A Sketch for a Levinasian Theory of Action (Original Draft)

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A Possible Levinasian Theory of Action
(or an Account of the Primordiality of Normativity and the Posteriority of Prescription in Levinas Metaphysics)

By Martin Gak

Much of the problem which keeps Levinasian ethics from becoming a viable moral program is the fact that, for Levinas, all actions are, in essence, defined by the priority of ethics. This means that all acts—even those that we find quite offensive— are in principle ethical. In this guise, ethics loses any action-guiding force and remains merely descriptive of the way things happen to be, which is to say that ethics ceases to have any ethical import in the traditional sense.
Yet, the questions of prescription does occur in Levinas' work and nowhere does it emerge with more force than in his discussions of the law. If not within the scope of ethics, normativity in the traditional sense—that is, as concerned with the regulation and governance of actions—makes its presence felt in our author's account of the acceptance and obedience of the law. In the context of these discussions, which can be found in his major works and are the very substance of his Talmudic commentaries, we find Levinas making certain claims that seem to entail some account of action-guiding principles. As a matter of fact, it is precisely in the context of the elucidation of the relation between the Same and the law that Levinas comes closer to explaining the possible relation between his articulation of the primordiality of ethics and the uptake of and obedience to prescription entailed in the deliberation and performance of the law. On account of this, I want argue that any possible elucidation of a Leivnasian moral theory is strictly dependent on the successful adumbration of a Levinasian theory of law because it is there where both his ethical metaphysics and his implicit account of normativity share address.
The purpose of this paper, then, is to give a general sketch of such a Levinasian legal theory, which is the domain where the relation between this new conception of ethics and the customary demand of justification and adjudication relevant to moral philosophy is most visibly exposed.
I will do this by giving a summary of Levinas' articulation of the acceptance of the law taking as my point of departure his exposition in "The Temptation of Temptation" of the reversion of the structure of moral deliberation in the response of the Hebrews to God's conferral of the law in Exodus 24:7. I will expand this account be advancing what may be understood as a Levinasinan phenomenology of legality.
In so doing, I will make three substantive claims: The first is that the uptake of the law demands no conceptual grasp. That is to say that the law need not be conceptually available to express or enact its normative power.
Following form the first, my second claim is that, in fact, the qualia of legality—the what-is-it-likeness of living within the law—is pre-conceptual and thus forestalls the possibility of deliberation. I will actually suggest that in most cases, to act in accordance with the law is to act in ignorance of the law and I will give a few examples of this. This will be my account of the phenomenal invisibility of the priority of normativity.
My third and final claim will be that the prescriptive force of the law upon which the subject can deliberate which surfaces as the law's conceptual availability, is only a secondary product—the thematization—of the primordial phenomenal invisibility of the law performed in ignorance of the letter. This will be my account of the posteriority of presciption.

My intention in this paper is not to present a full account a Levinasian moral theory, which may not be possible, but rather to demarcate the locus for the emergence of principles, which can permit adjudication among different acts without negating the radical primacy of ethics, which is probably Levinas' greatest contribution to the field.

On The Primordiality of Normativity and the Posteriority of Prescription

It has been often pointed out that one problem, perhaps the furthest reaching problem, of the radical primordiality of Ethics in Levinas' philosophy is the apparent impossibility of formulating a theory of action. And yet the author has a number of works in which he discusses the nature of prescription and its possible substantive content at some length. In this paper, I will try to build a conceptual bridge between the apparently inert primacy of ethics in the major works and the elucidation of norms and prescriptions in Levinas' account of the uptake of the law.

Indeed, in the next few pages, I will argue that it is possible to find in Levinas' account of what I shall call the performative uptake[1] of the law, the conditions necessary for the formulation of a theory of action-guiding principles. In arguing this position, I will make two substantive claims the first of which should be more or less uncontroversial. Namely that according to Levinas, the acceptance of the law is the most salient expression of the primacy of ethics. The second, which is perhaps a bit more problematic, is that it is precisely within the scope of the uptake of the law—and not in his ethics—where the freedom to deviate, which is a precondition to adjudication first emerges and it is this that permits the formulation of a possible theory of action.

