Research Note

Existential Images: Heidegger, Camus, and Levinas
Varoluşculuğun İmgeleri: Heidegger, Camus, and Levinas

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Abstract
This essay examines key images presented in the works of the following philosophers: Martin Heidegger, Albert Camus, and Emmanuel Levinas; the central notion is that certain images are employed in order to express vital points of the thinkers' works and, arguably, act as Existential artefacts in their own right. Existentialist thought employs such images because of a rhetorical constraint or limitation of language which is not explicitly recognised or elaborated within the works themselves. Further, it is maintained that the imaginative aspect of Existentialism articulates an essentially metaphorical approach to the world. Finally, it is considered how this tension between the expression of philosophic positions and the image relates to concepts.
Keywords: Existentialism, Heidegger, Camus, Levinas, abode, Sisyphus, the face, the image, rhetorical constraint, concept work

Öz
Bu çalışma Martin Heidegger, Albert Camus ve Emmanuel Levinas'ın eserlerinde sıkça görülen ana imgelerin bir analizini sunar. Çalışmanın temel düşüncesi, incelemenin konusunu oluşturan düşünürlerin önemli noktaları açıklamak için eserlerinde ortak belirli imgeleri kullandığı ve bu imgelerin varoluşçu felsefenin arketiplerini oluşturduğu yönündedir. Aslında bu düşünürlerin eserlerinde açıkça ifade edilip tartışma konusu yapılmasa da varoluşçu düşüncenin dilin retorik boyutta neden olduğu kısıt ve engellemeler yüzünden bu tür imgeler kullandığı iddia edilmektedir. Ayrıca, varoluşçu felsefenin imgesel yönü gözlemlenen dış dünyanın temelde betimlemeler aracılığıyla ifadesini gerektirir. Sonuç olarak, varoluşçu felsefenin görüşlerinin ifade biçimi ile imge arasındaki gerilimin felsefinin temel kavramlarıyla olan ilişkisi bu çalışmanın konusunu oluşturur.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Varoluşçuluk, Heidegger, Camus, Levinas, Sisyphus, imge, retorik kısıt, kavram

In *Existentialism and Humanism* (1998), Jean-Paul Sartre sets out to defend Existentialism from claims that it leads to despair and inaction. He also defends against claims that Existentialism is based on the pure subjectivity of isolated individuals, lacks the necessary solidarity, and constitutes a denial of human affairs and values. Sartre, in contrast, maintains that Existentialism "renders human life possible" (65). It has been stated that Existentialism "over-

emphasis[es] upon the evil side of human life … [on] ugliness," but Sartre argues that it is in fact life-affirming and humane (65); "every truth and every notion imply both an environment and a human subjectivity" which is related to meaning (65). Sartre asserts that it is in fact the general public who have a negative view of man and not the Existentialists, for the "dismal proverbs and common sayings" of society such as "How like human nature!" amount only to the prevention of rising above one's station or of going against tradition (66); man is told that he must be restrained from his natural inclination towards evil. Existentialism, then, offers an optimistic alternative in which man is confronted with a "possibility of choice" and the possibility of living meaningfully in the world. This *possibility of living meaningfully in the world* is essentially connected to the production of existential images.

Sartre distinguishes the Christian and Catholic Existentialists (Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel) from the atheistic Existentialists (Heidegger, himself, and the French group); the central tenet of both strands, however, is that existence *precedes* essence and that "we must begin from the subjective" (66). The idea persists that essence is prior to experience; human nature is imagined as a universal concept in which particular humans participate. In opposition to this, Existentialists claim that man is "a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it" (67); originally man exists, then he finds and defines himself. Man begins as nothing, or at least as an undefinable entity, and only later may he make something of himself (or not). Therefore, Sartre asserts that there is no human nature or God, only Being in which man *is*; he *is* what he wills, and as he conceives or imagines himself after already existing: "Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself" (68); Man is a being which primarily exists, that is, "something which propels itself towards a future and is aware that it is doing so" (68); man as *project* is in possession of a subjective life and nothing exists prior to this projection or propulsion.

