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INNOCENCE WITHOUT NAIVETE, UPRIGHTNESS WITHOUT  
STUPIDITY: THE PEDAGOGICAL *KAVANNAH* OF EMMANUEL  
LEVINAS \*

**ABSTRACT.** While it is impossible to transfigure philosophical and Judaic thought of Emmanuel Levinas into a moral agenda for education or the programmatic regularities of a pedagogical methodology, this paper argues for the importance of his work for re-opening educational questions. These questions engage the problem of what it could mean to live historically, to live within an upright attentiveness to traces of those who have inhabited times and places other than one's own. In this sense, I address the problem of remembrance as a question of and for history, as a force of inhabitation, as an inheritance we are obligated to live within, that intertwines with our sense of limits and possibilities, hopes and fears, identities and distinctions. Substantively, this problem is manifest in how one attends to the experiences of others: how one reads, how one views, and how one listens, always historically specific normalized practices that in any given epoch are ingrained in what it means to live in consort with others, to live as though the lives of other people mattered. The paper seeks to display the fecundity of the thought of Levinas for re-thinking such issues.

**KEY WORDS:** attentiveness, historical consciousness, Levinas, remembrance, testimony

*True learning consists in receiving the lesson so deeply that it becomes a necessity to give oneself to the other. The lesson of truth is not held in one consciousness. It explodes toward the other. To study well, to read well, to listen well, is already to speak: whether by asking questions and, in so doing, teaching the master who teaches you, or by teaching a third party.*

Emmanuel Levinas (1994, p. 80)

Emmanuel Levinas and education, how should one speak of this relation? What should one speak about? These questions are not mere rhetorical gestures. What must temper any such consideration is precisely the difficult problem of what it might mean to address the writing of Levinas and its relevance for educational thought. Let me make clear from the start, that I view it as impossible to simply “broker” Levinas’ writings

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through the transfiguration of his philosophical and Judaic thought into either a moral agenda for education or the programmatic regularities of a pedagogical methodology. To configure either in the name of an “applied Levinas” would be infelicitous, too caught up in an internal contradiction between the contemporary rationalities of educational discourse and the sustained critique of ontological foundations of Western philosophy that was Levinas’ concern. My alternative, the path I will follow here, is to discuss certain aspects of Levinas’ writing that have introduced new questions and re-opened old considerations in regard to my thinking on education. These questions and concerns engage the problem of what it could mean to live historically, to live within an upright<sup>1</sup> attentiveness to traces of those who have inhabited times and places other than one’s own; that is, they engage the problem of what practices might embody a sensibility through which an encounter with the testament of another is lived within an ethics of responsibility. In this sense, I am concerned with the problem of remembrance as a question of and for history, as a force of inhabitation, as stories we live with, that intertwine with our sense of limits and possibilities, hopes and fears, identities and distinctions. Substantively, this is manifest in the problem of how one attends to the experiences of others: how one reads, how one views, and how one listens, always historically specific normalized practices that in any given epoch are ingrained in what it means to live in consort with others, to live as though the lives of other people mattered.

#### REMEMBRANCE, LEARNING AND HOPE

While narrated memories are a sign of civic life, the motivated, authorized character of that *civitas* is very much an issue of how such memories might be engaged so as to construct the substance and terms of one’s connection to those who have gone before us. Public memory is not simply that which contributes to knowledge of the past and/or underwrites a claim to group or communal membership. Quite divergently, public practices of memory can have a transitive function; that is, they may be conceived as actions that “pass over” and take effect on another person or persons. On such terms, practices of remembrance are always already caught up in the obligations expected by the transitive character of the testamentary act, the act of writing, speaking, imaging so as to bear an educative legacy to those who “come after.” In this context, my current research and writing has been

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the notion of uprightness (*droiture* (French.), *temimut* (Hebrew)), see Levinas’ talmudic reading “The Temptation of Temptation” (Levinas, 1990) as well as Derrida’s “Adieu,” his eulogy to Levinas (1999, pp. 1–13).

concerned with remembrance as encompassing both learning and hope. My colleagues<sup>2</sup> and I have been exploring various practices through which one might engage – as an act of remembrance and learning - varieties of documents (diaries, memoirs, video testimony, poetry, songs) that might be taken as reference points for opening up the difficult agenda of learning, not only about the past, but from the past. A good portion (but not the only portion) of our work with such documents has centered on the problems of engaging the testament of victims of Nazi crimes and genocide and worrying and wondering why and how such engagements might be important. How and what of these events is to be remembered through contemporary practices of Holocaust history, memorialization and education are vital questions. An ethics of responsible memory would require that we keep them interminably current.