So where are we to find Levinas account of the uptake of the law? There is a whole set of works in the Levinasian corpus that deal directly with the law, his Talmudic readings. These texts, which are normally taken to belong to his religious thought, would be more appropriately understood—within the context of philosophical output—as his jurisprudential essays.[2] It is, moreover, in the Talmudic readings were Levinas comes closest to discussing questions of prescription. It is perhaps because the Talmud is specifically concerned with laws, rules and regulations that in the commentaries we find Levinas approaching the basic questions of moral philosophy—what must one do?—which, in his metaphysical works, are absent.

The problem with Levinas' account of ethics is that all acts, including those, which we normally find quite reprehensible, must still be understood as being essentially ethical. Put differently, if ethics is so radical as to pervade each and every action, then there can be no such thing as the unethical. In which case, good and bad are either impossible or, minimally, do not belong to the domain of ethics. This is the reason why the criticism is often raised that Levinas philosophy is incapable of furnishing ethics with an action-guiding principle or that his ethics are either empty or not ethics at all.

What we need to find in order to make this brand of ethics into a viable moral philosophy is the place where the theory is capable of affording us sufficient leeway to deliver a standard of action that is liable to transgression. Unlike ethics for Levinas, this would have to be a principle of action extrinsic to action itself, one that would liberate action from the constitutive choke of what

is here called ethics and allot the Same some form of free will. In other words, the principle in question would have to be one which can be freely violated, which ethics as a foundational principle cannot.

In the Talmudic commentaries, we find a discussion of prescriptive enunciation—in this case, the jurisprudential output of theological thinkers—which unlike the 'insurmountable'[3] demand of the Other in *Totality and Infinity*, are very much liable to infringement. As opposed to the metaphysical demand, the law is—in principle—capable of being transgressed. If transgression were not possible then the law would be, at best, redundant and at worst altogether nonsensical. Indeed, the law must presuppose what its enunciation attempts to curtail.

At the same time, the domain of the juridical, as all other domains of action in the Levinasian universe, is defined by the primordiality of the ethical demand. And this means that, even those actions that deviate from the guiding principle that the law provides remain, in essence, ethical. These acts of ethical illegality should not be construed as actions oriented to the good beyond the domain of the law[4] but rather as action, which are by their very constitution, ethical and by their relation to the principle furnished by the law, illegal.

It is precisely because within the context of the law, actions gain the capacity to acquire a status other than the one defined by their ethical constitution, that jurisprudence is the most conducive terrain for the emergence of a theory of action, which can at once preserve the Levinasian account of the constitutive primordiality of the ethical while allowing for the conditions necessary for legal and moral adjudication.

1. The Performative Consequences of Epistemic Recalcitrance

So let me first explain how the uptake of the law is a prime example of the primacy of ethics. In "Temptation of Temptation", Levinas identifies the primacy of the ethical with the pre-deliberative uptake of the law. Perhaps one of Levinas' clearest accounts of the primordiality of ethics is to be found in the discussion of the passage in Exodus 24:7, which registers the ancient Israelites response to the divine impartment of the law. After having Moses recite a long and extremely detailed list of laws and ordinances—which one can find between Exodus 20 and 23, and which includes the Decalogue as well as rules on the treatment of slaves, the reparation for theft, the proper ways of worship, etc—the congregated people respond "we shall do and we shall hear", which the Talmud and subsequent Jewish commentary understand to mean 'we will do before understanding'.

As Levinas himself points out, this response "shocks logic" or at least it subverts the logic of deliberation. The attribution of responsibility from which praise and blame issue, depends upon the presupposition that the scope and consequence of a given action can be calculated in advance of its performance. One receives the prescription, deliberates over the process, gauges its outcome and, based on the results of these mechanisms, assesses the desirability of the action. This is what then allows one rationally to choose to perform it or not. To do before knowing the content of the prescription seems to mean, in principle, to negate deliberation by forestalling the assessment of the value of the action prescribed.

The religious significance of the response to the divine law is often explained in terms of some radical form of pietism and while this may well be the case, Levinas finds in this strange inversion of the logic of deliberation and action the occasion for the phenomenological elucidation of the pre-deliberative uptake of the law

In the promise to defer deliberation, the law becomes truly foundational. The law is not merely

accepted in an act of naïve trust or on the grounds of pure authority; "the doing which is at stake here is not simply *praxis* as opposed to theory" he says "but a way of *actualizing without beginning with the possible,* of knowing without examining, of placing oneself beyond violence without this being the privilege of a free choice".[5] To negate the priority of free choice and assert the primodriality of the law addresses in some evident and some more elusive way the demands of ethical justification. Any prescription, which fails to find justification in ontology, could only look at another prescription—a previous one—to sanction its prescriptive force, say, a law that would demand the obeisance of the other law. This, however, would put us well on the way of an infinite justificatory regression, which would, ipso facto, negate any justification to begin with. In other words, the law would be infinitely incapable of finding a foundational justification making its prescription void.

