The "Weight" of the Existence of Me:

"Shame" in Levinas

Rina KATO
Kyoto University

Abstract

This paper explores the ethical interplay between the "I" and the Other, particularly within Levinas's philosophical framework, focusing on the concept of "shame" as a lens to critique the theory of the Other within the philosophy of education. Levinas challenged the legitimacy of power itself by examining situations beyond its control through the lens of shame, highlighting that in the phenomenon of shame, we can find a situation in which the "I" is riveted to its own existence. This paper explores how the sense of shame shifts with the Other's "election," reversing the burden from the absurd weight of "the I can only be me" to the ethical imperative weight of "the I must be me." This discussion navigates the aporia inherent in the theory of the Other in the philosophy of education, where conflicting views emerge—the impossibility of fully understanding the Other versus the necessity of the educational "project." It introduces the notion of education's potential for generating "shame," illustrating the tension wherein attempting to disengage from the aporia proves futile as it is constitutive of education itself. It argues that this aporia, rather than a hindrance, defines the essence of education. Ultimately, the paper concludes that the ethical bond between the educator and the educand thrives in embracing the tension of this aporia, as educators persist in understanding educands through educational intention while grappling with the weight of their own existence.

Key words: Emmanuel Levinas, shame, ethics, the Other, the weight of the existence

Introduction

"The methodological 'project' of formulating principles, establishing grounds and systematizing is emblematic of modern spirit" noted Hitoshi Imamura (Imamura 1994, 55). However, Imamura also highlights an aspect often overlooked: "people do not notice

that there is a characteristic of exclusion the foreign body in the inside (of the modern spirit)" (55). The spirit of the "project" has permeated pedagogical discourse extensively. With the advancement of educational technology, modern pedagogy often views human nature itself as an object that can be understood and controlled[1]. Reflecting on this aspect of modern pedagogy, efforts have emerged to unveil the coercive nature of educational "projects" and to challenge their legitimacy. One such endeavor is found in the theory of the Other within the philosophy of education, influenced by post-colonialism. In the theory of the Other, a tension arises from conflicting notions; firstly, despite attempts to comprehend the Other through "projects," complete understanding remains elusive due to the inherent Otherness of the Other. Secondly, within educational contexts, it is challenging to evade the pursuit of objectives and accountability, thus making the abandonment of "projects" in education impractical. Consequently, the theory of the Other in the philosophy of education grapples with the dual challenge of acknowledging the impossibility of fully understanding the Other while recognizing the necessity of engaging in "projects" concerning the Other.

In this paper, we explore the tension inherent in the theory of the Other in the philosophy of education, which we characterize as an aporia. We argue that the ethical relationship between the educator and the educand is truly established only within the tension of this aporia. To illustrate this, our paper focuses on the insights of Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), who pointed that human existence cannot be fully encapsulated by the paradigm of the "project" emblematic of the modern spirit.

Levinas used the term "power (pouvoir)" to denote the capacity to autonomously engage with and pursue goals through "projects." According to Levinas, Western philosophy has historically privileged the understanding of human beings in terms of their "power" (Œ2: 109). This philosophical tradition has labeled as "failures" events that defy control through "power" and disrupt the spontaneous exercise of freedom (TI: 81-82=83). However, beneath the labeling of such events as "failures," there persists an implicit affirmation of the legitimacy of "power" (TI: 81-82=83). Levinas challenges this assumption by reframing events beyond the scope of "power" not as "failure" but as occasions of "shame," thereby casting doubt on the very legitimacy of "power" itself (TI: 82-83=83-84).

---

[1] Tetsuo Okamoto (2012) highlights that in modern education, characterized by the dominance of "Human-Centered" worldview and the notion of autonomous individuals, a "mechanistic view of humans" based on "demonstrative scientism" has a prevalent perception of education as mere "conditioning" (22). Fumio Ono (2019) endeavors to reassess the modern educational paradigm, governed by technological rationality, through the lens of "knowledge of pathos."

