On Time

On Time:

Philosophical, Theological, and Literary Accounts

Edited by

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FRANCISCO GOYA, *TRUTH RESCUED BY TIME, WITNESSED BY HISTORY*
(C. 1812 – 1814)

INTRODUCTION

A winged demon holds an hour glass in his left hand and, with his right one, leads a naked maiden. She is truth being unveiled by time. Another unrobed female figure is portrayed sitting down and holding a book. She is history. Francisco Goya's (1746—1828) unfinished, allegorical sketch "Time, Truth and History" (1797—99 or 1804) images the relationship between these three dimensions or meanings of existence. Drawn during the period in which Goya's focus shifts from the search for halcyon beauty towards reflections that bespeak a coincidence between the fantastic and the mundane, the sketch relates a sense of uneasiness and tension generated by the confrontation with the necessarily uncertain foundations of human existence.

Time arises in the face of our attempts at reckoning with an abyssal uncertainty. What does it mean to count time? To resolve to count the limitless, and to believe that by such a counting we measure existence, means to live in a construct. Fancy and fantasy are at the core of human constructs, world orderings, and models. And yet, if we pay attention, as did Goya, to the uncanniness of the fantastical, which traces out and glosses over the appearance of human life, we confront also the monstrous. As we work back from Goya's finished painting, "Truth Rescued by Time, Witnessed by History" (1812—1814), to the underlying sketch we mentioned to start, we reckon with the abyssal, the limitless, the excessive, and the monstrous permutations of that which we aim to regulate and count. For, although Goya's demonic sketch predates the painting that has covered it over with the better angels of our intellectual nature, for us, the deeper image, which we can only arrive at in the second place, raises the better questions. The meaning of time, having been eclipsed in a finished painting, is revealed as we trace it back to and work it out in Goya's sketch. The meaning is beautifully simple until we start scraping off the veneer—our constructs, models, and orderings—and asking after its truth.

The essays in this volume retrace time in its multi-dimensional, carnal, cognitive, and world installing arrangements. Questioning after the relationship between time and eternity, Zachary Biondi's contribution triangulates the Ancient, Platonist, and Modern views of time. Drawing on Plato, Plotinus, and Spinoza, Biondi articulates the philosophical foundation of the theological account of eternity and argues that the

thinking of eternity is then fruitful when it owes less to mysticism and more to the systematic efforts of the human intellect. Pursuing the opposing trajectory of argumentation, Ashley Gay's rigorous investigation of the eternal and the infinite relies on Levinas's thinking about concealed divinity and on Kierkegaard's account of an incalculable time in order to ask after an eternity that arrives as love in the face of death. Articulating the relationship between classical, theological, and contemporary philosophies on time, John Panteleimon Manoussakis filters his findings through the lens of psychoanalytic and literary reflections on temporality. Manoussakis's rich essay insists on a return or recoil from the otherworldly, and it configures the eternal as the carnal, lived, and sensuous flow of temporal phenomena.

The contribution by Michael Kelly marks a shift in focus in the volume. Kelly's essay does not concern itself with the eternal, nor does it approach time from a strictly scientific or theological perspective. Instead, analyzing Heidegger's reflections on time in the *Kantbuch*, Kelly develops a phenomenological account of the confluences and the divergences between Husserl's and Heidegger's understanding of temporality. Marina Marren's essay shows a thematic continuity with Kelly's work. Marren takes up Kant's chapter on the schematism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Marren develops arguments intended to show what the implications of the relationship between time and imagination are for Kant's view of cognition.

Continuing the investigation of time understood as an element that constitutes a self, Gregory P. Floyd's essay questions the origin and genesis of the reflective self in Kierkegaard. Positioning Kierkegaard's religiosity against Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenologies of time, Floyd offers an integrated view of the heterogeneous temporality of the self. Concluding the volume, Kevin Marren's essay defends Husserl's phenomenology of internal time against Paul Ricoeur's critique from *Time and Narrative*. Marren's findings point to oversights in Ricoeur's account. The essay provides a Husserlian reintegration of Ricoeur's narrative theory with transcendental phenomenology.