So neither ontology nor normativity can provide a justification for the prescriptive content of law in general, let alone of laws and their substantive contents in particular. On this account, the negation of the possibility of a justification more primordial than the law entails the priority of the law itself and such priority, in addition, amounts to its epistemological recalcitrance.

For all these reasons, as we shall see, the actualization of the law cannot but be pre-deliberative—insofar as there is no incipient possibility or foundational concept to be examined—and performative.

2. The performative actualization of the law

I would like to offer now a tentative elucidation of the performative actualization of the law in its priority to deliberation. In Exodus 24:7, the law is heard in the voice of Moses to whom God had spoken. This hearing is a form of doing, which is prior to the discursive rationality of calculation. Those hearing the law are performing an act, that is, they are hearing the enunciation of the law. If the law were—let us just say for the sake of the argument—the demand to hear the law, the subject who hears Moses voice would be obeying the law even before understanding the command. In being heard, the Other's voice, which carries the law, arrives at the ear of the listener before its content; the order is heard before it can be grasped. In this hearing, there is obviously a performance: one hears, one receives, one bears and the uptake of the law is done both pre-deliberatively—as I have not deliberated on the merits of hearing—and performatively—as I have accepted the law by merely performing it.

For Levinas, in fact, the law expresses in its most basic form the proscription of murder, which in this case may be understood as the interdiction to negate the law. In *Totality and Infinity* he writes:

> This infinity, stronger than murder, already resists us in his face, is his face, is the primordial *expression*, is the first word: "you shall not commit murder." [6]

The Other's doing—his saying—is law and to murder the Other would be to negate the law. But such thing is impossible. The sound of the Other's voice cannot be negated a priori because it is not grounded on my freedom—I cannot decide if the Other will say to me. In the Other's freedom to say I am—originally—the unwilling recipient of the Other's saying and to that extent, the reception of the law is unavoidable. This is the inexorable acquiescence to the law's demand of being heard and to the acceptance—de facto and compulsive—of the interdiction to murder the voice of the law.

So this is the primordial pre-deliberative and performative uptake of the law: being incapable of

choosing the silence of the Other, the listener is in hearing, accepting and thus fulfilling the law. Which is to say that in *his incapacity not to hear,* to become deaf to the voice of the Other that speaks to me, one abides by the radical prohibition to negate—murder if you will—his voice. Levinas, in "Temptation of Temptation", explains the issue like this:

To hear a voice speaking to you is *ipso facto* to accept obligation towards the one speaking.[7]

Performance is not subsequent to the demand but rather simultaneous—or concurrent—with it.[8] That is to say, the uptake of the law is performative, which means that it is not epistemic. Perhaps there is no more novelty in this proposition that the phenomenological articulation of a well-known Wittgensteinian[9] point. Rules have a performative life previous to their epistemic life. But, however obvious this may be, it is of importance to us for two reasons. The first one is that when Leivnas' account of the primordial interdiction is read as I have above, it seems to confirm the suspicion of the primordiality of ethics; the second is that it forces us to account for a form of learning, which is not epistemic. We will begin with the second.

3. The Pre-Deliberative Uptake of the Law

The uptake of the law of which Levinas speaks—the primordial proscription to negate the Other—seems to be anchored in some inherent predisposition to receptivity and this means that it operates virtually as a natural law, which—as such—does not so much furnishes a principle that can be followed or that can prescribe a course of action that must be taken but limits the scope of action of the subject to whom it applies by imposing a principle of constraint. The subject is incapable of negating his own receptivity to alterity because such receptivity is, in a manner of speaking, part and parcel of its natural constitution. The merit of this articulation is to show that, in light of the impossibility of satisfying the demand for justification, this natural receptivity is the only thing that can guarantee the actualization of the law. The primordial acceptance of the law does not so much compel the subject to act in some given way as foreclose the possibility of acting in certain others. Law, in this regard, is limit.

This limit, though, is not thematizable prior to its performance. If it were, the actualization would be merely the belated performance of a previous choice, resolved by epistemic means. But this is a possibility that we had discarded in the previous section. The question then arises: if the law is not thematizable, then how is it that it can be taken up at all.