Practices of public remembrance are often justified on three counts: the development of historical understanding, a rescue of memory from the oblivion of forgetting, and as a means for instigating contemporary practices of justice, compassion and tolerance. These three justifications are assumed to complement each other in an alignment of education, memorialization, and ethics. What is seldom considered however, is just how such an alignment might be hopeful; that is, on what terms is it possible to articulate an imaginable coupling of hope and practices of remembrance. Hope as both telos and emotion is usually associated with an anticipation of a future that bears a new beginning. More often a motivating wish, expectation and desire than a clear foundation for action, the condition of hope is most commonly thought as a form of deferment, as something that has not yet arrived. Thus one might ask, if hope is always enacted as a deferment, can there be a *practical* linkage between hope and remembrance? If such a connection is to exist, hope must be re-thought as something other than a desired “not yet” always still to come; a future forever delayed by its own futurity. Specifically, hope must be reconsidered as what Andrew Benjamin (1997, pp. 1–25) calls “a structural condition of the present;” a condition rooted in a conception of what it means to be positioned in-the-present. What possible contribution might practices of public remembrance make to the inculcation of such a condition? And in particular, how and on what terms might the production and reception of the testament of those subjected to Nazi crimes and genocide be seen as establishing hope in the present?

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As a means of opening up a discussion of such questions, it is important to mark the differences in function and substance of various remembrance practices. In distinguishing among the social forms of remembrance, I underscore the point that remembrance is always constituted within the discursive and materially specific practices through which groups of people engage “the past.” It is no surprise then that different forms of remembrance embody varying assumptions about time, memory and pedagogy. It must be understood that every variant of remembrance carries its own conception of what learning it requires and what obligations must be fulfilled in order for that practice to successfully instantiate the notion of hope integral to its form. In this sense any discussion of a pedagogy of remembrance is premature if one has not first clarified one’s understanding of remembrance as pedagogy.

*Historicization.* When remembrance is carried out on the terms of historicization, the past is engaged in a manner which sharpens its difference from the present. That is, remembrance is enacted through the project of historical understanding which defines its task as discerning past events on their own terms, this to be done to the greatest extent possible through documentary evidence and argument. Here, remembrance is practiced as historiography and the teaching of history. It demands a form of learning in which one attends to detail, document, and argumentation. Remembrance in this mode seldom informs “present hope,” indeed its methodological tenets warn against a conflation of past and present. Hope within historicization, to the extent it addresses the present at all, comes as either a warning against repeating the events similar to those of the past or a marking how much progress a society has made in putting the past behind. In more formal terms, historicization is a hermeneutic practice that organizes discursive structures within which basic moral collective commitments might be articulated, cultivating mutual understanding and social solidarity.

*Memorialization.* In memorialization what has been lost must be symbolically brought into view not only so that one might “know” what happened but so that we might attach ourselves (most often through processes of empathy and/or identification) to this remembrance, thus securing the personal and communal importance of the eternal act of remembering. In this way, memorialization is called on to take in the enormity of loss, to recognize death while resisting the dissolution that is death. Within practices of memorial remembrance, the “fact” of and desire for a manifest continuity is made apparent. Collective rituals are enacted that attempt to build social accord by invoking iconic memories that mobilize affective

structures of affiliation. Rather than reference some future state of affairs different from what currently exists, hope is affirmed when remembrance, while confronting loss, articulates an experience of continuity of social life that in itself is a refusal of oblivion. Indeed, memorialization will always attempt an anxious hope rooted as it is in confronting personal and communal loss while maintaining a remembrance that ensures the experience of continuity.

