the other. Specifically, Eichmann's dutiful obedience to Hitler silences any ethical resistance he might otherwise display.⁶² Two points merit comment. First, Eichmann's duty to Hitler is a retreat from the other. Second, this initial retreat from the other results in a further clouding of Eichmann's ethical sense.

Eichmann's self retreats from the other and also from itself as an ethical self. The metaphor of hardening of heart describes the willful retreat of the self into itself, which in the extreme results in a calcification of self against otherness (DBWE 6:162).

First, Eichmann's reliance on duty to Hitler as a guiding ethical light constitutes a retreat from the other. Duty to the party line offers Eichmann a safe haven from the potentially disturbing reality of the other. At the Wannsee conference, which soothed his 'doubts' about the Final Solution, Eichmann's freedom from guilt followed from his rejection of personal responsibility. Arendt records Eichmann's approach, '*Who was he to judge?*

Who was he "to have [his] own thoughts in this matter?" (Arendt 2006:114, emphasis

⁶¹ Cf. Weil's insistence on the scandal of affliction. Eichmann cannot bear the sight of affliction; he must flee from it (WG 68,70,73).

⁶² Arendt, however, remains agnostic on whether or not Eichmann had the resources of self to resist anyone, anywhere. The portrait that she constructs is one of the consummate 'follower'. Eichmann was not one to go against the crowd, especially when there might be personal penalty involved. He is a particular example of how powerful and destructive enslavement to the social and the successful can be.

in original). Ironically, by rejecting *responsibility* on the grounds of his self, he actually rejects *himself*. Eichmann answers the question posed by Bonhoeffer's other, 'who are you?' by identifying himself as one who is not responsible.⁶³

Second, Eichmann possesses small capacity for ethical resistance. This is one reason

Eichmann's case is so provocative and so unintelligible for the judges in Israel.

Eichmann's case is not one of going against good conscience; Arendt records Eichmann as adhering to his conscience, even if it is revealed to be a distorted conscience.⁶⁴ Arendt alludes to the confusion of discussing Eichmann's conscience when she writes,

As for base motives, he was perfectly sure that he was not what he called an *innerer Schweinehund*, a dirty bastard in the depths of his heart; and as for his conscience, he remembered perfectly well that he would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he had been ordered to – to ship millions of men, women, and children to their death with great zeal and the most meticulous care. This, admittedly, was hard to take (Arendt 2006:25).

What qualifies, for both Arendt and the judges in Israel, as conscience is so distorted in Eichmann as to be almost unrecognisable. Eichmann's complete lack of recognisable conscience persuades the judges that Eichmann must be a liar. Arendt, however, sees neither the depravity of a monster nor the cunning of a good liar. In Bonhoeffer's terms, Eichmann's insulation within himself, in disunity, leaves him at the mercy of his own

⁶³ There is an interesting parallel here between Eichmann and the biblical figure of Cain. As Eichmann understands the question of responsibility as a question of his self, so does Cain. Where Eichmann asks what right he had 'to have his own thoughts in this matter', Cain famously asks 'Am I my brother's keeper?' (Genesis 4:9, NASB). Of interest is the fact that both reference *themselves* in evading responsibility. Responsibility is as much an *outworking of oneself* as it is a 'free' choice. When they ask 'Who am I' their response conditions their ethical stance. When questioned about himself by the other, Eichmann answers, 'I am a dutiful worker'. Cain answers, 'I am for myself'. Cain's response also describes Eichmann. He also cares exclusively for himself. With Cain Eichmann answers the question of responsibility with a question of his own self.

⁶⁴ Cf. Arendt 2006:116.

conscience. His conscience, however, is fundamentally deceived by the force and success of the Third Reich.

Eichmann's disunity of self results in ethical instability. He does not have the resources of self to resist the allure of power in the basest sense. Eichmann is taken up into what he orients to; he is *overpowered* by duty to Hitler's success. This overpowering of Eichmann by Nazi success partially explains Eichmann's lack of conscience. Eichmann is little more than flotsam on a sea of influence; his words are captured by Arendt as being almost completely vacuous. This explains not only Eichmann's manifest thoughtlessness, but also his 'elation' over stock phrases.⁶⁵ Eichmann's sense of duty, evidenced by his reflections on the Wannsee conference, provides the only possible source of self-stability. Eichmann's sense of duty becomes the sole source for his self-justification. Arendt notes,

Now he could see with his own eyes and hear with his own ears that not only Hitler, not only Heydrich or the "sphinx" Müller, not just the S.S. or the Party, but the élite of the good old Civil Service were vying and fighting with each other for the honor of taking the lead in these "bloody" matters. "At that moment, I sensed a kind of Pontius Pilate feeling, for I felt free of all guilt" (Arendt 2006:114).