This is not only a question posed to the foundational acceptance of law in general. The acceptance and performance of substantive laws with complex and specific content shares the epistemic recalcitrance entailed in the foreclosure of, both, descriptive and normative justifications and thus raises the same question. The reason is that for the most part, in our daily life we perform all sorts of actions in accordance with laws while being completely oblivious and even fully ignorant of its letter. Indeed, it should not be hard to see that the legality of our actions is seldom dependant on the knowledge of the actual law governing them. So in this case, we have a much more proximate example of the pre-deliberative—that is non-epistemic—performance of the law. So, once again, let us consider how is it that one can dwell in legality without knowing the law.

Two immediate responses suggest themselves here. One is that the action's agreement with the law is purely fortuitous, which means that, indeed, the law is not known and has no bearing on the action at all. This is, of course, a possibility but only within a limited scope. If the act were in accordance with the law by grace of dumb luck, then three problems would emerge, two weak

and one strong. First, though possible, the subject would be unlikely to act in accordance with the law in repeated occasions. In other words, luck would have to be on the agent's side—or on the side of the law—at each instance in which the law in question ought to apply. But then again, this is not impossible. Second, the subject would be incapable of abiding by coercive laws. Imagine someone fortuitously filling tax forms and doing so correctly by sheer coincidence. It would seem that in those occasion where the law demands successive and aleatory actions dependent on one another, fortuitous obeisance would be harder; yet again, not impossible. Third, and this—I think—is the strongest contention to fortuitousness: the modification of laws and consequent correction of the actions governed by that law would be impossible because the subject would recognize no action that, performed in accordance to a law, must be changed so as to be performed in accordance with another law. The main problem, in this case, would be that evolving patterns of legal behavior would have to be discounted as not just unlikely but impossible.

Then there is another possibility. The second response to our question—how is it that one can dwell in legality without knowing the law?—would demand that, indeed, we show the performative life of the law prior to its conceptual articulated self. The type of life that I have in mind here is, of course, an eminently performative one. Here is a brief portrait.

The performance of the law—and this is particularly noticeable with respect to children and foreigners—is undertaken not by maintaining constant sight of the rule but rather in the repetition, emulation or agreement with the gestural cues and practical demands of the performative context in which the subject dwells. For instance, when an adult takes an infant to the park, he need not make constant appeal to laws governing the use of public space in order for the child to act in accordance with them.[10] The legality of the act of the child is rather taken up as emulation from the adult, with whom the child shares the public space and who makes use of it in accordance with the law. The child is brought into a performative game—a language game—and is made to participate even before the rules are articulated.

In fact, in palpable Wittgenstinian tones we may want to say that language constitutes the best example of the pre-conceptual uptake of the law. The rules of language are extremely complex and yet, it is not through the articulation of prescriptions that children[11] are made to learn the language but through their performance in common use with others. The infant is arguably not aware that the mere utilization of the expression "I want" constitutes the conjugation of the verb to want in the first person of the simple present, indicative mood. In fact one can readily imagine what the enunciation of that rule would sound like and one can also readily imagine the absurdity of demanding from the infant who has barely learned to speak that he enunciates petitions by using the verb 'to want' conjugated in the simple present, first person singular, indicative followed by the adverb 'please'. The imposition of the rule does not occur by a proclamation of prohibitions, permissions and obligation but rather by bringing the child into the domain in which he can participate in the simple performance of the rules. There, the mere performance of the rule by the Other amounts to the establishment of a regulative principle for the subject. And every time that the performance of the rules is repeated the normative thrust of the action becomes a new performative uptake in the subject. The Other's action coheres with a performance in the subject, which not being the product of his choice can only amount to the pre-deliberative uptake of a rule originating elsewhere.

Beyond this developmental account there is another reason to suppose that the uptake of the law is performative and that is that the law itself—as the letter of the law—cannot possibly be

exemplary. The law, which deals with action, can say much about action but cannot, itself, perform the actions of which it speaks. Confronted with the letter of the law, the individual to whom the law applies would be at a loss to try and understand its application unless there was a previous performance of the acts of which the law speaks to gauge against the letter. In other words, the law can only talk of that which has performative existence previous to the articulation of the law itself. What could a law without a corresponding action be other than nonsense?