*Transformative recollection.* Transformative recollection proceeds on very different assumptions regarding the relation of time, memory and hope. Here, hope exists only when the present remains exposed, vulnerable. Hope becomes “a way of naming the present’s inherent incompleteness . . . functioning as a structural force . . . holding the present open and thus as being unfinished” (Benjamin, 1997, p. 10). If remembrance is to participate in “holding the present open” not just to the possibility of existence but to its own “inherent incompleteness,” it will have to take on a form quite counter to either practices of historization or memorialization. In this form, remembrance enacts a transformation, it becomes a practice of unsettling the present; in particular unsettling the sufficiency of the terms on which the present recognizes the past as one of its own concerns. Here the possibility of hope is initiated by a rending, a tearing of continuity in that moment in which “tradition” (in the form of institutionalized practices, past narratives, existing systems of knowledge) is recognized as unable to fully provide the terms for remembrance. In this respect, remembrance must become an opening, a learning, a moving beyond that which is recognized as a concern of the present because it is already known and that which is of no concern because it cannot be known. On these terms, remembrance becomes a social process within which a collectivity considers how and on what terms we can admit accounts of the past into our contemporary moral community such that they possess an active claim on our present and future actions in ways that do not reduce the terms of this admittance to projections of our own identities and desires.

#### THE TRANSITIVE DEMANDS OF TESTIMONY

Testimonies are archival documents, affirmations and perspectives of lives lived and still living. But testimonies also perform acts of witness which through a transitive address obligates those participating in the legacy of a communicative encounter. This transitivity within the testamentary act (at every reading, at every listening) is an *occurrence*, an event that has a singular illocutionary force that subjects its addressee to a demand, to an

obligation that can be refused (or differentially enacted) but not erased. It is important for those interested in the pedagogical dimensions of cultural practice to recognize there is an inherent force in demands of testimony. This is a force that lies in the “event of testament” as that which instantiates a movement that demands attentiveness and initiates a gift, an inheritance, consequently opening the problem of its reception. The event of testament brings the past with it, charging this event with a future, a possibility; that is, the address of testimony opens the prospect of a space of difference and transformation whose contours are not preset but brought into view and situated, situated anew at each testamentary instance implicating testament in the promise of a re-formation and renewal of historical consciousness.

With respect to such a re-formation and renewal, there is a polyvalent quality to testimony which accounts for its readiness-to-hand for practices of historicization, memorialization and transformative recollection. Attending to testimony in each of these various ways places very different responsibilities on the those who open themselves to such accounts. Which combination of these responsibilities might be met at any given moment is, in large measure, a function of the wakefulness, the attentive presence within and through which one engages testimony. Not a system or a code of behaviour, what is at stake is an orientation, a turning towards in which various notions of being-for-an-other may become manifest. How might we consider what is at issue here?

I begin by drawing upon the notion of “*kavannah*,” a Hebraic term extensively developed within Jewish thought and practice. *Kavannah* commonly references the attentiveness, attunement and intentionality with which one is able to engage in prayer.<sup>3</sup> Levinas was deeply concerned with prayer as a question of attention, wakefulness, an orientation, a turning, and ultimately an adherence and responsibility. In commenting on a letter by Paul Celan to Hans Bender (where Celan has written “I cannot see any basic difference between a handshake and a poem”) Levinas writes (1996, p. 43):

A gesture of recognition of the other, a handshake, a saying without a said – these things are important by their interpellation rather than by their message; important by their attention! “Attention, like a pure prayer of the soul,” of which Malebranche speaks, in so many unex-

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<sup>3</sup> Let me admit some risk in setting forth the term *kavannah* as a dispositional concept. In many contexts of use within the Jewish thought *kavannah* would not be seen simply as a conceptual frame for a different qualities of disposition, but rather an aspiration in regard to achieving a measure of piety in one’s prayer. For what Levinas regards as the “height” of prayer see his essay “Prayer Without Demand” (1989). In this essay, he provides an understanding of prayer quite different from the common presumption that it is a demand addressed to God.

pected echoes from Walter Benjamin's pen:<sup>4</sup> extreme receptivity, but extreme donation; attention – a mode of consciousness without distraction, i.e., without the power of escape through dark underground passages; full illumination, projected not in order to see ideas, but in order to prohibit evasion; the first meaning of that insomnia that is conscience – rectitude of responsibility before any appearance of forms, images, or things.

Prayer for Levinas is not exclusively a relation of human to the divine, but also that which opens the problematic of the inter-human.<sup>5</sup> That is, prayer is assumed to require a particular embodied attentiveness within which one becomes self-present to, and responsive toward an existence beyond oneself, signaling problems of answerability and address. For this reason, there is a semblance between the difficulties of prayer and responding to testimony of witness. Both practices require an answering to an alterity, to a difference not ever ethically reduced to the terms of one's own self-understanding. In other words, reading, watching, and/or listening to, for example, a testimony of a survivor of a ghetto or camp, raises the question, with what embodied attentiveness, with what "*kavannah*" does one approach this task?