Levinas pursued this inquiry within two primary contexts. Firstly, he engaged with Heidegger's concept of "facticity (Faktizität)," offering a critical reinterpretation. Here, Levinas introduced the concept of "shame" to describe the existence of the "I" bearing "facticity." Moreover, Levinas extended the application of the concept of "shame" to the ethical dimension of relating to the Other. Thus, Levinas proposed that grappling with the existence of the "I" in light of its facticity and navigating the ethical relationship with the Other are intertwined endeavors, both aimed at questioning the legitimacy of "power"[2].

However, most preceding studies overlook this aspect when addressing Levinas's question of "power" within the philosophy of education. This oversight is largely due to the predominant focus of these studies on Levinas's conception of the relationship with the Other, originally developed within his philosophical framework[3]. While Levinas indeed underscores the significance of questioning "power" within the context of the Other, this paper argues that a deeper understanding emerges when we center our attention on the concept of "shame," revealing Levinas's examination of the ethical relationship with the Other through the lens of human existence bearing "facticity"[4].

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to examine how the I engages in an ethical relationship with the Other while bearing its own "facticity," using Levinas's concept of "shame" as a guiding principle, and to describe this way of being of the I in terms of the "weight (poids)" of existence of me[5]. We seek to elucidate the essence of this existential "weight" of the I and demonstrate that the ethical connection with the Other is not established through the exertion of the I's "power," but rather is continuously shaped by the I's existence within the interconnected and reversing two "weight"[6].

---

[2] The term "the I," frequently utilized in this paper, pertains to the concept of "the I" (le moi, je) as articulated by Levinas. For further insights into Levinas's exploration of "ipseity" as developed throughout the early and middle phases of his career readers may refer to Hiroshi Hiraoka's work (2019) on this subject.

[3] Whether the term "power" is explicitly invoked or not, a significant portion of contemporary scholarship has addressed scenarios wherein my "power" is challenged by the Other. For instance, there is research examining the tension between the "power to interpret the Other" in education and Levinas's critique of "power" (Ono 2002). Additionally, studies explore the potential for a mode of thinking akin to "hearing" through an analysis of the dynamics of relationships with the Other informed by Levinas's critique of "power" (Williams and Standish 2018). Moreover, investigations delve into the substance of Levinas's critique of "power" by scrutinizing his objections to the "maieutic method" (Hiraishi 2011). Finally, there are studies demonstrating, through an examination of hyperbole—Levinas's method of argumentation—, that Levinas's manner of discourse itself serves a performative function, prompting readers to critically reflect on their own "power" (Anjiki 2020).

[4] In recent years, there have been critical examinations (Bernasconi 2012; Kotegawa 2015) of certain studies that interpret Levinas's philosophy through the lens of the theory of the Other (Morgan 2009; Sato 2000).

[5] The discussion has largely focused on how Levinas incorporates and expands upon Heidegger's notion of "facticity" (Calin 2011; Moati 2012; Rolland 2011). However, there has been insufficient examination of the connection between the concept of "shame" introduced within his discourse on "facticity" and its role in his ethical discussions. Additionally, the significance of the concept of "shame" has often been overlooked (Tonaki 2021, 373-374).

[6] Kazuya Wakabayashi (2021) also explores the dual significance of the "weight" of existence, with a particular

In this paper, we first summarize the theory of the Other, a subject actively debated in the field of the philosophy of education, as a discourse on "power," and elucidate the tensions within the aporia inherent in the theory of the Other in educational philosophy (Section 1). Subsequently, drawing on Levinas's interpretation of Heidegger, we critique Heidegger's interpretation of "facticity," which implicitly privileges "power" (Section 2). Then, we delve into the nature of human existence burdened by "facticity," conceptualizing it as the "weight" of one's being, through an analysis of Levinas's original interpretation of "facticity," with a particular focus on the concept of "shame" (Section 3). Additionally, we elucidate how the implication of this existential "weight" undergoes a reversal when the I, laden with "facticity," is "elected" by the Other (Section 4). Building upon these discussions, this paper examines the implication of the tension inherent in the aporia of the theory of the Other in the philosophy of education and describes the reality of the ethical relationship between the educator and the educand (Section 5). Finally, we illuminate the pedagogical significance of our finding (Conclusion).