3. The Emergence of Freedom

To act in accordance with the law in the absence of the law amounts to a certain performative indetermination. By this I do not mean to say that the performance does not have a certain form but rather that in the moment of the performance—we can think once again of simple sentences or of absentmindedly waiting for a green light at a street intersection—the action is not computed into a general taxonomy of actions to which a set of rules corresponds. That is to say that the action is, for the subject performing it, juridically neutral. I do not think—at least not normally—as I wait in my car to cross an intersection, that this is an intersection, that that is a stoplight, that the stoplight is red, that I am in a car, that I must wait until the light turns green, etc. Rather my relation with all these actions that I undertake in accordance with their governing laws and regulations are performed with virtually no deliberation.

If legality were anchored in the actual enunciation of the rule—the letter of the law in black and white—the sheer number of laws would make the process of computing and calculating the legality of each and every action unattainable. In the case of the stoplight, I would need to take stock of all the laws governing automotive operation from those abstract the ones that do not deal with cars and stoplights, from those abstract the ones that apply, for instance, to emergencies—where I am allowed to yield to emergency service vehicles and disregard the law governing the normal use of stoplights—and then find my way to the specific regulation devised for the situation I find myself in. Now, if legality were grounded on law—that is to say, if law were the causal force behind the actions performed in accordance with it—then every legal action performed would have to be submitted to a process like the one just described and this would make our days impossibly long.[12]

For this reason, then, it would seem that with regards to acts performed in conformity with the law, for the most part, the law itself need not have causal normative force over the actions.

Now, in those cases in which the action is performed in accordance with the law but in disregard of its letter—in ignorance or oblivion—as in the case of the acceptance of the primordiality of the law discussed before, the performance amounts to a pre-deliberative performative uptake. The action that forgets the letter, even if it acts in accordance with it, has foregone the epistemic availability of its form and its justification prior to the performance, which means that it has done away with deliberation and in a sense, this also means that they have been performed without free-choice. That is to say that every time that the law is taken up in its predeliberative performativity, the agent is accepting to do before hearing.

And yet, despite the absence of the epistemic grounding for the action, in the juridical indetermination of the act, we can still find what could be described as the coherence of action and law. As we said this coherence can neither be merely accidental nor solidly causal. So what is the alternative? In order to rescue the normativity of the law but allow for the freedom to stray, I want to propose, now in more clear and focused terms, what I have been arguing all along. It is that the uptake of the law belongs in essence to the normative force of the doing of the Other

previous to its prescriptive articulation. For this reason, the uptake of the law is not epistemic or deliberative but purely performative and primordial, in each case. We behave in accordance with the normative demands posed by others in the game that we play with them.

Actions in accordance with the law are the product of the normative force that the performance of the law in others has for the subject—irrespective of how the other may have himself taken up the law. As in the case of the voice in the biblical example that enunciates the law and, which is heard before its content is understood, the performance of the other person forces the subject into a game—with laws and regulations—even before making such rules explicit and before the rules are understood by the subject. And this means that by the time one learns the rules of law one is already a competent player. This is, indeed, the preconceptual performativity of the law, its pre-epistemic life.

4. Demarcating the Topology of a Possible Levinasian Moral Theory

The final issue that I would like to address here concerns the possibility of articulating a Levinasian theory of adjudication in the context of the law, which is, after all, the stated purpose of this paper.

As has been pointed out before, the all-encompassing nature of Levinasian ethics forestalls the possibility of valuation and adjudication. His theory, in many ways so persuasive, fails in one major respect and that is in being unable to furnish a principle with which to assess which actions are reprovable and which are commendable. This problem is common to all metaphysics and, as we also said before, the only way to overcome it would be to find a principle of evaluation extrinsic to actions, which can be transgressed. This cannot be found in ethics because ethics is constitutive of all actions. So it is in the pre-deliberative uptake of the prescriptive force of the actions of the other that a window of opportunity has opened for us. The reason is that this relation is at once foundational and normative. These two aspects of Levinas' ethics that in the domain of metaphysics foreclosed the possibility of adjudication, within the space of action define their very condition of possibility and this is how.

Because the other—who should be now more visibly akin to the Levinasian Other—from whom the prescription issues, remains constantly beyond the subject's epistemic reach, the content of the prescription—substantive and justificatory—remain beyond cognitive reach as well. The Other who imparts the law by performance refuses totalization.[13] So in some very important sense, the law always remains beyond the grasp of the subject and must permanently be prescribed anew by the Other's performance. This means that the subject's performative uptake is always liable to error. The subject is always capable of straying from the prescription and is always capable of infringing the law.