Insulated in himself and in his duty, Eichmann is unable to care for the other in any meaningful way. Given the Bonhoefferian account of self developed in this thesis, a self that becomes fully itself through responsibility for the divine and the human other, it is

⁶⁵ Arendt notes, 'he [Eichmann] had not forgotten a single one of the sentences of his that at one time or another had served to give him a "sense of elation." Hence, whenever, during the cross-examination, the judges tried to appeal to his conscience, they were met with "elation," and they were outraged as well as disconcerted when they learned that the accused had at his disposal a different elating cliché for each period of his life and each of his activities' (Arendt 2006:53). Eichmann's lack of self is indirectly displayed when Arendt relates, 'Eichmann's great susceptibility to catch words and stock phrases, combined with his incapacity for ordinary speech, made him, of course, an ideal subject for "language rules"' (Arendt 2006:86).

notable that the opposite also holds true.⁶⁶ In terms of hardening of heart, the heart can become so hardened as to be virtually unable to be responsible. The human being characterised by negation of and continual retreat from the other becomes more prone to such negation, until the opportunity for change is all but gone.

5.3.5 *Closing Remarks About Eichmann's Irresponsibility*

Drawing on the rich biblical metaphor of hardness of heart, Eichmann's hardness of heart orients himself inwards, rather than outwards towards the other. He resists and evades the confrontation of otherness. For Eichmann, this ethical hardness renders him unable to perceive the other as other. Yet, this consideration of himself does not lead to wholeness. Instead, it yields only disunity and in the extreme, self-deception. Referring back to the parable of the Good Samaritan, he is unlike even the priest and the Levite, because he cannot even acknowledge the wounded traveler. Whereas they 'saw [the traveler], and passed by on the other side' (Luke 10:31,32, NASB), Eichmann's encounter with Storf indicates the depth of his ethical inattentiveness. Eichmann's disunity robs him of ethical perception.⁶⁷

Eichmann's disunity and lack of ethical perception renders him incapable of resisting power and influence. He is swept away by Nazi success. He is like an empty vessel, filled

⁶⁶ This example of personal and ethical growth is popularly represented through Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. In the film, what begins as a favour to a friend results in Oskar Schindler's whole-hearted attempt to save as many Jews as possible. After using his considerable wealth to preserve Jewish lives, the culminating scene is him weeping over the fact that his last remaining possessions were not traded for additional Jewish lives. In this scene Schindler represents the antithesis to hardness of heart. Not only has he become increasingly more sensitive to otherness, his capacity for responsibility has grown accordingly.

⁶⁷ Cf. DBWE 6:242 for Bonhoeffer's own account of ethical perception.

with ideological clichés and contradictions.⁶⁸ Eichmann 'is' his duty to the Nazi party. Arendt notes this overriding allegiance to the Nazi Party, or more appropriately, Eichmann's success within the Nazi party, 'Eichmann did not have the slightest hesitation in explaining to him [Captain Less] at considerable length, and repeatedly, why he had been unable to attain a higher grade in the S.S., that this was not his fault' (Arendt 2006:49). Moreover, it is notable that Eichmann's only instance of becoming overtly angry during the police interrogations occurs when confronted with the indiscretions of another S.S. officer. He found it hard to believe that such a person, 'could ever have been an S.S. Standartenführer' (Arendt 2006:50). Eichmann is unable to see beyond his desire to elevate his position within the Nazi party.⁶⁹

5.4 Freedom 'for' the Other: The Role of Creativity and Repentance in Responsibility

If the point of this chapter is to criticise Adolph Eichmann, then it suffers from a pitiable lack of scope and ambition. It is not difficult to foment antipathy towards a prominent facilitator of the Final Solution. To simply criticise falls prey to the same temptation the prosecution in the trial faced. The greater question reflects on how these actions originate from a normal, even underwhelming, human being? Affirming the

⁶⁸ In a brilliant passage, Arendt addresses Himmler's gift for majestic propaganda. She writes, 'The trick used by Himmler – who apparently was rather strongly afflicted with these instinctive reactions [to physical suffering] himself – was very simple and probably very effective; it consisted in turning these instincts around, as it were, in *directing them toward the self*. So that instead of saying: What horrible things I did to people!, the murderers would be able to say: What horrible things I had to watch in the pursuance of my duties, how heavily the task weighed upon my shoulders!' (Arendt 2006:106, emphasis mine). Eichmann's almost total dependence on clichés and slogans demonstrates the considerable effect such propaganda had upon him (Arendt 2006:48). Himmler's 'winged words' suggest an existential weight borne by the self in itself. The reality for Eichmann, however, was a singular disunity of self which both cracked beneath these words and fed upon them.