1. The Discourse on "Power" in the Theory of the Other in the Philosophy of Education

In this section, we delve into the theory of the Other within the philosophy of education through the lens of the critique of "power." This theory is discussed within two key contexts: the theory of educational relationships, and the theory of human (trans)formation (Bildung) (Sakurai and Ozeki 2019). The theory of human (trans)formation emerged in a post-modern milieu characterized by skepticism towards the simplistic valorization of educational aims. It represents an endeavor to relativize education through the framework of "becoming" as an inherent aspect of human nature (Miyadera 2009). Against this backdrop, we emphasize that prior to delineating the distinctions between the theory of educational relationships and the theory of human (trans)formation, a more fundamental issue arises from the different stances towards the "project" within the theory of the Other in the philosophy of education.

The theory of educational relationships addresses the dynamic between the educator and the educand as the Other, while the theory of human (trans)formation explores the

---

focus on the concept of "shame." However, his analysis lacks an explanation of the existential reality of the "weight" that humans bear within ethical relationships while confronting "facticity."

educand's relationship with the world and other individuals as the Other. When examining the relationship with the Other in this broad sense, whether within the theory of educational relationships or the theory of human (trans)formation, the stance of the theory of the Other diverges based on its approach to educational intention. Essentially, two positions emerge: one advocates for integrating educational intention into the discourse to foster an ethical relationship with the Other, while the other critically scrutinizes intentionality in "project" due to its potentially coercive nature, recognizing it paradoxically as a hindrance to establishing an ethical relationship with the Other.

We would like to present two notable studies that align with the former position regarding the "project." The first study, conducted by Yasushi Maruyama (2002) delves into the ethical relationship between the educator and the educand. In the wake of the increasing awareness prompted by post-colonialism, there is a growing recognition that educational intentions directed towards the educand can often be entangled with colonialistic tendencies of control. In response to this awareness, Maruyama seeks to strike a balance between educational intention and respect for the Otherness of the educand. He posits that when confronted with the incomprehensible, what is necessary is "the cultivation of the ability to imagine beyond one's own framework for understanding" (10). The second study, conducted by Mai Takahashi (2003), proposes a perspective wherein "one immerses oneself in the intersecting horizons" of two contrasting "consciousnesses": the consciousness that "feels the need to understand" the Other, and the consciousness that acknowledges that the Other "must not be understood in their own framework" (60). Takahashi argues that embracing these dual consciousnesses simultaneously serves as a valuable "tool for 'understanding,'" a notion that pedagogy should advocate (60).

In these studies, we observe an inclination towards transcending inherent limitations through the "project," rooted in the self-discipline and concerted effort, even when one's capacity to comprehend the Other remains constrained. However, it is crucial not to regard their positions merely reverting to the modern spirit's paradigm of the "project." Maruyama and Takahashi recognize the inherent difficulty for education to eschew aims and responsibilities in understanding the educand and fostering the educand's development. Hence, they persist in maintaining an orientation towards the educational "project." Consequently, the theory of the Other in the philosophy of education unavoidably grapples with conflicting ideas. On the one hand, despite engaging in a "project" to comprehend the Other, full understanding remains elusive due to the Otherness of the Other. On the other hand, abandoning the educational "project" proves challenging. Thus, it becomes imperative to reconcile both the impossibility of fully

understanding the Other and the necessity of the educational "project." Considering the tension inherent in this aporia, Maruyama and Takahashi endeavor to confront it by continuing to pursue a "project" for an ethical relationship while acknowledging the impossibility of fully understanding the Other. However, we can still scrutinize their position critically.