Implicit in this question is the assumption that there are practices of remembrance and learning that might support the development and sustainment of *kavannot* with different qualities and responsibilities. What is at stake in this assumption perhaps can be clarified by distinguishing between two forms of *kavannah*: the *spectatorial* and the *summoned*. What is at issue here are the particular ways of opening oneself to another; of enacting one's non-indifference. A *spectatorial kavannah* concerns the construction of an observer – one who listens and watches. Limited to neither one's visual nor auditory sense, this turning to another references a larger, pervasive organization of perceptual engagement; a particular management of the way one attends to another. This type of engagement, according to Kaja Silverman, "encourages us to apprehend other beings as present-at-hand entities because it implies seeing them from one uniform standpoint (...) through those perceptual coordinates which are most emphatically and frequently reiterated in our culture, and which therefore interpose themselves almost automatically between us and the world – through what might be called the "given-to-be-seen" (Silverman, 2000, pp. 32–33). On these terms, a *spectatorial kavannah* embodies and

<sup>4</sup> In his essay on Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin writes: "Even if Kafka did not pray – and this we do not know – he still possessed in the highest degree what Malebranche called "the natural prayer of the soul": attentiveness. And in this attentiveness he included all creatures, as saints include them in their prayers" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 812).

<sup>5</sup> This is most explicit on pp. 148–149 of Levinas' early essay "The Transcendence of Words" (Levinas, 1989; or for a different translation Levinas, 1992). See also "Is Ontology Fundamental?" (Levinas, 1998b, p. 7).

enacts a capacity to grasp a given testament within frames of understanding which render it intelligible and meaningful in ways that evoke thought and feeling.

As a mode of embodied attentiveness, a spectatorial *kavannah* opens the object of my attention to my individual involvement with it. Not at all pure passivity, the very basis of this form of *kavannah* lies in the elicitation of an individual response. But – as a strictly individuated response – there is no need to have my terms of attendance returned to an other in a transformed, publicly accountable manner. My encounter, within the testament of other is, in this manner, naturalized into an aggregation of engagements and responses that befits the private interior of “my experiences.” That is, a spectatorial *kavannah* invites identification and the reading of the particulars of images and narratives on the terms of the moral certainties each one of us hold[s] dear. Indeed, it is the very acceptance of this invitation that allows us to disavow any ethical requirement that the terms on which we are moved by such displays throw ourselves into question, into destabilization. The projections and identifications made within a spectatorial attentiveness, and the consequent defenses it elicits, both require and enact leaving ourselves intact, at a distance, protected from being called into question and altered through our engagement with the stories of others.

In a spectatorial *kavannah* one is not limited to abstract and objectified forms of historical interpretation. Indeed, one might expect to be informed but as well, inspired, delighted, disgusted, saddened and horrified. What is not expected is that one may become obligated and called into question by the summons of another, consigned and challenged by the substance and substantiality of that one who now holds my regard. This is not to say an observer operating within a spectatorial frame is without obligations. One may be obligated within the norms of historiography, by principles of research ethics, or by a series of a priori affiliations and identifications which require attention to what another is attempting to communicate. However none of these obligations are founded in that instant in which, in facing another who in that moment addresses me, I find myself susceptible, responsible, vulnerable. As Levinas suggests, “To communicate is indeed to open oneself, but the openness is not complete if it is on watch for recognition. It is complete not in opening to the spectacle of or the recognition of the other, but in becoming a responsibility for him” (1998a, p. 119). It is this responsibility which both provokes and embodies a summoned *kavannah* – a form of presencing, a being-for-another, in Levinas’ word: *sensibility*. Levinas was quite clear that the sensible as an intuition of an image, is a claim (1998a, p. 62). That is, the identification of what is being said or shown in testimony is a proclamation, a promulgation, a stating of the said. But he also argued that knowing



is indirect and torturous, produced on the basis of the sensible oriented toward that which is beyond the “this or that” of the text, stripping itself of the halo in which it is nonetheless reflected and abides (1998a, p. 61). To attune to this, a responsible responsiveness to testimony (and its testament) would include a vigilance that attends to how one is attending. But this is, of course, familiar phenomenological ground, not specifically informed by the thought of Levinas. The question remains, why this effort to read Levinas in relation to education, what is to be opened here through his notion of sensibility?