The essays in this volume all aim to be an occasion for the reader to arrive at original insights about the relationship between eternity and time, temporality and worldly existence, and the temporal dimension at the heart of the agencies that constitute the self. Another goal pursued by the publication is to avail the readers of the sense that the questioning about time is always also an inquiry about the character of one's own existence. One of the reasons for this intimate connection between temporality and character is time's function as the ground of history. As we take time now to reflect on what is so succinctly imaged by Goya's painting—on time's

revealing power—we observe the dark moments in the biography of one of the most careful thinkers of time: Martin Heidegger.

Heidegger had himself timed the release of his *Schwarze Hefte*. Now his groundbreaking analyses of temporality, in *Sein und Zeit*, are all the more poignant. The realization that the same individual, Heidegger, wrote both about the call of conscience and decried world Jewry is, as Heidegger himself might say, *unheimlich* (uncanny) to the utmost degree. However, this uncanniness is but one example of the way in which one's own time—the time of one's thinking—is both ahead of itself and is retrograde. Certainly, Heidegger's thought has contributed towards the working out of time even in this introduction—to the meaning of concealment and truth. Yet, that one and the same thing can be monstrous and be glossed over by beauty indicates, for us, that time cardinally lacks coincidence with itself. Out of this non-coincidence arises the possibility of reflection, of return, of an attempt at a home coming. Such attempts bear no guarantee of being fruitful, if by the latter we understand solely having something with which to comfort ourselves, or with which to reaffirm our views of the world, our egos, or our entrenched senses of self. This is all the more reason to set sail. Let the questioning bring up from the probed depths the grievous images that go into the constitution of both the self and the world. The reflective pursuits do not stop here. Time given, the animating loves, truths, and callings—those joints that hold up the hope in the goodness of life—also manifest. Are not these worth the time we give to work that makes possible their arrival?

—Marina and Kevin Marren

PART I:

TIME AND ETERNITY IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY AND IN THEOLOGICAL ACCOUNTS

BEING AND ETERNITY: A NON-THEOLOGICAL VIEW OF ETERNITY

ZACH BIONDI

> *Death is not an event in Life: we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present. Our life has no end in just the way in which our visual field has no limits.*
> —Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* 6.4311

The debate over a proper view of eternity has traditionally been concentrated around two distant poles: *timelessness* and *sempiternity*. The former is thought to have originated in Plato, the latter in Aristotle. Such a characterization makes historically oriented discussions concerning eternity far more manageable. But the sharpness with which these discrete notions are opposed is not commensurate with whether, historically speaking, the two Greeks univocally advocated for their respective theories; the differences among them are not as drastic as the titles ascribed to their views would lead us to believe. It is likely that the poles were set with the integration of Greek thought into Christian thought: the exigencies of theology called for careful theorizing about eternity for purposes of solving problems surrounding God's nature.[1] Hence, as is expected with this development, ascriptions of eternity are typically reserved for God—with the possible addition of mathematical truths and laws of logic (both of which might be related to God in some way relevant to how one should understand the eternity of logical and mathematical truths). Few can deny that talk of eternity is dominated by theology, and one cannot go far without seeing a theory of eternity applied to or motivated by theological concerns (and very few things besides God are called eternal). Does God exist in time? If not, how does he act in time?

[1] See W. von Leyden "Time, Number, and Eternity in Plato and Aristotle," in *The Philosophical Quarterly* 14, no. 54 (Jan. 1964), 36-7.

How might God 'perceive' time, if such a phrase makes sense? And there are far more issues in philosophical theology that make use of eternity. Godspeed to those debates. They, however, will not be my concern here.