Maruyama locates ethical responsibility in the ongoing effort to comprehend the Other, despite the Other's inherent alienness. However, notably, he never questions the "project" itself from an ethical standpoint. In his discourse, regardless of the outcome of one's "project," "the act is justified by the fact that one has done one's best" in the process of one's effort (Maruyama 2002, 9). Similarly, Takahashi assigns a simplistic value to the "consciousness" (Takahashi 2003, 60) and the "intention" (61) to "feel the need to understand" the Other or acknowledge that the Other "must not be understood in their own framework." Yet, she fails to address the potential pitfalls of this naïve perspective, particularly the inflated self-consciousness it engenders.

On the other hand, Naoko Saito (2002) sharply highlights the inherent violence embedded within the notion of the "project." Saito identifies "a closed state in the self in which one clings to make an effort to speak to the Other what one cannot speak, and therefore, conversely, one cannot expose oneself to the voiceless voice from the Other" (32) within discussions aiming to realize ethical relationships through "projects." According to Saito, no matter how much individuals expand their "power" of self-consciousness and effort, they cannot attain ethical relationships with the Other. Such relationships transcend mere "project" endeavors.

The debate over whether ethical relationships are established through "projects" or not has frequently surfaced in studies on Levinas within educational philosophy. Sharon Todd (2001) argues that "the specifically *ethical* possibility of education, this possibility for non-violent relation to the Other, can only ever emerge when knowledge is not our aim" (73) within educational relationships[7]. Additionally, Todd suggests that when teachers "teach with ignorance" (73), they "create a path toward an ethical horizon of possibility" (73). However, Todd's argument appears to leave open the possibility that emphasizing teaching with "ignorance" might paradoxically be distorted into advocating for achieving ethical relationships through "projects" by educators. Paul Standish (2001) proposes that Todd's argument could easily be manipulated into a discourse promoting "better interpersonal or communication skills" and "carefully calculated behaviors" (76).

---

[7] The italicized text in quotations is the author's own, unless otherwise specified.

As we have observed in this section, the participants in the debate approach the aporia within the theory of the Other in educational philosophy in distinct manners. Maruyama and Takahashi suggest that establishing an ethical relationship with the Other is achievable by persisting in "projects" aimed at understanding the Other, despite recognizing the inherent limitations. Todd posits that the potential for ethical relationships with the Other emerges through engaging in "projects" that involve relating to the Other with ignorance. These arguments, while acknowledging the limitations of projects, still affirmatively accept the paradox and endeavor to establish ethical relationships through them. Consequently, the legitimacy of the "project" itself remains unquestioned, and the tension inherent in the aporia is somewhat disregarded. On the contrary, Saito's and Standish's arguments necessitate questioning the legitimacy of the educational "project," thereby addressing the aporia in a manner that maintains its tension. Hence, this paper aims to describe how ethical relationships with the educand can be achieved by skillfully navigating within this tension. Thus, starting from the next section, we will delve into the context of Levinas's critique of "power" and engage in deeper discussions to confront this aporia and scrutinize the educational "project."

2. The Failure of Power: Levinas's Interpretation of Heidegger's "Facticity"

Levinas challenges the legitimacy of human "spontaneity" in his seminal work *Totality and Infinity* (1961). In Levinas's framework, "spontaneity" refers to "the naïve right of my powers" (TI: 83=83), thus his discussion on critiquing "spontaneity" can be interpreted as a critique of "power." According to Levinas, traditional Western philosophy encounters the critique of "spontaneity" when the certainty of "power," the belief in our unrestricted freedom, falters, leading to "failure" (TI: 81=83). It was believed that this "failure" would expose the "weakness" inherent in "power" (TI: 81=83), previously perceived as absolute, thus prompting a reevaluation of "power." However, labelling the inability to exercise one's "power" as "failure" still implies an acknowledgement of "the undiscussed value" of "power" (TI: 81=83). Therefore, Levinas argues that the critique of "spontaneity" and "power" in Western philosophy has not been sufficiently radical.