What is to be stressed is that though sensation is not reducible to the clarity of the idea derived out of it, this is not simply because of an opaque resistance to the intelligible, the failure or impossibility of representation. Rather, it is because sensibility, as vulnerability, as an unconditional hospitality to another, opens sensation to a sense beyond ontology, beyond the disclosure of essence (1998a, p. 63). What is the significance of this? Levinas suggests that within sensibility as vulnerability, knowing, being’s disclosure to itself, marks a break with the thematizable, with the abstractions within which one grasps an understanding of who it is that addresses you and what might be the substance and import of his or her message. The immediacy of the sensible, which is not reducible to such a gnosis, such a knowing, is the exposure to a wounding which initiates a dephasing, a loosening up or unclamping of one’s ego but *within which one is still obligated to respond, to be accountable to the demands of the witness, that s/he be taken seriously, that his or her speaking matters*. This wounding transposes to the psyche in the form of a responsibility only possible as an incarnation, an animation, identity as body exposed to the other, in which one’s response-ability is put into question by the alterity of the other (1998a, p. 64). This is sensibility as a *kavannah* which establishes proximity, not as a state, a repose, but a restlessness, a movement toward the other in which one paradoxically draws closer when vigilant of one’s infinite distance from the other (1998a, p. 82).

## LEVINAS AND EDUCATION

But let me keep in mind the purpose of my speaking: Levinas and Education. What is the point then of admitting these two forms of embodied attentiveness: the spectatorial and the summoned? Thinking pedagogically, it seems to me that they lead to very different ways of enacting one’s response to testimony and they also align themselves quite differently in relation to different forms of remembrance, learning and possibilities for hope. Within a spectatorial *kavannah*, testimony is generally

framed as a document. One might regard such a document as partial evidence supporting or refuting a historical argument and/or a display of the constructed character of memory, particularly in relation to traumatic events. In either case, its characterizations are of the order of an observer in relation to a "text." Geoffrey Hartman (1997) illustrates this attunement when he writes in the context of audio-visual testimony of Holocaust survivors: "What is essential, because portrayed with unusual directness, is the survivors' defining struggle with trauma or loss. We *see* [my emphasis] the flux and reflux of consciousness, as witnesses grapple with what has escaped or overwhelmed memory" (p. 17). The point here is that testimony is seen, heard, and emotionally experienced as a document of memory being remembered. Specifically, the textual, visual and auditory features of testimony become semiotic referents which signify the character of this process of memory. In this sense, testimony may become an object of information, fascination, identification and sympathetic response. One can "read" it as a document to critically assess and access what information it brings to historical understanding. And one can "read" it as a document which displays, and allows us to connect with, what historical events meant and still mean to people in regard to the physical and emotional realities of their lives. Within a spectatorial engagement one can be both informed and moved, clearly educationally important consequences. Indeed, it is a mode of mediating the concrete relation between an I and a world, a mode that is not anything one could or would want to do away with.

However, within Levinas' notion of sensibility, Levinas' summoned *kavannah*, something more is at stake. First of all, Levinas suggests that such a mode of engagement opens one to something he called "the traumatism of astonishment" (Levinas, 1969, p. 73). This astonishment is not that moment of surprise in which one finds out something that is novel, undisclosed and now recovered. Although one has come to read, see and/or listen, this astonishment occurs when, within the proximity of the witness and you who answers, you find yourself "touched," summoned to be accountable to a saying that exposes and begin to de-phase the very taken for granted terms through which the stories of others settle into your experience. It is important to underscore that more is at stake here than recognising a vast imaginative space separating the ordeal of a witness from our capacity to comprehend it. And more is at stake than a form of conscientization in which we awaken to that to which we have been blind, taking pleasure in what Jorge Luis Borges called "those things that can enrich ignorance" (cited in Parks, 2001, p. 43). Yes, such questioning implicates my inexperience to hear the testimony that addresses me. What I encounter is not just the dramatic abundance of experience, or even the overflow of traumatic episodes, but the experience of my inexperience to

hear and learn. Certainly, what I may learn in such an encounter are not just facts about another's life or even facts about my own, but that I can be challenged, awakened to an attending to my attending. However, the ethical force of Levinas' thought and implications for education does not rest here, particularly when one recognizes that the "putting into question of consciousness [often] gets recuperated as the consciousness of being put into question" (Robbins, 1999, p. 108) – again, something that is of considerable value, not at all insignificant (Simon, 2000). The solitary work of the thematization of one's own thought about oneself, however valuable, still evades the responsibility, the answerability inherent in Levinas' notion of sensibility.