There is a powerful pedigree of philosophers with non-theological theories of eternity.[2] In fact—and in proper monist spirit—these theories are essentially one theory, running from Plato to Plotinus to Spinoza. My emphasis will predominantly be on Plotinus, with the predecessor and progeny surfacing to supply textual parallels and bring greater clarity. It is not my aim to chart the influences of the earlier figures on the later figures, but instead to focus on the ideas.[3] I acknowledge that there are crucial differences between the three figures (to claim there are not would be foolish), but this does not preclude a fruitful synthesis and unification of their commonalities, especially with regard to a specific topic; and 'What is a non-theological way of understanding eternity?' is a question worthy of an answer. Although the three thinkers use eternity in different ways on occasion—i.e. applying it to different parts in their systems and using it to solve different problems—I claim that the concept of eternity they are using is essentially one and the same.

Plotinus' view of eternity is mainly confined to his tractate, "Time and Eternity" (III.7).[4] In it there are several definitions that serve as fitting starting points:

> Thus, we come to the definition: the life—instantaneously entire, complete, at no point broken into period or part—that belongs to the Authentic Existent by its very existence, this is the thing we were probing for—this is Eternity. (III.7.3)

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[2] *Theological* here narrowly construed. Of the three I consider, Plotinus is most likely to be considered theological, but he is also likely not taken as propounding the orthodoxy of a particular religion, and this is my meaning. One might also call their views 'non-theistic' in the sense that 1) for all three, eternity is not required in order to square certain preset notions of God's character, and 2) Plotinus and Spinoza (and Plato, if he is pushed) do not mean by God an anthropomorphic deity with a personality, and it is likely true to call them atheists *with respect to* the gods of traditional religions. Eternity and God are hence separable. Conceptually, it is worth noting, calling the view of eternity 'non-theological' is not to commit the advocate of the view to atheism (which explains my phrasing). 'Non-theological' and 'non-theistic' are not equivalent. The former emphasizes the idea that eternity might relate or apply to a God. The latter is stronger and likely entails the former.

[3] The amount of influence could not be more different. Plotinus saw himself simply as an expositor of Platonism, whereas Spinoza was very likely to be wholly unaware of Plotinus (but probably familiar with Neoplatonism generally).

[4] Plotinus, *The Enneads*, S. Mackenna (London: Penguin Books, 1991). All parentheticals reference sections in III.7.

> Thus a close enough definition of Eternity would be that it is life limitless in the full sense of being all the life there is and a life which, knowing nothing of past or future to shatter its completeness, possesses itself intact for ever. (III.7.5)

Eternity, as we see, is linked with life and being *as such*, not with a span of existence—as incalculable or infinite as that span might be. In fact, eternity must be understood as the express denial of such temporal attempts at explanation: what is not eternal is temporal, and the existence of being itself, when conceived simply as being, must be eternal. For Plotinus, there is something (or a way of understanding or experiencing everything) to which temporality does not apply. We are to abandon an understanding of eternity through time in favor of an understanding through *being*. Plotinus says, "That which neither has been nor will be, but simply possesses being; that which enjoys stable existence as neither in process of change nor having ever changed—that is eternity" (III.7.3). One hears echoes of Parmenides in the idea that eternity is the unbroken and full existence of the whole. After all, for Parmenides, the questioning of what there was before being and what there will be after falls far from the path of persuasion. There can be no conception of an eternal thing that persists through time or is generated or annihilated; rather, eternity entails the complete and entire existence of something unlimited by notions of before and after. In a sense, it sits above and unaffected by such conceptions. What is eternal is being, namely, the whole: it is changeless and motionless, inherently entire, impervious to development. It is not subject to growth or decay, now being one way and later another, but is always all of itself, concentrated at one point, as Plotinus says (III.7.3) Accordingly, in contemplating the whole, we move away from constraining and, strictly speaking, inaccurate notions of unending time to a consideration of the nature and essence of being and life.