As such, man is responsible for himself and what he becomes or has become; by extension, he is responsible for all men. Subjectivism amounts to both the freedom of the individual and a necessary limitation as "in choosing himself he chooses for all men" (69). Self-creation is in accordance with "an image of man such as he believes he ought to be" and thus how all men ought to be (69); the value of what is chosen is affirmed as valid for all and "the entire epoch in which we find ourselves" (69). Man is responsible for, or has a commitment to, mankind. For example, marriage is a commitment to the human practice of monogamy: "I am creating a certain image of man as I would have him to be, in fashioning myself I fashion man" (69). Man is in anguish in the sense that he cannot escape from his profound responsibility, for when he chooses for himself he chooses for all mankind; he must imagine "what would happen if everyone did so?" (69). Sartre maintains that it is not an anguish of inactivity as man is "obliged at every instant to perform actions which are examples" (70); one must act, which is the cause of the distress or the weight of his responsibility. There exists a plurality of possible actions so there is value in what is chosen to be enacted.

Sartre believes that God does not exist, is absent, or has abandoned man; he writes that it is in fact a divine disappointment not to find a universal in an intelligible heaven or an infinite, perfect consciousness. Dostoevsky maintains that, as there is no God, everything is permitted; this is another foundation of Existentialism; in this case man is forlorn as there is no support system in place, no excuse, no given human nature to blame, and no original sin. Man is free and is freedom; there exists no justification or value which commands legitimization, only man himself. Yet man is *thrown* into the world and is, subsequently, supremely responsible for his actions in the face of an absolute ambiguity. Choice is a perennial invention in which "we ourselves decide our being" and interpret events in order to justify (or come to terms with) our own choices (75). Despair relates to limitation, feasibility, and probability; the world will not and cannot adapt to the entirety of one's will. Sartre asserts that there is "no reality except in action" (75); man exists insofar as he realizes himself; he is, therefore, nothing else but the sum of his actions or the culmination of his own [lived] life. One may be horrified by this state of affairs in which some possibilities are not allowed by circumstance and, further, potential capacity (the *what could have been*) is of no import. Sartre states that "in life, a man commits himself, draws his own portrait and there is nothing but that portrait" (75) (which does not bring much comfort to the unsuccessful). It raises the question of whether it is indeed possible for all men to succeed. Finally, one is not judged merely on an *object* of art or labour: "man is no other than a series of undertakings, that he is the sum, the organization, the set of relations that constitute these undertakings" (75). For example, it is claimed that a coward is responsible for his cowardice as, it is argued, his actions and choices made himself into such a coward; this presents the reality of, on the one hand, guilt, and on the other, the possibility to give up being a coward. Existentialism is the total commitment to such an undertaking.

It seems that in order to undertake the Existential project, one must *imagine* himself doing so; the coward first imagines bravery before it can be enacted. The Existentialist creates an *image* of himself and an image of mankind. Although Sartre is concerned with practical action, there is apparent in his philosophy a figurative turn; that is, man is committed to action but that action is secondary to the imaginative capacity for action; if the Existentialist must draw his own *portrait*, and if it is the *portrait* itself which is meaningful; then it raises the question of the role of the image in Sartre's philosophy and in Existential philosophy generally. For instance, how does man conceive of himself and others? Does imagining of Self, others, world, and operation within it itself constitute action? Is the essence of existence imaginal? In which case, it may be the ability of consciousness to imagine which allows the opportunity for man to grasp his essence and to make sense of his existence. The *image*, then, is a central aspect of Existentialism; this essay will examine the image as employed in the works of Heidegger, Camus, and Levinas; the question is the extent to which images are used to provide examples of philosophic or conceptual positions, whether such positions can only be expressed as images, and whether the image

has some kind of larger role in the thought of the above thinkers (even if this is an implicit or denied function).