More decisively, what is opened by Levinas' thought is the possibility of a social practice, a relationality within which one might enact the very cracking of fate, fate understood here as the "necessities of the present." At stake is my fate and fate of world, not on the terms of my individuation, the development of my autonomous ego that "remains outside everything and participating in everything" (Levinas, 1990, p. 33), but within a concern for the self in regard to how the self might answer for its responsibility to and for others. Jill Robbins (1999) is helpful here when she poses the question 'Why is generosity so important for Levinas? To this question she replies that "Levinas writes 'It is in generosity that the world possessed by me – the world open to enjoyment – is apperceived from a point of view independent of the egoist position . . . The presence of the other is equivalent to this calling into question of my joyous possession of the world' " (1969, pp. 75–76). On this basis Robbins suggests that "it is as if, in generosity, the blind spot of the habitual economy were brought into view. The self's habitual economy, its tendency toward possession and *pouvoir*, is called into question by the other. But this calling into question, which will not be absorbed into an awareness of being called into question, must straightaway become generosity, or what Levinas also calls "the welcome of the expression of the face." But one can only recognise the face in giving: "To recognise the other is to give. But it is to give to the master, to the lord, to him whom one approaches as 'You', in a dimension of 'height' " (Robbins, 1999, p. 6).

Consider of what this generosity must consist in regard to one's engagement with testament. To welcome the face(ing) inherent in the transitivity of testimony (concretely in our work, for example, when reading diaries written in ghettos or viewing and listening to survivors's videotestimony) means not just listening and hence allowing speech to proceed as a gift, but straightway giving back to the one who has spoken the speech of non-indifference. Such gratitude, however, can rarely be a return to origins. The gift of testimony is non-reciprocal; that is, the only way to return the gift, to

return the receipt of the problem of inheritance initiated by the movement of testament, is to give it to someone else. Thus, one welcomes the face inherent in transitive expression of testimony by giving back speech, by speaking *of* this face(ing) *to* others, speaking specifically of its teaching; speaking specifically so as to teach others what it is that it has taught. As Levinas states “. . . speech, in its original essence, is a commitment to a third party on behalf of our neighbor: the act *par excellence*, the institution of society. The original function of speech consists not in designating an object in order to communicate with the other in a game with no consequences but in assuming toward someone a responsibility on behalf of someone else” (1990, pp. 20–21). Thus responsibility to the alterity of testament must begin as performative. Within this insight, one might suggest that the crucial contemporary importance of Levinas’ *kavannah* is that within a society dominated by the solicitation of spectatorial modes of attentiveness, it may enable new forms of living-on after the event of witness; new forms of answerability to that witness constituted in an “uprightness, an original fidelity to an indissoluble alliance, a belonging with, [one that] consists in confirming this alliance and not in engaging oneself headfirst for the sake of engaging oneself” (Levinas, 1990, p. 49).

This leads us to questions such as what might educational thought and practice become if it was grounded in the necessity for generosity, if education was constituted in an “uprightness, an original fidelity to an indissoluble alliance” where “consciousness is the urgency of a destination leading to the other person and not an eternal return to self” (Levinas, 1990, p. 48). Of what might an educational thought and practice consist in which “expression” becomes the primary mode of teaching and learning, expression here inflected with Levinas’ sense of ethics?

Is self-expression merely the manifestation of a thought by a sign? This is something suggested by writing. Words are disfigured or ‘frozen,’ when language is transformed into documents and vestiges. The living word struggles against this transfer of thought into vestige, it struggles with the letter that appears when there is no-one there to hear. The act of expression makes it impossible to remain within oneself (*en soi*) or keep one’s thought for oneself (*pour soi*) and so reveals the inadequacy of the subject’s position in which the ego has a given world at its disposal. To speak is to interrupt my existence as a subject and a master, but without offering myself up as a element in which this dialectical situation is realized in concrete terms. The subject who speaks does not situate the world in relation to himself, does not situate himself purely and simply at the heart of his own spectacle . . . Instead, he is situated in relation to the Other (*Autre*). This privilege of the Other (*Autre*) ceases to be incomprehensible once we admit that the first fact of existence is neither being in-itself (*en soi*) nor being for-itself (*pour soi*) but being for the other (*pour l’autre*) . . . By offering a word, the subject putting himself forward lays himself open and, in a sense, prays (Levinas, 1989, pp. 148–149).