We find the same view in Spinoza, in a definition to Part 1: "By eternity I understand existence itself [*ipsam existentiam*], insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition alone of the eternal thing."[5] This might appear hopelessly circular, but any such reading is a mistake. Spinoza means something very close to Plotinus: eternity is not

[5] Baruch Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, vol. 1, Edwin Curley, ed. and trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). Cf. especially, (Id8). All references to the Latin are from *Spinoza Opera*, 4 vols., Carl Gebhardt, ed. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925). The Ethics is abbreviated as follows: 'IIp7s,' for instance, that means '*Ethics* Part 2, Proposition 7, Scholium' 'd', 'a', 'c' refer to definition, axiom, and corollary, respectively.

explicated through duration, but is instead the eternal truth of the existence of the whole, whose essence is all things (everything considered as a unity) and thus existence. Spinoza, like Plotinus, expresses eternity as precisely *not* existence in time, even time considered as without beginning or end, as he says in the explication following the definition: "For such existence, like the essence of a thing, is conceived as an eternal truth, and on that account cannot be explained by duration or time [*per durationem aut tempus explicari non potest*], even if the duration is conceived to be without beginning or end."[6] This is perhaps the clearest expression of the timelessness of the eternity view.[7] The whole must exist (for the alternatives—i.e., something less than the whole or more than the whole—are incoherent) and must include in it everything. One is reminded of Quine famously answering, "everything" to the question "what is there?". Plotinus considers this explicitly when he argues for the whole as immune to exclusion. By this he means that all that exists is included, and all that does not (all that is non-existent) is, quite obviously, not contained within the whole. What it means to exist is to be contained within the category of 'everything.' Eternity is the existence of this 'everything' considered as an undifferentiated whole (Ip15s); it is being as such when understood as an immutable and unchangeable unity. In the view of both figures there is only *one* (however, not *the* One of Plotinus, which is ineffable) that deserves the ascription of eternity, but this ascription is nothing more than the being of the whole—i.e., to use Spinoza's language, the existence, essence, and eternity of the whole are all one and the same (Ip34). "There is, of course, no difference between Being and Everlasting Being," Plotinus says (III.7.6). It is the nature of being to be eternal, and any proper understanding of one term will include an understanding of the other.

Although it is true that eternity cannot be understood through temporality, time is not therefore extraneous. It is important to understand the above notion of eternity in relation to time, and how eternal being relates to the changing world bound in time. We begin with the patriarch. Plato is certainly without the strong monisms of Plotinus and Spinoza, but he speaks similarly about eternity when he considers the forms. He calls them "changeless,"[8] "ever the same and in the same state,"[9] "uniform,"

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[6] Spinoza, Id8.

[7] In fact, Spinoza stresses this time and time again in the *Ethics*. He says, for instance, at Vp23s, "[W]e nevertheless feel that our mind, insofar as it involves the essence of the body under a species of eternity, is eternal, and that this existence it has cannot be defined by time *or* explained through duration."

[8] Plato, *Timaeus* in *Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997), 28a.

and "indissoluble."[10] Plato's theory is not as clear and developed as those who followed him, and, as I stated at the outset, he is not an undeviating propounder of the timelessness idea we discover more directly in the other two, but what we find in the *Timeaus* particularly are the forms described as pre-existing the creation of the world as eternal templates which serve as the 'image' of not only the world but of time itself. The model of the world (i.e., the forms) is "an everlasting living thing."[11] If it is uniform and everlasting, it clearly cannot be thought of as in development, growth or decay, or in any way bound to temporality. The world, however, being subject to change, process, and variation, does not share in these qualities of the forms, and in fact cannot due to the separation: Plato says, "[I]t was the Living Thing's nature to be eternal, but it isn't possible to bestow eternity fully upon anything that is begotten."[12] There is a stark divide between eternity and temporality, yet despite this, there is a relation.

The moving world is an 'image' (*eikos*) of eternity. This obscure phrasing is also found in Plotinus who argues that time is understood to be a "representation in image" of eternity (III.7.1). Plato means by this that the world of time is somehow analogous to the eternal model; it is a likeness in that it copies certain true characteristics of the model and does not merely resemble it, to use the distinction found at *Sophist* 235d.[13] The world must bear a certain relation to its model; otherwise there is no structure in which the world can partake. And being that the models are eternal and the world partakes in them, although the world is not eternal, it must be an image of the models and thus an image of eternity. The shadows and puppets are images of the authentic and 'more real' objects outside. This manner of speaking highlights for Plato the idea that the forms are more fundamental than the created world, and the latter is derived from the former: "Time, then, came together with the universe."[14] We also find in Plotinus the idea that eternity is, metaphysically speaking, prior to time, and time should always be understood as depending on eternity. He says, "Time itself must descend from eternity" (III.7.7). The similarity between the two is even more striking when we consider the creation-myth structure and language of the *Timeaus*; and for Plato it is in a passage concerning the creation of the world that we find treatment of the relationship between eternity and time. Plotinus employs a comparable