Not only is the law epistemically unattainable for the subject but, furthermore, to the extent that the subject takes up the law from the Other, the Other is for the subject always closer to the letter of the law than the subject himself. This distance between the letter of the law and the action of the subject is mediated by the Other, who in the Levinasian tale forestalls all epistemic approaches. This same space is, indeed, the space of the subjects freedom to tort.

Because of the Other's vantage point, it is only he, who—from the point of view of the subject—can trace the distance and adjudicate the propriety of the relation between the subject's performance and the law. I want to argue that this is the reason why for Levinas justice is in the hands of the Other. Nowhere is this reflected as clearly as in his account of the place of the teacher, who is the master of adjudication:

> The transitivity of teaching, and not the interiority of reminiscence manifests being; the locus of truth is society. The *moral* relation with the Master who judges me subtends the freedom of my adherence to the true. Thus language commences. He who speaks to me and across the words proposes himself to me retains the fundamental foreignness of the Other who judges me; our relations are never reversible. This supremacy posits him in himself, outside of my knowing, and it is by relation to this absolute that the *given* takes on meaning. [14]

And then a few lines later:

> My freedom is thus challenged by a Master who can invest it. Truth, the sovereign exercise of freedom, becomes henceforth possible.[15]

For the subject, it is always the Other's mastery of the law that he imparts that ought to be known. This knowledge would afford the subject mastery of his own freedom to choose rightly or wrongly but this can only be pursued by means of totalizaton, so ultimately it cannot be completely accomplished, which goes to say that ultimately, the subject can never be the master of his own freedom. But to the extent that also totalization is constitutive of his subjectivity, he must strive to articulate and understand the law in the performative prescription issued by the Other, which allows him to adjudicate. This, however, belongs to a different discussion.

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[1] The term *uptake* I borrow from J.L. Austin, who makes this form of active receptivity a central mechanism of his account of linguistic praxis.

[2] By this, I do not mean to suggest that the Talmudic commentaries should not be counted on their theological value or that their conceptual kinship to the broader Levinasian corpus cannot be a useful tool to situate Levinas' philosophy in the context of his Judaism or vice versa. My point here is simply that—taken solely on their philosophical merit—the treatment of questions of prescription, which are prominent in these texts but conspicuously absent from other writings, present the best occasion for the elaboration of a Levinasian moral philosophy. And that in this one regard—that is, in assessing the relation between the primordiality of ethics and the contingency of prescription—the texts need to be read for their assessment of jurisprudential normativity rather than for their illumination of religious doctrine.

[3] In page 198 of *Totality and Infinity* Leivnas writes: "The infinite paralyzes power by its infinite resistance to murder, which, firm and insurmountable, gleams in the face of the Other."

[4] Think of instance in which breaking the law is morally desirable.

[5] *Nine Talmudic Readings.* 43

[6] *Totality and Infinity, 199*

[7] TT 48

[8] This, I believe, is the essential feature of OB. This is an issue that, I think, ought to be worked out in detail and I believe that Austin's philosophy of language could prove of great use for that purpose. That is, the uptake of any act of speech seems to amount to obedience—however qualified. I will give a tentative account of the prescriptive force of simple performances in the following section.

[9] This is the critique of ostensive indication. For an extensive treatment of this discussion see:

[10] I am not here underestimating the hard labors of parenting, which oftentimes demand the

strict repetition of a command or the threat of punishment to adjust the behavior of an unruly child. No place offers a more plausible stage for infantile anarchy than an expedition to the park, I suppose. My suggestion, however, is that even if such rectification is sometimes required, the infant does not need the guiding rule for every action pronounced in order to act in accord with it.

[11] And often, albeit less visibly, the already competent speakers learning new patterns of speech in changing argots.

[12] This issue could be articulated along the lines of Ryle's distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that". See Ryle, G. *The Concept of Mind.*

[13] In addition to the passage about the normative force of the master who 'retains its fundamental Otherness', that is its recalcitrance to totalization, in final section of "Exteriority and the Face", most illuminatingly, Levinas writes: "The accomplishing of I qua I and morality constitute one sole and same process of being: morality comes to birth not in equality, but in the fact that infinite exigencies, that of serving the poor, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, converge at one point of the universe." (*Totality and Infinity, 245)*

[14] TI 101

[15] *ibid*