Heidegger, in his key Existential text *Being and Time* (1998), endeavours to formulate the fundamental question of Being in which what is sought guides the act of seeking; that is, activities in the world are prefigured by prior understanding of Being. Being is understood as the non-conceptual understanding of what is or "that which determines entities as entities" (27). Being itself is not an entity and differs in how it is discovered. Entities are interrogated regarding their Being and are accessible as they are in themselves: individuals are Being, and so is how they are. Being is the fact that something is, as it manifests as present, valid, and substantiated reality. *Dasein* is posited by Heidegger to mean a kind of question or method of questioning related to Being in which Being becomes transparent to itself through self-conscious activity. Looking, understanding, conceiving, choosing are all constitutive of the appropriate inquiry and all constitute modes of Being (there) in themselves: "to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity – the inquirer – transparent in his own Being" (28). Inquiry, as one possibility of Being, is Dasein.

It is argued that entities with the character of Dasein are essentially related to the question of Being. The totality of entities corresponds to the field for "delimiting certain areas of subject-matter" such as history, space, language, and Dasein which are the objects or themes of scientific investigation (30). Such objects are limited or confined by previous scientific thought but may be liberated through an understanding in which the mode of inquiry concerning Being affects the experience of Being: "basic concepts undergo ... a radical revision which is transparent to itself" (30). The fundamental task of the sciences, according to Heidegger, is to clarify the meaning of Being; the ontological foundations of which are prior to the ontical sciences. Dasein is ontically distinguished by the fact that is own Being is a central issue or crises: "with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it" (31). Self-understanding is characteristic of authentic Being. Being-towards-Dasein as self-understanding, in Heidegger's work, is existence in which Dasein is the self-expression of Being or the "possibility of itself ... to be itself or not itself" (33). Dasein is self-determinate and has the potential to take hold of its own existence or not; in which case the question of existence is answered by existence itself. Ontic concerns specific entities whereas ontological concerns the underlying structure of reality; a fundamental ontology is sought by Heidegger in the Existential analytic of Dasein. Heidegger posits an "ontico-ontological condition for the possibility of any ontologies" in which Dasein can approach or understand the Being of other entities through its understanding of existence (33). Dasein can be understood as "the pre-ontological understanding of Being" in which we *are* it (34). However, each of us are not ontologically close to it, but the furthest away. The analytic of Dasein is the first requirement in the question of Being in which the basic structures are "adequately worked out with explicit orientation towards the problem of Being itself" (35); therefore, Dasein could be interpreted as an Existential justification; choosing "a way of access" to Dasein

constitutes "a kind of interpretation … [in which this] entity can show itself in itself and from itself" proximally and in its average everydayness (37).

Centrally, Heidegger chooses to illustrate this notion of Dasein with an image of *dwelling* or *Being-in-the-World* in his 'Letter on Humanism' (1977); this reference to a key image in order to express the basic point of his philosophy is significant; it raises questions concerning how exactly an individual may approach their own Being; is a process of imagining necessary for self-transparency? Is the inquiry into Being or its pre-ontological status founded on an approach which is essentially imagistic? Heidegger begins his letter by considering the essence of action; he claims that "the essence of action is accomplishment. To accomplish means to unfold something into the fullness of its essence, to lead it forth into this fullness-procedure" (193); therefore, to *accomplish* Being, or to *act essentially* in the world, requires the *unfolding of Being*; what already *is* (or already exists) can be accomplished in this sense through *thinking* which constitutes the *relation of Being* to the essence of man (as an acting individual). Importantly, Heidegger stresses that thought does not cause the relation of Being and Man; Being *hands over* this relation or reveals it through thinking; and this handing over is through the medium of language: "Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home" (193). Being, then, (as Dasein) is manifest linguistically and is sustained through language acts. Essential action is understood, not as the application of thought, but as thought itself; this action is described as "the simplest and at the same time the highest, because it concerns the relation of Being to man" (193); that is, thinking as expressed in language hands over or illuminates man's essential Being-in-the-World.