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[9] Ibid., *Phaedo* in *Complete Works*, 78d.
[10] Ibid., 80b.
[11] *Timaeus*, 37d.
[12] Ibid.
[13] See von Leyden, "Time, Number, and Eternity in Plato and Aristotle," 37-8.
[14] *Timaeus,* 38b.

creation-myth when he turns to his own theory of time after refuting the others in 7-10. He says,

> To this end [i.e., a definition of time] we must go back to the state we affirmed of Eternity, unwavering Life, undivided totality, limitless, knowing no divagation, at rest in unity and intent upon it. Time was not yet; or at least it did not exist for the Eternal Beings. It is we that must create time out of the concept and nature of progressive derivation, which remained latent in the Divine Beings. […] Time lay, though not yet as Time, in the Authentic Existent together with the Cosmos itself." (III.7.11)

It is from an understanding of eternity that we can make sense of the existence of time, which is separate from eternity and yet bears some relation or likeness to it. Time is also understood through number in Plato's case[15] and additionally through "derivation" for Plotinus. (This commonality—the intimate relation between time and mathematics—is seen most notably in Kant). I will consider two other points from this passage and the others I have employed: the categories of eternity and time are somehow discrete and yet related or analogous, as we have seen; and further, we somehow play an active role in the creation of time insofar as we measure and experience it.

Plotinus' tractate begins with the dichotomy of the essay's title: we learn that time and eternity are discrete and mutually exclusive categories ("two entirely separate things" (III.7.1)), and thus there can be nothing, when conceived in a particular way that can be eternal *and* temporal. The relevance of 'conception,' as I phrase it, is both important and vague. In Spinoza, for instance, it is through an act of the intellect (namely, 'reason,' the second type of knowledge (IIp40s2)) that enables a person to perceive something no longer bound within a temporal sequence or process, but rather *sub quadam specie aeternitatis*, and hence as necessary (IIp44c2). Similarly in Plotinus, although the categories are discrete, the membership of a thing to one class or the other is not a question of a neutral ontological sorting process (i.e., *this* object is temporal and *that* one is eternal) but depends on how the thing is conceived according to the unity of being, and the manner of this conception naturally depends upon an act of intellect as well. The issue concerns the form of one's knowledge of being. Plotinus and Spinoza certainly wish to retain our normal way of speaking about particular and separate things existing in time while also maintaining the eternity of the unified whole. How can they maintain this when the categories are utterly discrete and yet everything is part of the whole?

[15] Ibid., 37d.