⁶⁹ Arendt references the total impact of the Nazis on Eichmann. She writes, 'The very words "S.S.," or "career," or "Himmler" ...triggered in him a mechanism that had become completely unalterable...The presence of Captain Less, a Jew from Germany...did not for a moment throw this mechanism out of gear' (Arendt 2006:50).

prosecution's portrayal of Eichmann as a monstrosity hardly informs current ethical conversations. Although this thesis does consider Eichmann to be the antithesis of the ethical self, the reason for this evaluation stems from, in Bonhoeffer's terms, Eichmann's disunity. This disunity, and the insulation from others which accompanies it, does not allow for free, responsible action on behalf of the other. Such responsible action requires moral imagination and repentance. Free, responsible action ventures out on behalf of another. Even when ventured in good faith, one relies on the mercy and grace of God. This reliance is expressed through the concept of repentance.

Arendt herself notes Eichmann's lack of moral imagination and repentance. These concepts mark the final contribution to the responsible and attentive self. This section argues three claims. First, the self oriented towards others is genuinely free. Second, the responsible and the attentive self possesses the resources for moral imagination in a way Eichmann does not. Third, repentance characterises the responsible and attentive self. These three elements of theological selfhood put the finishing touches on an account of the self oriented to the other in responsibility and attention.

5.4.1 *Eichmann's (un)Freedom*

First, Eichmann is, in Bonhoeffer's sense, 'unfree'. While he is able to make decisions and function in a world of choices, he is constrained by two primary forces. First, he is imprisoned within himself.⁷⁰ This imprisonment indicates the inversion of himself upon himself. Second, Eichmann is unfree in that, in Bonhoeffer's terms, he lacks wholeness

⁷⁰ Cf. DBWE 10:400. Bonhoeffer uses metaphors of incarceration and inversion to describe the *cor curvum in se*. He writes, 'Faith means to be torn out of imprisonment in one's own ego' (DBWE 6:148).

and single-mindedness. Due to his disunity and double-mindedness, he is deeply susceptible to manipulation. Eichmann's lack of freedom has ethical implications. Disunity insulates the self against the other; freedom for the self in disunity means to be free from the other. In disunity responsible action is impossible.

Bonhoeffer considers freedom in a different sense. Freedom granted to human beings is a freedom 'for' the other rather than 'from' the other. The freedom of human beings is a freedom to exist both with and for others. Bonhoeffer writes, 'No one can think of freedom as a substance or as something individualistic. Freedom is just not something I have at my command like an attribute of my own; it is simply something that comes to happen, that takes place, *that happens to me through the other*' (DBWE 3:63, emphasis mine). Freedom comes from the other who is exterior to the self. Freedom emerges from the relation with the other and freedom is bound up with the other. Therefore, in a paradoxical way, the self becomes free only when bound to the other. What sort of freedom, exactly, is this? The freedom of the self for others is a freedom to be what one is destined to be.⁷¹ Specifically, it is the freedom to conform to Christ in the world. As Christ is the human being for others *par excellence*, so the true freedom of the human being is the freedom to be for others and for God. However, Bonhoeffer does not develop this point in detail. What does it mean, concretely, to be for others in the world? This question serves as a bridge between Bonhoeffer's concept of freedom and of the moral imagination.

5.4.2 Moral Imagination

⁷¹ This language of 'destiny' references Kierkegaard rather than Bonhoeffer. Yet, this concept of becoming what one is intended to be is not alien to Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer addresses in the form of the *imago dei*. In the free self for the other, God sees God's own self within humankind (DBWE 3:64).

Second, the concept of moral imagination constitutes a crucial aspect of the responsible and attentive self. While Bonhoeffer retains a place for ethical principles, he argues that principles 'will soon be thrown away when they are no longer useful' (DBWE 6:82). In keeping with this affirmation, Bonhoeffer suggests that traditional ethical 'paradigms' cannot solve the problems faced by human beings in the modern world (DBWE 6:80). He supports this claim by invoking the tragic comedy of Don Quixote. Quixote represents the dated approach to the ethical decision; he, like some of the classical ethical paradigms, is ultimately toothless. Bonhoeffer writes of Cervantes' tale: 'This is the picture of adventurous enterprise of an old world against a new one, of a past reality against a contemporary one, of a noble dreamer against the overpowering force of the commonplace' (DBWE 6:80). This point is embodied in Eichmann, who employed Kant, duty and conscience in his deliberation, yet could not have been more ethically adrift. Instead of advocating a different moral system, Bonhoeffer articulates a different *type of person*.⁷² This person is the one oriented to Christ, the one at both the centre and boundary of human existence. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Who stands fast? Only the man whose final standard is not his reason, his principles, his conscience, his freedom, or his virtue, but who is ready to sacrifice all this when he is called to obedient and responsible action in faith and in exclusive allegiance to God – the responsible man, who tries to make his whole life an answer to the question and call of God' (DBWE 8:40).