Levinas's objection to the critique of "power" through "failure" is underpinned by his skepticism towards Heidegger's discourse on "facticity." Levinas interprets "fact" as "being made, accomplished and past and hence irrevocable, which as such obstructs our

spontaneity" (TI: 80=82), terming this characteristic of "fact" "facticity (facticité)"[8]. He contends that "a *consideration* of the fact" has been discussed in Western philosophy as the critique of "spontaneity" or "power" through "failure" (TI: 80-81=82). While not explicitly mentioned, it is evident that Levinas is referring to Heidegger's exploration of "Faktizität" as the Western philosophical discourse addressing "facticity." In Heidegger's examination of the concept of "throwness," he considers the "facticity" of an individual's existence, acknowledging the inevitably of being thrown into the world without choice (Heidegger 1957, 135=174). Levinas disagrees with Heidegger's characterization of "facticity" as the "failure" of "power," a point that is elaborated on when Levinas examines "facticity" by drawing on Heidegger's concept of "throwness"[9].

Heidegger articulates that "the expression 'throwness' is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*" (Heidegger 1957, 135=174). Furthermore, he defines "facticity" as "*a characteristic of Dasein's Being—one which has been taken up into existence, even if proximally it has been thrust aside*" (Heidegger 1957, 135=174). From this, it is evident that Heidegger suggests that human beings being already made to exist in this world is not merely an experience; rather, "facticity" itself constitutes a characteristic of Being that comprises human existence. While the I is free to exercise my "power" since "proximally" facticity "has been thrust aside" for me, this fact remains an inherent aspect of human existence that cannot be separated from oneself. Levinas acknowledges this understanding of "facticity," as he describes the characteristic of "fact" as "irrevocable, which as such obstructs our spontaneity" (TI: 80=82).

However, Levinas take issue with Heidegger's discussion of "projection (Entwurf)" because he describes "facticity" which is "*taken up into existence*" (Heidegger 1957, 135=174) as something that can "be undertaken". In his lecture "Power and Origin" (1949), Levinas thematically addresses this matter, stating that Heidegger emphasizes that the "projection" "does not overcome the finite characteristic of throwness, but merely undertakes this characteristic by power to die" (Œ2: 131). However, within this act of "undertaking" lurks "a power that can end" the self "in the finite itself" (Œ2: 129). From Levinas's perspective, whether it is the "overcoming" or "undertaking" of the "throwness," Heidegger's thought still revolves around "power" while discussing "facticity." Initially, according to Heidegger's description, "facticity" is an intrinsic of Being that consists human existence, and thus one should not be able to distance oneself

---

[8] His explanation of "fact (fait)" largely stems from linguistic considerations in French, where the word "fait" originates from the past participle of the verb "faire," meaning "make" or "do."

[9] This paper solely examines Heidegger's thought within the framework of critiquing "power," drawing heavily from Levinas's interpretations of Heidegger.

from it. However, beneath Heidegger's notion that "facticity is undertaken," there is an assumption that we can maintain a distance from "facticity" and manage it in some way. It is this contradiction in Heidegger's framework that Levinas interrogates.

Heidegger appeared to question the legitimacy of "power" by exploring "facticity" and revealing the condition of human beings who inevitably bear their own existence. However, Levinas's critique suggests that Heidegger ultimately did not transcend the framework of implicitly valuing "power" because he sought to maintain the possibility of undertaking "facticity."