The answer lies in the role we play in the creation of time. Spinoza says that "*quin etiam tempus imaginemur*" (IIp44s). In fact, no one can doubt it. By imagination Spinoza means the lowest type of knowledge: the fragmentary, "*mutilatam et confusam*" perception of the succession of objects presented to the senses. Time then, being a product of a low type of knowledge, only exists insofar as we perceive images in succession, and does not exist (at least as we experience it, though this is controversial) in any real way apart from these perceptions. (The notion of levels of knowledge is, of course, inspired by Plato and the divided line in *Republic* at 509d-511e). Plotinus makes the same point, saying, "Time [is the] Life of the Soul in movement as it passes from one stage of act or experience to another" (III.7.11). Here, we find a clear parallel to Spinoza's idea that time is comprised according to a succession of sensory experiences—and the relevance of number in the experience of time is particularly germane. Plotinus continues, "Time, however, is not to be conceived as outside of the Soul," (III.7.11) expressing the necessary role the Soul plays in the creation of time. Plotinus even makes the strong claim that time would cease to exist without an 'imagining' soul: "If, then, the Soul withdrew, sinking itself again into its primal unity, Time would disappear" (III.7.12).[16] This, however, is not the claim that time would disappear with the disappearance of Soul, but a claim about an intellectual transformation the Soul can undergo. Like Spinoza, we can conceive of things as eternal when we understand them through a higher type of knowledge. If the soul is united with the Unity, for Plotinus, or if we attain knowledge that proceeds from adequate ideas of the essence of God, for Spinoza, we will then understand the whole under the form of eternity. This form of knowledge is the understanding of things as necessary insofar as they follow from the essence of the whole. Since the whole is eternal and not subject to change, what exists must exist and cannot exist in any other way. Embracing the eternity of the whole leads to this Stoic point, which is seated in proper understanding (i.e., an act of intellect). Although this is attainable, it is not *permanently* attainable: both Plotinus and Spinoza hold that humans, being a part of nature, necessarily at times perceive according to the lower type of knowledge, and, accordingly, a life wholly without the experience of time is impossible. But the less one experiences

[16] Because Spinoza holds that humans are necessarily a part of nature and thus necessarily passive at times, there is no such thing as a 'non-imagining' mind. Although we can work to conceive of more things under a form of eternity (and this is virtue and blessedness itself), we can never conceive of everything in this way. Expressed in another way, we are not self-sufficient bodies; we require other bodies for our existence. But, as we see, Plotinus has a similar view.

in time, and thus conceives eternally, the greater one's virtue. For Spinoza, these two are one and the same. We are to become rational mystics.

It is worth pointing out in conclusion that all three thinkers recognize the inherent challenge of speaking about eternity. Here we are confronted with the familiar boundaries and frustrations of apophasis. Plato, for instance, uses various time-*esque* terms to describe the forms: e.g., "everlasting" and "sempiternal."[17] Plotinus, one of the greatest apophatics, eschews temporal means of speaking about eternity, though he concedes that such a project is, as a practical matter, impossible. Spinoza links language with a process of imagination (i.e., memory (IIp18s)), which, we have seen, is bound to temporality. However, Plato is probably clearest about these shortcomings: "[*W*]*as* and *will* and *be* are forms of time that have come to be. Such notions we unthinkingly but incorrectly apply to everlasting being. […] [B]ut according to the true account, only *is* is appropriately said of it."[18] Spinoza says at Ip33s2, "[I]n eternity, there is neither *when*, nor *before*, nor *after*." Failings of language are inevitable when speaking about eternity, and perhaps the very act of speaking presupposes a dependence on time, in which case we cannot expect our language to stretch towards concepts like eternity. There is no hope in equipping language for eternity by purifying it. Can an utterance itself be eternal? Spinoza is conscious of this, and we are left to work through his proofs. There is something infuriating and yet enticing about the idea, shared by the three and many more in the history, that we must be diligent and patient, and open to the idea that what seem like problems now will (*in time*), when we finally reach the good or achieve the intellectual love of God, eventually dissolve. We are being led by the hand, as it were, up Wittgenstein's ladder. The common image of ascent stresses that it is not the world that changes, but the perspective; the ascent does not yield solutions to problems, but a manner of seeing—one in which we see that there is no problem at all. These approaches frustrate common sensibilities of philosophy today.

In all three we find the idea (contrary also to our scientific sensibilities) that what is tangible and sensible, what we commonly take to be the most real due to its amenability to measurement and quantification is, in fact, *not* the most real, but confused and ephemeral, derivative and dependent. Eternity is abstract and difficult (and perhaps impossible) to express to others. It does not follow from this, however, that it is less essential to life and existence, or that it is a chimera or sophistry. It is the opposite! It

[17] *Timaeus*, 38c.
[18] Ibid., 37e-38a.

demands a patience that so few are willing to give. But in due course and diligence we can achieve the highest knowledge, the intellectual love of God; we can experience the loss of our soul in the One and come to understanding; we can, as the well-known story goes, ascend into the light.