However, Heidegger states that the essence or truth that language may reveal is unavailable in a large amount of its usage in contemporary technological society; instead, it is employed as an instrument of human will or domination over others and the environment (199). In which case, individuals encounter "beings as actualities in a calculative business-like way" (199); further, even the inexplicable, the mysterious, or the uncommunicable, are subordinated to scientific explanation and proof; the potential for incomprehensibility is no longer valid. In contrast, Heidegger writes that, "If man is to find his way once again into the nearness of Being he must first learn to exist in the nameless" (199). It seems then that the *nameless*, the simple, the mysterious, and that which eludes scientific terms, is somehow closer to the dwelling of Being. It is claimed that many notions of Being relate to general Being rather than the essential Being of an individual in the world. To realign man to Being, Heidegger seeks to redefine the meaning of humanism or *humanitas* as the essence of man. This necessitates the *primordial* experience of the essence of man (the pre-conceptual) as well as an illustration of particular accomplishments of Being. According to Heidegger, "the essence of man lies in ek-sistence" or that which *is* essentially (224); additionally, that for which *Being* is a central concern. Such *humanism* celebrates the essence of individual *revealers* of Being as essential to the truth of Being.

As above, Heidegger employs an image to shed light on this position of his philosophy and in response to the question: *When are you going to write an ethics*?; in other words, how ought a man live in a fitting manner? Heidegger refers to the saying of Heraclitus which reveals the essence of *ethos*: "*ethos anthropoi daimon*" in which ethos is understood by Heidegger to mean abode or dwelling place (233); the phrase, typically translated as "A man's character is his daimon" is reinterpreted to mean that "Man dwells, insofar as he is man, in the nearness of God" (233). Being appears to man, and is allowed to appear, in the *open region* of man's abode or dwelling; it is within this space that essence may be revealed in relation to Being in the sense of the above *namelessness* or incommunicability; in addition, it could be said that man dwells in language; Heidegger gives the following example:

> The story is told of something Heraclitus said to some strangers who wanted to come visit him. Having arrived, they saw him warming himself at a stove. Surprised, they stood there in consternation – above all because he encouraged them, the astounded ones, and called for them to come in with the words, "for here too the gods are present." (233)

The travellers are disappointed with the reality and *everydayness* of Being; they find an abode, a figurative dwelling of the highest thought, and it is nonetheless unremarkable; in fact, it is so simple that it is hardly worth the effort of the trip. The image of Heraclitus in relative poverty by the stove is employed in a significant way by Heidegger; Heraclitus' utterance to the travellers that, "*Einai gar kai entautha theous* … Here too the gods are present" (234) takes on a new meaning:

> *Kai entautha*, "even here," at the stove, in that ordinary place where every thing and every condition, each deed and thought is intimate and commonplace, that is, familiar, "even there" in the sphere of the familiar, *einai theous*, it is the case that "the gods are present". Heraclitus himself says, *ethos anthropoid daimon*, "The (familiar) abode is for man the open region for the presencing of God (the unfamiliar one)". (234)

The abode of man, his *ethos*, is a dwelling in which one may meet with an unfamiliar presence. In light of this, Heidegger's *ethics* considers this abode: "… that thinking which thinks the truth of Being as the primordial element of man, as one who eksists, is in itself the original ethics" (235). Heidegger writes that this notion of ethics, "the thinking that ponders the truth of being [and] defines the essence of *humanitas* as ek-sistence from the latter's belongingness to Being" is neither theoretical nor practical as "it comes to pass before this distinction" (236). It is also fundamentally connected to ontology but not in the metaphysical sense; Heidegger postulates a *reaching back into* the essential place of Being, the simple dwelling place of the everyday and unfamiliar in which the truth of Being may reveal itself through our relation to it. This type of thinking differs from conceptual approaches; it is so simple that it is felt to be almost undigestible for the modern mind; "In the poverty of its first breakthrough, the thinking that tries to advance thought into the truth of Being brings only a small part of that wholly other dimension to language" (235); Heidegger asserts that language should