⁷² By this we mean that what is required is not a new moral calculus, even one which perfectly details how to be a 'self for others'. Instead, what is needed is a person oriented to the other and embodying certain qualities. Bonhoeffer writes, 'Principles are only tools in the hands of God; they will soon be thrown away when they are no longer useful. This liberated view of God and of reality, as it is real only in God, unites simplicity and wisdom. There is no true simplicity without wisdom, and no wisdom without simplicity' (DBWE 6:82).

Although this is a helpful point of guidance, it does not articulate with precision the sort of action one who 'stands fast' undertakes. This lack of timeless, universal rules or commands demands that those who seek to stand fast be able to navigate, creatively and constructively, within their world. Bonhoeffer states, 'Responsible action is neither determined from the outset nor defined once and for all; instead, it is born in a given situation...One must observe, weigh, and judge the matter, all in the dangerous freedom of one's own self. One must indeed enter the sphere of relativity, in the twilight that the historical situation casts over good and evil' (DBWE 6:221-222). It is this wisdom in ethical navigation to which the 'moral imagination' refers. This wisdom only occurs following considerable focus on one's obligations in their unique contexts. While Bonhoeffer here emphasises the call of God, patient waiting also plays a significant role in this imaginative ethical process.⁷³

Attention serves as the context for the moral imagination.⁷⁴ Attention is creative and visionary; it increases the self's ethical capacity to perceive and to respond to the other. Weil understands attention as re-creating the person crushed by necessity and affliction. Attention informs the moral imagination in both of these ways. In the ethical space created by waiting upon God, the attentive and the creative self envisions new

⁷³ Bonhoeffer writes, 'One may ask whether there have ever before in human history been people with so little ground under their feet – people to whom every available alternative seemed equally intolerable, repugnant, and futile, who looked beyond all these existing alternatives for the source of their strength so entirely in the past or in the future, and *who yet, without being dreamers, were able to await the success of their cause so quietly and confidently*' (DBWE 8:38, emphasis mine). While Bonhoeffer's words have an eschatological tenor, this does not obviate the ethical applicability in the current time. There is a necessarily patient approach to one's context which requires attention in order to be able to then see what that context requires ethically.

⁷⁴ Weil would likely disapprove of linking attention to imagination. Imagination, for Weil, is that faculty of human beings which seeks to overcome the void within the soul. This void is the receptacle of grace. Therefore, 'The imagination is continually at work filling up all the fissures through which grace might pass' (GG 16). At the core of Weil's concern is the idea of truth. Specifically, of concern is the truth of oneself. For this reason, a concept of imagination which disguises or distorts the reality of the self is the consummate evil. In contrast to such distortion of reality through the imagination, she writes, 'We must prefer real hell to an imaginary paradise' (GG 53).

ways of being for the other in conformation to Christ's own orientation. The moral imagination is the capacity, informed by Christ, to envision life for the other in the world.⁷⁵ Beyond attention as the capacity to perceive the other to the self, the moral imagination considers how best to serve that other who appears to the self. Returning to the parable of the Good Samaritan, the moral imagination moves beyond the immediate attention of the Samaritan to the Samaritan's further care. The Samaritan 'put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you" (Luke 10:34,35, NASB). The moral imagination, in this context, emphasises the active element of attention.

Attending to the other is not solely a perceptive occurrence. Instead, it is a perception leading to responsibility. The moral imagination facilitates the move from attention-as-ethical-perception to responsibility-as-ethical-action.

The incident with Storfer provides a striking example of Eichmann's lack of moral imagination. Confronted with the impending death of a friend, Eichmann can think of the situation as nothing but a case of poor luck (Arendt 2006:51). It would have been, by Eichmann's own admission, difficult for Eichmann to save Storfer. Nevertheless, Eichmann can see nothing beyond his own obligation to orders. His reticence to obey Himmler's order to preserve Jews at the end of the war further attests to Eichmann's lack of moral imagination. For the person with a developed moral imagination this

⁷⁵ In keeping with Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the *conformatio Christi*, one sees Christ himself as the exemplar of the moral imagination. Christ's perplexing responses to the Pharisees illustrate the moral imagination in action. He persistently exceeds their moral deliberation with his retorts. Consider, for example, the woman caught in adultery in the gospel of John. She has clearly transgressed the religious law, and yet she is ostensibly a victim as well. Jesus creatively manages the situation, secures some semblance of justice and warns the woman to 'go and sin no more'. This is the ethical potential of the moral imagination; it finds creative ways of dealing with harsh ethical situations. However, with Bonhoeffer one sees in Jesus a simplicity which transcends insoluble ethical quandaries.

order provides ethical 'cover'.⁷⁶ Himmler's order enables Eichmann to save countless lives if he has the inclination or vision to do so. That Eichmann resists this imperative indicates his lack of moral imagination as well as a stance against the other. In contrast to Weil's assertion that imagination prevents the coming of grace, in this case it can be said that Eichmann's *lack* of imagination obstructs the coming of grace.⁷⁷