TEMPORALITY OF THE UNSEEN AND UNREPRESENTED: KIERKEGAARD'S ETERNAL LOVE AND LEVINAS'S INFINITE RESPONSIBILITY

ASHLEY GAY

Both Kierkegaard and Levinas write of an alternative temporality, figured in faces of death[1] and the unseen God.[2] Kierkegaard describes this temporality as eternity, experienced in love for the dead,[3] and in the indiscriminate love for every other.[4] Levinas describes an immemorial time that opens the relation to the Infinity of the Other. In reading Levinas through Kierkegaard, this essay has four aims: (1) to enunciate Kierkegaard's notion of eternity in *Works of Love*, especially insofar as it disrupts a temporality of calculation, return, or false infinities; (2) to suggest how this alternative temporality affords a loving relation to the unseen God, the dead beloved, and every neighbor who is seen with a "closed eye;"[5] (3) to intimate the dilemma of expressing time as both a relation to God and a relation to another's death; and (4) to hear Kierkegaard's eternal love in conversation with Levinas's infinite

[1] Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love,* trans. H. and E. Hong (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 317-329. Also, Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time,* trans. B. Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 117.

[2] The "unseen" God is Kierkegaard's language. Though, the disruption of phenomenology implied in this phrase resembles Levinas's language of God's enigma—the disruption of a phenomenon, an appearance. Hence Levinas, too, can write of the incognito God. Emmanuel Levinas, "Phenomenon and Enigma," *Collected Philosophical Papers,* trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 66, 72.

[3] *Works of Love*, 317-329.

[4] Ibid., 158-159. Kierkegaard's eternal love "makes every relation to other human beings into a God-relationship"—a statement not unlike Levinas's understanding of the God who comes to us in the face of the other (ibid., 345).

[5] Ibid.

responsibility, while acknowledging the latter's more radical break with the temporality of ontology.[6]

1. Eternity of the Unseen in *Works of Love*

I will first isolate the term eternal as not simply in contrast to infinity, but in contrast to the worldly. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard emphasizes that the temporality of Christian love reveals the insufficiencies of various worldly loves: the poet's "self-love;" the "giddy" infinity of erotic love; and the "lofty" expression of celebrated love.[7] In contrast to these incomplete modes of loving, he suggests eternal love as the "awareness of possibility."[8] The experience of the eternal seems as 'lofty' as it is phenomenologically problematic. However, Kierkegaard's atemporal love is far from an exemption from temporality, or a suspension of Levinasian ethics. Kierkegaard's sense of the eternal is rather akin to an immemorial time that disrupts the economy of returns or reciprocity. Eternal love has its own temporality, a "prior history" to the "interlude[s]" of "erotic love and friendship."[9] Erotic love and "earthly love" imply a joy of being; eternal love is not bound to the dynamics of being and nothingness.

The contrast between these interludes of 'worldly loves' and the ultimacy of eternal love could be better expressed as that between incomplete loves, and an ever-completing love—between an *unsatisfactory* (insufficient, partial) love and an *unsatisfiable* (immeasurable because not calculating)[10] love. A helpful set of distinctions, but not without a problem at the heart of the "eternal." For it is not simply as Kierkegaard initially

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[6] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 31-43. I acknowledge that this enterprise of comparison is perilous, insofar as drawing any parallels implies a synchrony, or a potentially reductive relation. However, I would like to risk this reading so as to welcome the two authors into one another's philosophical contributions. Following Lyotard, one might call this a commentary rather than a work, in the Levinasian sense. Jean-Francois Lyotard, "Levinas's Logic," *Face to Face with Levinas* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), 117-118.

[7] *Works of Love*, 35-36.

[8] "The lover, on the other hand, hopes all things; for him no indolence of habit, no pettiness of mind, no picayunishness of prudence, no extensiveness of experience, no slackness of the years, no evil bitterness of passion corrupts his hope or adulterates possibility. Every morning, yes, ever moment, he renews his hope and enlivens possibility, if love endures and he endures in love." Ibid., 241.

[9] Ibid., 149.