move away from its scientific or research concerns and attempt to approach Being phenomenologically; adequate thinking is not yet possible for this experience, therefore it is to be first expressed using contemporary philosophic terms; yet these very terms are to be surpassed (ethics, ontology, metaphysics, Existentialism) due to the error which they induce through being passively received by readers rather than actively rethought. Thinking about the truth of Being, the essence of *humanitas* as ek-sistence, one's accomplishment of and dwelling within Being, are understood as *recollections of Being*; such investigation constitutes one's belonging to Being as it is the *thinking of Being*. This type of thinking "has no result. It has no effect. It satisfies its essence in that it is ... it lets Being – be" (236).

How a man should live in the world is answered by his living; man's dwelling in the world, his abode, is found in language and the activity of thought; this is the essence of his Being-in-the-world. The *primordial element* of Being is a meeting with the mysterious as expressed by the God that appears in the house of the familiar; Being is all-pervasive and yet is not easily encompassed in thought; to reveal Being, that is, to join (and in so doing *accomplish*) one's essential Being to the *ethos*, dwelling, or truth of Being, requires turning away from the complexity of concepts and embracing the simplicity of *Being* as such. Now, Heidegger has expressed the core of his philosophy through etymology and an image; however, he concludes that "the talk about the house of Being is no transfer of the image "house" to Being. But one day we will, by thinking the essence of Being in a way appropriate to its matter, more readily be able to think what "house" and "to dwell" are (236-237). In a sense then, we are met with the images of Being before we can grasp them in thought; therefore, it could be argued that we possess the image of Being before unfolding our essential Being itself. If language is the *home* of Being and we dwell in language, then linguistic or even literary examples seem to the point the way towards a more developed, future understanding (and actualisation) of Being. In order to grasp the thinking which is to come, Heidegger finishes his *Letter on Humanism* with another image:

> Thinking is on the descent to the poverty of its provisional essence. Thinking gathers language into simple saying. In this way language is the language of Being, as clouds are the clouds of sky. With its saying, thinking lays inconspicuous furrows in language. They are still more inconspicuous than the furrows that the farmer, slow of step, draws through the field. (242)

Heidegger's existential description of thought, then, requires an image; further, it could be said that it is Heidegger's use of *metaphor*, as an application or extension of an image to the world, which allows his readers to grasp his philosophic position. I would argue that (1) Existentialism proposes an essentially metaphorical relation to the world as evidenced in the production of images by philosophers to express their positions; (2) existential images and metaphors are necessarily prior to work with concepts; in this sense, such images *compose* concepts: they articulate concepts and are also components or instances of these concepts.

Camus' image of absurdity in the figure of Sisyphus needs no introduction; it clearly illustrates his philosophical position in a way that can be easily grasped and internalised by readers. Camus presents the image in his work *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1995) to help solve the "truly serious philosophical problem" of suicide (1); for Camus, individuals are met with an absence of any profound reason for living, a daily agitation or trace of the ridiculous in their everyday activities, and an apparent meaninglessness of their suffering; the central philosophic issue, then, is whether one should continue struggling to survive in face of such an absurd existence. In contemporary technological society, man becomes increasingly *weary*; yet this weariness, anxiety, or alienation is the source of consciousness and leads to a choice: to commit suicide or to recover: "is one to die voluntarily or to hope in spite of everything?" (5). The *Absurd* is understood by Camus to be the irrational or incomprehensible which eludes man's desire for reasoning and understanding. Camus writes that it is Sisyphus' return to the bottom of the hill to continue his eternal labour which is significant:

> I see that man going back down with a heavy, yet measured step toward the torment of which he will never know the end. That hour like a breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness. At each of those moments when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks towards the lairs of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock [...] All Sisyphus' silent joy is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His rock is his thing. Likewise, the absurd man, when he contemplates his torment, silences all the idols. (9)