5.4.3 Repentance

Third, the attentive and responsible self is characterised by repentance. Repentance re-orientates the self towards the other; it recognises its propensity for domination. The relation of the self to others is always changing, sometimes imperceptibly, sometimes dramatically. With every asking of the question 'Who am I?' a potential re-orientation occurs. The recognition that this orientation changes, often away from the other, is the precursor to repentance. The repentant self understands not only its obligation to the other, but also the failure of that obligation. The perpetual failure of total responsibility requires a correlating recognition of the need for repentance. In repentance, the stance of the self is one of humility. The other-oriented self does not force itself upon the other, and the repentant self does not exist under false pretences. The repentant self

⁷⁶ Arendt notes that Eichmann required cover for all that he did. This cover prevented the ascription of responsibility to him. There are two key ways in which Eichmann required cover. First, his avid participation in the 'language rules' obscured the real intention of his tasks. Arendt writes, 'The net effect of this language system was not to keep these people ignorant of what they were doing, but to prevent them from equating it with their old, "normal" knowledge of murder and lies' (Arendt 2006:86). Second, Eichmann required direct orders for his actions. He was reticent to make his own decisions, and incidentally, Arendt notes that when he did make a genuine decision, he got into much trouble as a result (Arendt 2006:94). She writes, 'Eichmann, who never made a decision on his own, who was extremely careful always to be "covered" by orders...did not even like to volunteer suggestions and always required "directives"...' (Arendt 2006:94). This is, in part, what made it so difficult for him to be pegged with specific crimes.

⁷⁷ Bonhoeffer describes similarly the consequences of hardness of heart: 'There is a degree of distortion and self-entrapment in lying, in guilt, in one's own occupation, one's own work, and in self-love that makes the coming of grace especially difficult...Defiance, obstinacy, and rejection may have so hardened a person that Christ can only destroy the obstinate in anger; Christ can no longer come into that person in grace...No one can hinder Christ's coming, but we can oppose that coming in grace' (DBWE 6:162).

recognises itself for what it is; called beyond itself in a way it cannot, in itself, actualise. Thus, the self always fails in its calling to total responsibility. Repentance indicates both the recognition of this failure and the dedication to a greater future responsibility, empowered by Christ.

Unlike the self for others, Eichmann remains unrepentant. Eichmann dismisses repentance, saying, 'Repentance is for little children' (Arendt 2006:24). Why does Eichmann take such a stance? Eichmann's understanding of 'idealism' partially explains his disapproval of repentance. For Eichmann, 'An "idealist" was a man who *lived* for his idea...and who was prepared to sacrifice for his idea everything and, especially, everybody' (Arendt 2006:42, emphasis in original). Eichmann's approval of 'idealism' corresponds with his concept of 'objectivity'. Objectivity, for Eichmann, refers to one's approach to the Final Solution. To be objective is to view the matter of extermination in terms of administration and economy. These clinical terms oppose 'emotional' and mystical approaches (Arendt 2006:69). To express regret or repentance implies abandonment of Eichmann's 'idealist' who stands by their idea to the bitter end. The scientific or objective question is not *whether or not* the Jews should be exterminated, but *how* they should be exterminated. The objective approach does not question the ends of one's action. It is a question of efficiency, not a question of ethics. However, repentance has nothing to do with efficiency. Rather, repentance has to do with the very question of orientation Eichmann brackets out as emotional and mystical. To be repentant, to admit wrongdoing, is difficult enough. But to admit horrific wrongdoing might require a re-orientation of oneself.

Eichmann successfully insulated himself, or rather his 'idea', against change. Assumed in his concept of idealism is an unwillingness to alter that vision, even in the face of one's own ethical impulses. Thus, in Eichmann's idealism is an explicit elevation of one's own intellect over against the emotions or the will. For someone like Arendt's Eichmann, unable to think on their own, this commitment to the idea becomes even more dangerous. In contrast to the elevation of the idea over the will, repentance is a movement of the *whole* self. That is, repentance holds no privileged place for the intellect *or* the emotions *or* the will. Repentance integrates the whole self in a movement of change. Given that Eichmann valued idealism because it elevated an idea beyond all emotions or preferences, it would have been virtually impossible for him to re-orient himself, repentantly, towards an other.