[10] Ibid., 176.

states, "Erotic love is still not the eternal; it is the beautiful giddiness of infinite."[11] In other words, the distinction is not between a limited erotic love and eternal love, but two senses of the infinite. Kierkegaard revises: as there is a worldly sense of the infinite (erotic love praised by the poet), there is also an eternal sense of the infinite. The worldly lover, suspicious of infinite love, points out its insufficiencies.[12] In a way, Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* is thus written from the perspective of the worldly lover. And yet, because of this noted insufficiency, he can somehow hope for the "eternal sense of infinite."[13] The finitude of the world's infinite love becomes apparent in what it is not. Therefore, the eternal is an apophatic move; the eternal demarcates the limitation of a certain infinite. Eternal love is not infinite love, if infinite means an "infinite passion for an individual."[14] Rather, the eternal is an infinite debt to infinite others.[15] This infinite debt of eternal love is *not* "reminiscent of an actual bookkeeping relationship," but the unfathomable paradox: "that the lover by giving infinitely comes into—infinite debt."[16] As in Levinas's infinite responsibility to the other, eternal love is a desire that "hollows out," and therefore perpetuates, desire.[17]

2. Eternity as Seeing Otherwise

Granted, Kierkegaard resists the language of desire, of erotic love, insofar as it connotes one's insatiable lust. He admits that there can be a purification of eros, which gives the lover a "calm," or "strength of weakness."[18] This "sacred" desire chastens the possessiveness of lust.[19] By Levinas's definition, "metaphysical eros" is precisely this avoidance of possession and refutation of the lustful ego.[20] Accepting their differences in denotations, it is possible to sense in Kierkegaard's eternal love the

[11] Ibid., 36.
[12] Ibid., 78.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 54.
[15] Ibid., 172.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Levinas, "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity," *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 58.
[18] *Works of Love*, 315.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 33.

ethical "optics" afforded in Levinas's metaphysical eros.[21] Because, for Kierkegaard, eternal love is a constant, it withdraws from the changes and lapses of finite love. This withdrawal from the vicissitudes of being is not synonymous with one's ability to ignore the neighbor. Rather, eternity occurs when one acknowledges the ways in which every person's arrival is a withdrawal, thereby demanding a love against calculation, partiality, and personal need. Eternity, as what resists representation and sight, trains love's perception. It is not that one should "love only the unseen," but rather be trained by the unseen to *unsee* the prerequisites of "fastidious" love.[22] Worldly love demands that the other change to fit my conception of perfection; eternal love reverses my demand of the other into a demand placed upon me—to love every other without conditions.[23] The eternal is thus a love freed from finitude, insofar as it "imprison[s]" us in an infinite duty toward others.[24]

When Kierkegaard posits eternal love as indifferent, impartial, freed from externals and calculations, he inadvertently suggests two "works": that we love others better than the God of judgment would suggest (if judgment implies calculation), *and* love God as if God were dead. We must love God not for God's activity in the world, but for God's hiddenness, trusting God's presence despite God's invisibility. We must love God in spite of the question of God's being, that is, if we are truly to be freed for loving those whom we can see. The eye trained by God's transcendence will better 'see' the duty to not only love those we cannot see, but also love all others with a closed eye to their contexts.[25] Eternal love closes an eye to what worldly love demands to see; and in so doing, is better able to see the other. The other is seen without her finite distinctions—her errors, her imperfections, her failure of the Same's

[21] Ibid., 23.
[22] *Works of Love*, 159.
[23] One begins to hear in this reversal of the needy subject into an attention for the other's need in Levinas, articulation of the Other irreducible to the totalizing of the Same. The closure of the Same, in Kierkegaard's understanding of love, becomes a dis-enclosure. Or as Levinas writes of it, a "denucleation." Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. B. Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 12.
[24] Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 176.
[25] In a sense, Kierkegaard's contemplation of the closed eye of love resembles Levinas's attempt to express the other's face as nude—both to 'see' her in her transcendence and exposure, but also to unclothe her from the restrictions of her context. Levinas, "Language and Proximity," *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 121.