Levinas' *kavannah* suggests not just that there are different ways of attending to testimony, but that there are different ways to live historically, each with contrasting assumptions regarding the relation between remembrance and learning. It is not a matter of attempting to adjudicate which among differing forms of engagement is the superior, reducing remembrance to one correct form, none of the forms I have gestured to above are "incorrect." Rather, the multiplicities of practice I have sketched only give us a sense of the ambivalence that a mature public memory must inhabit. This said, there are serious problems that need to be addressed regarding the narrowing of remembrance within institutionalized forms which encourage particular forms of attentiveness and their associated objectives for the study of the past. This is not just a matter of the rationalization of education into measurable outcomes. It is actually much more basic.

As we offer each other our efforts to meet the interminable obligations the present owes the past, it is no small matter to support a collective study of testimony that attempts to approach the many facets of its "face," not by attempting to secure its essence, but by guarding the face of the other in a practice of non-reductive remembrance. This is an obligation in which one commits to a constant rewriting of the face that approaches us – testifying of and out of my exposure to its demands, opening up in turn my own witness to the questioning of others. As we find in Levinas, "To study well, to read well, to listen well, is already to speak: whether by asking questions and, in so doing, teaching the master who teaches you, or by teaching a third party" (1994a, pp. 78–79). "To listen well is already to speak," and to speak is to open and sustain a space within which the (absent) voices of witnesses past might resound anew in and into our own time. It is to make possible the re-sonance, or echo, of what has not yet been spoken – of something which is not already contained *within* the document sitting in my hands. It is to make possible a space and a time within which something new can happen – inaugurating a hope for a future which might be more than merely "more of the same."<sup>6</sup> Recognizing that for a story to survive as testament is for it to continue to address, what the reader/rememberer/learner is called to do within a testament is keep it from disappearing *as* testament – and this means responding to its call, performing this response by exposing to others my exposure to its demands.

This brings us to the heart of the matter, the moment when witness-as-study begins to enact an historical consciousness with radical possibilities. This would be a consciousness that, in the words of Levinas, "is the

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<sup>6</sup> I wish to acknowledge Mark Clamen for this generous insight.

urgency of a destination leading to the other and not an eternal return to self . . . [It is] an innocence without naivete, an uprightness without stupidity, an absolute uprightness which is also an absolute self-criticism, read in the eyes of the one who is the goal of my uprightness and whose look calls me into question” (Levinas, 1990, p. 48). Such a consciousness might be built with practices of remembrance/learning that unsettle enough to enable a re-working of one’s relationship to the world and others, seeing the possibilities inherent in an incomplete present, and deepening one’s commitments to justice now and in the world to come. This might stand a better chance of accomplishment if education became animated by the problem of receiving the gift of testimony and responding to the ethical exigency to give it again – not as simple textual re-transcription but in recognition that the gift of testimony lies precisely in its pedagogical force, its transitive demands which ground the terms of the exposure of my exposure as the substance of sociality capable of supporting transformative learning.

This then may be a productive path toward new forms of remembrance and learning. Within this path, the lessons of events such as the Shoah will not reside exclusively in the historical and sociological understanding of what was done by others, nor in the moral messages that encourage us to the civic courage needed to stand against injustice. These lessons will also reside in the very practice of collective historical study that becomes a way of thinking the present, our present.<sup>7</sup> They will reside in a creative study that opens to a learning with, about, and from others that cannot – without trivialization – be specified in advance. Watchful of the many ways in which our modes of attending continues to be subject to forces of spectacularization (forces from which no *solitary* act of reading can ever entirely disengage itself), required is a space and a time within which one learns, one teaches how one learns, and one learns again. It is this space that inaugurates what we have elsewhere referred to as a moment of ‘public time’- a relationality which, in the very unpredictability intrinsic to open conversation between individuals, perennially keeps itself open (Simon et al., 2002). Such a space inaugurates a community founded on the activity of remembering and learning, an open community of witnesses, both present and absent, living and dead. In the work of such a community the challenge is set for exploring the interrelation of remembrance, learning, and hope. In such community, we may yet find a way to be answerable to the gift we encounter in reading Levinas.

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<sup>7</sup> For an initial elaboration for this form of study see Simon, R.I., Di Paolantonio, M., & Clamen, M. (2002).

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