5.5 Conclusion

Bonhoeffer's concept of the unified self forms the first context for evaluating Eichmann. Particularly, Bonhoeffer's self is oriented to the other. For Bonhoeffer, Jesus Christ is the superlative other; one who presents himself both transcendentally and immanently to human beings. That presentation of otherness, of ultimate limit, requires the recognition and simple obedience of the whole self. To relate to anything other than the transcendent limit results in both an insular relation to oneself and disunity of self. Only genuine orientation to exteriority preserves the self from disunity and fragmentation. This claim follows from Bonhoeffer's reading of idealism as that which grounds the self in itself, with no genuine other, and thus only succeeds in securing its own disunity.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Although Bonhoeffer himself does not draw this comparison, his approach to the idealist self is a re-working of the synoptic rendering of Jesus words, 'For whoever wishes to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it' (Mark 8:35, NASB). Bonhoeffer's approach

Only 'genuine' otherness, or otherness which is completely exterior to the self, can break the self from its idealist prison. For Bonhoeffer, only God, or the divinely ordained 'You', can approach the self in true exteriority. For this reason Bonhoeffer's account of the self is a thoroughly *theological* account. Having established the context for the discussion between the self and otherness, the question turns to the more specific form of that relation. Specifically, metaphors of vision and thought are crucial. The self which orients itself towards otherness is both a seeing and a thinking self. Bonhoeffer and Weil help articulate the visual component of ethical relation. Weil and Heidegger offer insight into the 'thinking' component of ethical relations. These metaphors not only develop the nature of the self which orients towards the other, but also develop how that orientation emerges ethically.

Drawing on Eichmann's insulation within himself, this chapter has invoked the biblical image of 'hardness of heart'. The biblical witness uses this phrase to describe steeling oneself over against the human and divine other. It has been appropriated here to designate the insulation of the self against the command of the other. This account of hardness of heart develops in two ways. First, hardness of heart refers to straightforward resistance. Second, hardness of heart refers to evasion. The self, if not attending to the other, exhibits a 'fight or flight' response to the confrontation of the other. Eichmann manifests both possibilities.

to the idealist self might be, 'Whoever grounds themselves in themselves, loses themselves, but whoever grounds themselves in the other gains themselves.' Bonhoeffer implicitly suggests this when he writes, 'We "live" means that in our encounter with other human beings and with God, the Yes and the No are bound together in a unity of contradiction, in selfless self-assertion, in a self-assertion that is a surrender of myself to God and to other human beings' (DBWE 6:254).

Drawing on Arendt's observation of Eichmann's lack of both 'moral imagination' and 'repentance', this chapter contends that imagination and repentance are critical for the self oriented towards the other. These two concepts fit well within this reading of the Bonhoefferian self. Bonhoeffer's self is only free in the sense of being for the other. Within this binding to the other, however, there is moral space. This moral space provides a context for the exercise of the moral imagination. Given the freedom to discern the responsible action, even those who seek conformation to Christ will make mistakes. As a result, the ethically oriented self must be repentant. Repentance naturally follows from a self whose action 'is not fixed in advance once and for all by a principle, but develops together with the given situation,' since selves will act wrongly even when intending to act rightly (DBWE 6:261).⁷⁹ The repentant self acknowledges its binding relation to the other, as well as its failure to uphold its obligation within that relation.

Eichmann represents the antithesis of the self argued for in this thesis. As opposed to an attentive and responsible self, one finds in Eichmann an inattentive and unthinking self denying its responsibility for the other. Where Eichmann justifies himself behind orders and ideas of obedience, the other-oriented self acknowledges its fallibility and continually repents. Eichmann is a provocative and ethically devastating example of what an ethically oriented self *cannot be*.

⁷⁹ Bonhoeffer writes, 'Ultimate ignorance of one's own goodness or evil, together with dependence on grace, is an essential characteristic of responsible historical action' (DBWE 6:268). This chapter argues that repentance equally accompanies responsible historical action.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the concept of the ethically oriented self. David Ford and Michael Purcell also provide accounts of ethical selves, but do not draw on either the crucial theme of ethical orientation or the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Based on the work of Bonhoeffer, this ethically-oriented self is a responsible self; a self *for* others. This orientation towards another, following the orientation of Christ, permeates Bonhoeffer's corpus. The concept of a responsible self is further refined through conversation with Emmanuel Levinas's own account of the self-other relation. Having clarified the role responsibility plays in the self-other relation, the thesis turns to the thought of Simone Weil. Integrating Weil's concept of attention deepens the content of the idea of an ethically-oriented self. Attention describes the orientation of the self towards the other, and highlights the perceptive and creative faculties of the self. The creative faculty of the self operates at cost to the self; the attentive self is also a self which gives of itself for another. Finally, this conceptual journey towards the ethically-oriented self culminates in engagement with Hannah Arendt's presentation of Adolf Eichmann. This engagement highlights Eichmann's irresponsibility. Unable to attend to the other, Eichmann remains alone in his disunity. In addition, the example of Eichmann demonstrates that ethical life demands more than ethical principles alone can provide. This thesis concludes with a developed concept of an ethically-oriented self who attentively engages the other in responsibility, even to the point of giving oneself for the other.