In this way, when man contemplates his Being or existence (and is conscious of its absurdity) then he accomplishes his Being; he reaches an essential understanding and acts (exists) essentially. Importantly, Camus *imagines* Sisyphus as happy; this imagined struggle nevertheless represents the core of his philosophy. The Sisyphean image constitutes a vital experience of the Absurd and Existentialism; it may in fact be more visceral, relatable, or persuasive than if the same point were expressed in conceptual terms; further, it could be argued that the moment of Sisyphus' descent can *only* be expressed as an image. An individual may choose to say yes to his fate, that is, to master their own activity; he may find his own meaning and his own world in this task; yet this situation has been most adequately articulated as an image, and it is possible that man himself, before he is fully conscious of his own Sisyphean descent, must first imagine it (to fully grasp one's experience as a distilled, essential moment) before meaning can be revealed and affirmed.

Emmanuel Levinas, in 'Is Ontology Fundamental?' (1998), maintains that "the whole man's life articulates the understanding of being or truth. It is not because there is man that there is truth, it is because there is truth, or, if you like, it is because being is intelligible that there is humanity" (2). We see here, then, that Levinas connects Heidegger's position that Being reveals man's essence to Camus' approach that one's activity in the world (and consciousness of it) provides meaning to Being. Levinas states that ontology is based on the actuality of temporal existence in the world; for instance, man does not exist in a historical

vacuum but, instead, exists in relation to a particular, factual situation. Further, man acts inadvertently: "we get caught up in things; things turn against us … our consciousness, and our mastery of reality through consciousness, do[es] not exhaust our relationship with reality" (3-4); here, Levinas differs from Heidegger as one's "consciousness of reality does not coincide with our dwelling in the world" (3); man leaves *traces* of unwilled existence and mistaken actions on the world; Being-in-the-world is not a pure, conscious dialectical process as embodied, awkward man leaves unintended traces of his Being through his actions. Additionally, Levinas questions whether language "is not based on a relationship that is prior to understanding, and that constitutes reason" (4); that is, for Levinas, understanding of Being is a movement beyond Being; rather than approaching being as a universal relation in which individuals are subordinated, Levinas approaches Being through the *Other*:

> Our relation with him certainly consists in wanting to understand him, but this relation exceeds the confines of understanding. Not only because, besides curiosity, knowledge of the other also demands sympathy or love, ways of being that are different from impassive contemplation, but also because, in our relation to the other, the latter does not affect us by means of a concept. The other is a being and counts as such. (5)

A fundamental issue is how indeed does the Other affect us? Is it a figurative or real encounter? There are also additional similarities to Heidegger's position: language is central to Levinas' ethical approach as "man is the only being I cannot meet without my expressing this meeting itself to him. That is precisely what distinguishes the meeting from knowledge" (7); in this sense, man encounters an Other in reality which necessitates a linguistic and social position; as with Heidegger, "thought is inseparable from expression," or accomplishing Being, as one meets the Other in language in a way that precedes understanding (7). Levinas maintains that one's relation with the Other cannot be represented which seems to be at odds with the actuality of the linguistic-social encounter; the *invocation* of the Other is understood as a *religion*: religion here means to conceive of the Other as a distinct being; this Other is no longer an entity to be *of* use to the individual, but is beyond our powers; "the being as such (and not as an incarnation of universal being) can only be in a relation in which he is invoked" in the sense of a prayer or call to one's neighbour (8); it constitutes an encounter with the *face*. There are similarities here to Heraclitus' abode considered above; in both Heidegger and Levinas there is a very real, practical element to the philosophy but also a more transcendent and figurative (or metaphorical) turn; for example, is the invocation of the Other in Levinas an actual call or is it rather an image employed to illustrate an Existential approach to Being-with-others-in-the-world? On the one hand, Existentialists are concerned with practical action and meaningful existence in the world; on the other, there is an element of something which is *transcendent*; that is, beyond language, sociality, or perhaps even the written philosophic text itself, resulting in the necessity of images for its expression.