This conclusion performs two roles. First, it offers a series of broad conclusions based on the conversations of the previous chapters. These conclusions address a self who

exists on behalf of another, or an ethically-oriented self. Although they develop this theme in different ways, all three major thinkers in the thesis stage the self-other encounter as one of a self 'for' another. For each of these thinkers the concept of an ethical orientation is implicit. While partial insights are gleaned from all three figures, Bonhoeffer's theological account of the self-other relation, based on Christ, remains the fundamental ground for the ethically-oriented self. He unifies discussions of selfhood and ethics in a distinctively Christological way. This starting point then extends to consider the influential accounts of other provocative thinkers. This thesis draws on the insights of each interlocutor to develop a particularly rich account of Christological orientation. This thesis has attempted to (i) tease out the concept and (ii) give it a thicker description through placing it in conversation with like-minded interlocutors. Second, the conclusion sketches possible points of further exploration. Any conversations of this nature evolve in certain directions. Every chosen line of enquiry entails the exclusion of another line of enquiry. This concluding chapter briefly recaps where the thesis has gone and where further research could fruitfully go.

Concluding Points

This section concludes with three broadly significant points from this thesis. These points provide ground for further reflection on the concepts of theological subjectivity, ethics and the engagement of Bonhoeffer in theological reflection. The first concluding point of the thesis is the fundamental claim that theological subjectivity and ethics are not as disparate of disciplines as commonly presented. Stanley Hauerwas suggests that

the central question of ethics is not 'what should I do?', but 'who should I be?'⁸⁰ While Hauerwas's emphasis on the teleological character of humankind is a welcome one, this reconsideration of the ethical question requires an additional step. Implicit in Hauerwas's question is the question of oneself. In order to adequately consider where one is to go, ethically speaking, one must know where one is. More precisely, one must know who one is, and who one is not. In a limited sense, the inscription at the temple in Delphi is correct: 'Man, know thyself...' Within specifically theological ethics, the question of *what* one is to be can only be asked alongside *who* one is. Theological ethics and selfhood belong to the same discussion.

The second concluding point is the need for an ethic of response. This ethic of response contrasts, for example, an ethic of virtue which seeks to preserve its own righteousness. The force of this conclusion is manifest in Eichmann. Eichmann's example illustrates the extreme negative possibility in an ethic based on preserving one's own virtue. Eichmann's depravity does not follow from a love of gore or sadism. As indicated above, he abhorred violence. However, his conception of ethics as preserving his own blamelessness is a reactionary approach; his ethic has no positive content. Eichmann's is a superlative example of self-protection. He never attempted to do anything without 'cover'. In contrast, the ethic of response to the other developed above requires a 'going out' of the self. That going out is not a projection of oneself onto another; that would be domination. Instead, it is a going out which responds a call of need. Paradoxically, one can attempt to preserve one's own righteousness and in so doing, cement one's unrighteousness.

⁸⁰ Cf. Hauerwas, Stanley, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

The third concluding point of this thesis involves the fundamentally relational character of the self. This thesis attempts to preserve the positive character of human relationality. Although there are, as both Bonhoeffer and Levinas has been shown to assert, confrontational facets of the self-other relation, there is a strong affirmative relationship between the self and the other. Furthermore, this affirmative relationship is not, as Levinas claims, a reduction of otherness. Instead, and with Ford, it is joyful engagement with another. The distinctively Christian element of this engagement follows from the sociality of the self. Christians are collectively the 'body of Christ'; while individuality is preserved, the sum is greater than its parts.⁸¹ Holding these two ideas, the confrontational character of subjectivity and the essential sociality of humankind, together privileges sociality which does not result in reduction of alterity. The essential foreignness of the other remains, while refusing an account of otherness which cleaves the self-other relation in two.

Implications

There are three practical implications of this thesis that merit mention. First, Bonhoeffer's account of responsibility addresses not only individuals, but communities as well. The concept of communal responsibility has serious ramifications for an increasingly globalised context. Second, this thesis develops an account of ethical vision; *it is important to consider where, and how, one looks*. Positively, the ethical gaze sensitises the self to others around it. Negatively, gaze oriented towards oneself constitutes the stance towards oneself characterised by Bonhoeffer as the *cor curvum in*

⁸¹ Romans 12:3-8, NASB

se. Third, the Holy Spirit receives relatively little attention in the theological accounts mentioned in these chapters. However, the Spirit works at the boundaries in Christian ethics; while it receives little overt attention, it garners passing mention from both Bonhoeffer and Weil. There is greater room for the Spirit in an account of the ethically-oriented self than can be given above.

First, Bonhoeffer's concern for selfhood and ethics crucially informs questions of power and politics. Bonhoeffer does not consider ethics apart from the self in Christ; relating to Christ involves orientation towards the human other. Following the biblical text, such 'others' include those at the margins of power: widows, poor and orphans. In addition, this responsibility for the other is not limited to individuals. Recalling Bonhoeffer's account of the *Kollektivperson*, responsibility extends to concrete communities. As individuals are called to be 'for' one another, so communities are 'for' other individuals and communities. This concept of communal responsibility contributes to theological ethics in innovative ways. In an age of rapidly developing technology, the global gap between wealth and poverty continues to grow. Technological 'have-nots', without access to advances in medicine and industry, are becoming 'others' for more advanced nations. In a globalised world, Christian theology cannot ignore this reality. What does this idea of 'being for' the other mean in such contexts? What does it mean to exist kenotically for another on this level? While attempting to answer these questions goes far beyond this thesis, that this other-oriented framework addresses such a question at all attests to its value. The strength of this other-oriented approach is that, following Christ, it privileges the other at all times, allowing for a flexible and a contextual account of how one is 'for' the other. However, for those who require a case-by-case applied ethic, this flexibility is a weakness.

Second, the concept of ethical vision contributes to ethical debates as well.⁸² Attention forms the basis for the concept of ethical vision. In attention, the self gazes upon reality. For Weil, beholding reality takes the self up into that reality. The converse is also true. Orientation towards illusion draws the self further into illusion. This concept of ethical vision, therefore, has serious implications. This thesis has argued that *what* one views, and *how* one views it, impacts the self. This claim deeply informs debates about information technology. In the first place, what one views affects the self. The Internet, as the preeminent information technology, presents a limitless quantity of images, phrases and equations to the self. The ethical content of these images and phrases is not value-neutral. How does ethical vision affect an approach to information technologies? At the most basic level, the claim that it matters what one sees informs how one engages the Internet. Pornography desensitises selves towards sexual violence. Other videos desensitise persons towards other forms of physical violence.⁸³

In the second place, ethical vision determines how one views information technology. Is information technology a means to an end or an end in itself? As information technologies increasingly dominate human life and interaction, the question of orientation becomes paramount. To what does one orient when spending time on Facebook or Twitter? Films and television shows parody the person attached to their mobile device to the point of missing pivotal events in concrete life around them. Is

⁸² Stressing the importance of vision is not new. As George Pattison notes, contemplation of the divine Being has long been a part of Christian tradition and worship (Pattison, George, *God and Being: An Enquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 26. What is distinctive, in this thesis, is the concept of an *ethical vision in this world*. Pattison asks, '...can we perhaps understand the link between salvation and Being...in such a way as to circumvent the issue of their other-worldiness?...[does it say] something important about who we are, here and now, as well as what as we might become in another life?' (Pattison 2011:27).

⁸³ Cf. Silver, Beth, 'Fight Videos Spark Outcry, Charges' *The Los Angeles Times*, September 29, 2002. Accessed April 2, 2011. <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/sep/29/local/me-bumfights29>.

there an ethical implication to that depiction? Is there an other on the Internet?

Specifically, is there a 'feedback loop' in social networking; the more one feeds into the system, the more information comes back to the self? If so, the result is a circuitous giving of oneself to oneself, in insulation against genuine otherness. One can envision a potent critique of such insulation from both Bonhoeffer and Levinas. The required orientation of such a self might also draw the ire of Weil. The concept of ethical vision addresses what one envisions, as well as how one envisions the object of its gaze.

Third, there exists a noticeable lack of work on the Holy Spirit in ethical life. However, this thesis has argued that attention is a crucial element of responsibility. Weil herself mentions an explicit connection between attention and Spirit. The Spirit might affect human responsibility. Bonhoeffer suggests that whereas Christ 'grows' the church, the Holy Spirit 'grows' the human being (DBWE 1:139). Following this image of growth, Ford designates the Spirit as the 'transformer' of human beings (Ford 1999:212-214). Lossky describes the Spirit as illuminating presence in the human self.⁸⁴ Each of these roles of the Spirit – grower, transformer illuminator – resonates with Weil's account of attention. Attention grows as decreation occurs. Decreation operates inversely with the growth of grace in the soul. As God fills and displaces the self, so decreation occurs. Weil writes, 'The Kingdom of God means the complete filling of the entire soul of intelligent creatures with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit bloweth where he listeth. We can only invite him' (WG 144). The Holy Spirit may facilitate this process and direct the self's attention to 'the God who calls' (CC 104). There is much more work to be done on the ethical implications of Bonhoeffer's thought.

⁸⁴ Lossky 1976:162.

Conclusion

The deep joy of constructive projects like this one follows from the sheer multiplicity of possibilities. This thesis has drawn out connections between disparate (but not too disparate!) thinkers in the hopes of contributing to discussions of the theological self. The overlaps between Bonhoeffer and Levinas offer fertile ground to consider concepts of calling, responsibility and self-giving. These concepts, in turn, find a further interlocutor in Weil. They are expressed negatively in the figure of Eichmann. Here one finds engagement between Christian and non-Christian, theology and philosophy. This extended, staged conversation not only develops the thought of these thinkers, but it re-inserts them into contemporary debates about the nature and content of the self, how that self relates to otherness and the vocation of human beings.

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