Maria Dimitrova (2011), in her edited collection *In Levinas' Trace*, clearly puts across the position which has been considered:

> Ethics is prior to ontology. He [Levinas] questions the departure from the thinking subject [traditional ontology] and gives priority to the moral subject and to the relationship with Exteriority or Transcendence, understood as *autrement qu'etre*, that is, *beyond Being*. According to Levinas, Transcendence reveals itself prior to the objectifying thinking and summons me by the face of the Other to give a response to the incessant challenge of his otherness. (viii)

It could be stated that Heraclitus' statement that the *God* is present in the everyday abode or ethos of Being can be reworked to state that the Other, the mysterious, the Exterior, the Absurd, the incommunicable, the transcendent, also exist in the familiar. An individual dwells with others; therefore, their Being-in-the-world, if it is to be meaningful or essential, must come face-to-face with other beings; such other beings may be outside our usual context, absolutely external, yet always knocking at the door: "In response to the otherness [and vulnerability] of the Other, the moral subject becomes aware of the existence of Infinity and, correspondingly, his own finitude" (viii). However, if the Other is transcendent or beyond Being, then how does an individual meet them in the world? Does the *face* signify a meeting with infinity or a distinct entity? If one reaches the Other only through their *trace* of Being, then is the *face* merely another image?: A flicker of the past and that which escapes our present consciousness. If the Other is absent, always in passing, then how can one be said to encounter him? Dimitrova writes that "the otherness summons us again, provokes, and surprises, and in our attempt to capture it, to enclose it in the scope of totality, we realize that it evades, passes, withdraws beyond the boundaries not only of what is given, but of what is possible ..." (x). If the Other is truly transcendent in this way, beyond language, sociality, history, and even typical existence, then the face could be understood as an image; further, any meeting with the face is an *imaginative meeting*: relation to the transcendent or *beyond Being* is founded on and by the image. Perhaps a future language or concept will be able to adequately reach this Existential dialectic in thought (or perhaps it will remain necessarily unreachable).

In "Figurative Language and the Face in Levinas's Philosophy," Diane Perpich (2005) articulates the tension within Levinas' thought as follows:

> The fundamental thesis broaches the notion of the face is the is the difference between the way in which things are given to consciousness (the order of ontology) and the way in which human beings are encountered (the order of ethics). Whereas things are given to consciousness in sensible experience through the mediation of forms or concepts, the face is present, according to Levinas, in its "refusal to be contained" in a form. (103)

Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity* (1969), states that the face of the Other surpasses all ideas one might have of it; it is not an image one forms as "the face of the

Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me" (50-51). Perpich describes this as *non-phenomenal*: "it does not *appear* as such and remains exterior to concepts. Rhetorically, the face is an image that represents the inadequacy of every image for representing alterity … it represents the impossibility of its own representation" (103). If the face of the other cannot appear, be recognized, or conceptualized, then it can be asked: "in what sense can we think or represent absolute alterity if … it is unthinkable and unrepresentable?" (104). If the Other is understood as that which cannot be thematized, then it escapes literal representation, thought, or expression in language which raises the question of in what way *is* it? In fact, we are speaking about Others in some way through the image of the face so it is not absolutely unrepresentable. Another issue is that relying on such an image creates a situation in which "all unique, singular faces are the same" (Marion 227). Jean-Luc Marion (2000) formulates this succinctly: "How can one assign an identity to the origin of the appeal such as that one can specify which face is involved each time, but without thereby reducing it to a visible phenomenon in the mode of a spectacle? (226)". How can the face be both an indication of a relation to infinity or the beyond as well as representative of a distinct identity?

As mentioned above, this issue may be due to a limitation of language in which "the singularity 'represented' by the face cannot appear in language as such; it appears only at the price of losing or foregoing its singularity" (Perpich 104). Nonetheless, Perpich maintains that this limitation constitutes a significant tension in Levinas' work; I would state, further, that this conflict is also present in the Existential writing of Sartre, Heidegger, and Camus. In Levinas, the tension concerns his conception of our ethical situation: "singularity must be said and it cannot be said" (104). The act of saying in some way does an injustice to the Other in terms of its linguistic abstraction; the Other (and our own Being) demands affirmation, but this affirmation cannot be contained in language or expression of thought. At the heart of all that has been considered, then, is a type of *rhetorical constraint* that characterizes Existential approaches in both their conceptual elucidation (as text) and in Being-in-the-World (as linguistic-social relation). The Other is not a concept nor an image but a person; yet we cannot approach him with our current conceptual tools; equally, Being is not a conceptual or imagistic process, but at present it necessitates working with concepts and images. The face, for example, is an essential image which expresses, primarily, a real-world entity, and secondly, a philosophical (communicable) concept; yet the reality itself is not reducible to an image (even though it can only be explained as such); Being too is a phenomenon which cannot be adequately expressed in language; despite this, the philosophical task amounts to using language as our fundamental approach towards Being. The rhetorical constraint of inquiring into one's existence and articulating one's experience results in the necessity of the image: the image could be said to be the *theoretically or conceptually impossible*.

In conclusion, if the image is the closest that we can come to essential Being and the transcendent, it raises the question of whether the rhetorical constraint or limitation can ever be overcome. However, Perpich stresses that "there is no

resolving this contradiction" (117); rather, it represents a central ethical or, I would add, Existential tension or mode of Being. The images of the face, of Camus' Sisyphus, and Heidegger's humble Heraclitean abode, express a key area of their philosophic positions which cannot be entirely justified or as clearly presented in the terms associated with their conceptual approach. Being-with-others-in-the-world cannot be fully represented linguistically; thus, thinkers turn to the image and the figurative (consciously or unconsciously); the image may point towards the impossible, the exterior, and the mysterious in ways which can be communicated far more powerfully and convincingly than through our limited linguistic prowess. Whilst it may not be explicitly elaborated by Sartre, Heidegger, Camus, or Levinas, the image as well as metaphor is central to their philosophic project and communicative approach; such images are Existential artefacts in their own right; they are in some sense separate from the rest of the written texts; the images we have considered express key points in the thinkers' work and are also independent from it; by themselves they constitute philosophic positions as an essential insight into experience or trace of existence that can be recognized by readers; they can be taken up and put to work by others in multiple ways and for various purposes; further, they can be approached as dialectical moments of transcendence which cannot yet be put down adequately in words or which cannot yet be grasped conceptually. The rhetorical constraint of philosophy produces Existential images which possess a potentiality beyond the philosophic texts which contain them.

Finally, my current research considers whether this rhetorical constraint, it could also be said rhetorical *possibility*, is exclusive to philosophy; for instance, literature also produces existential images; in fact, I argue that philosophy and certain fictional pieces are not so easily demarcated as both may lead to productive work with concepts (Milburn 2022a; 2022b). I maintain that this imaginative aspect of Existentialism *renders human life possible* as it allows for meaningful and novel relation to the world; this is a metaphorical approach to the world which I have examined in both the thought of the psychoanalyst, Carl Gustav Jung, and the Japanese writer, Haruki Murakami. Man defines himself and his world through existential images and through conceptual work with such images; Man himself is a *project* and is much more than an image (an unending task); Man as an existential project, it could be argued, *is* this imaginative work with concepts: instigated by, employing, or building on the kind of images we have considered; forming metaphors, connections, and applications to socio-historical issues. Such activity, in my view, is the ongoing attempt to *conceive* one's existence. *Man draws his own portrait and there is nothing but that portrait*: to be metaphorical (as I must), the portrait or image is essential (it is, also, detached from its creator), but it is the *drawing* or use of concepts which is of even greater philosophic importance. We might rephrase Sartre's quote accordingly: *there is nothing but that activity of drawing. Concept Work* is understood as philosophic *action* and *accomplishment* of which Existential images and metaphors form a vital and necessary part.

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