The preceding discussion has illuminated Levinas's critique regarding Heidegger's interpretation of "facticity." Levinas's critical perspective has already surfaced in his own interpretation of "facticity" in the 1930s, predating his lecture "Power and Origin" (1949), where he extensively examined how human existence bears "facticity" in a manner distinct from the "failure" of "power." In the subsequent section, we focus on this alternative approach to "facticity."

3. The Absurd "Weight" of the Existence of Me

Levinas discussed how human existence bears "facticity" in his early article "On Escape" (1935). This article is often interpreted in light of Heidegger's "philosophy of being" (Ev: 94=51)[10]. While Heidegger's philosophy maintains the possibility that individuals can undertake "facticity," Levinas, in this article, emphasizes that "the fact the I is oneself" has the "most radical and unalterably binding of chains" (Ev: 98=55). In essence, Levinas does not confine himself within the realm of "power" by contemplating the prospect of human beings undertaking "facticity," as Heidegger does. Instead, he thoroughly exposes the destiny of human beings who persistently bear "facticity," namely, their own existence, and endeavors to portray the human condition as something that transcends mere the framework of "power." At this juncture, Levinas introduces the concept of "shame." Thus, this section examines human existence grappling with "facticity" in a manner distinct from "failure" of "power" by focusing on the concept of "shame" in the article "On Escape."

Incidentally, in his main work *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas also discusses "shame" as "the consciousness of moral unworthiness" (TI: 82=83) and "a consciousness of guilt"

---

[10] Jacques Rolland asserts that the article "On Escape" should be interpreted as "an attempt of hermeneutics of facticity" (Rolland 2011, 27=13).

(TI: 81=83). Thus, the concept of "shame" can be understood to encompass "phenomena of a moral order" (Ev: 111=63) according to Levinas. However, Levinas contends in the early article "On Escape" that presenting "shame" merely as a specific morally reprehensible act (Ev: 112=63) or as a form of social interaction with others (Ev: 112-113=64) is an inadequate analysis of shame (Ev: 111-112=63). He endeavors to surpass these limitations inherent in the analysis of "shame" and focuses on the notion that, fundamentally, "if shame is present, it means that we cannot hide what we should like to hide" (Ev: 113=64). By emphasizing this aspect, Levinas suggests that "shame" arises most fundamentally from "the fact of being riveted to oneself" (Ev: 113=64). In essence, Levinas suggests that the "I" can only be itself, and since the "I" is itself, it cannot escape or conceal itself from itself; thus, the facticity of existence is fundamental for the "I."

The human condition of "shame," so deeply intertwined with one's existence that the "I" cannot escape, manifests as "malaise" (Ev: 114=66), resulting from being enclosed on all sides with no way to flee. Levinas examines the phenomenon of "nausea" as "a case in which the nature of malaise appears in all its purity" (Ev: 115=66) and seeks to elucidate the human condition of "shame" concretely. According to Levinas, when experiencing "nausea," the "I" is unable to distance itself from the feeling due to the impossibility of escaping from one's own body (Ev: 115=66). In this state, the "I" is riveted to its existence in a manner where it wishes to flee from itself but is incapable of doing so. Levinas underscores that "malaise" induced by "nausea" differs from "an obstacle" (Ev: 115=66). While "an obstacle" is external to one's endeavors, allowing the "I" to exist while turning away from it even if insurmountable, "nausea" is inherent to the "I," and the existence of the "I" experiencing "nausea" is intertwined with it. Essentially, in "nausea," the "I" seeks to escape its own existence, yet simultaneously affirms its connection to existence through the very experience of "nausea" itself. Levinas characterizes this connection as a "relationship" (Ev: 118=68), wherein the very act of attempting to flee one's being becomes "the affirmation itself of being" (Ev: 118=68).

Thus, through the analysis of the phenomenon of "nausea," Levinas offers a concrete description of the human condition of "shame," wherein the "I" is inexorably riveted to its own existence. Levinas's discussion elucidates that despite human endeavors to surpass the limitations defining its existence, it remains entangled in the very constraints that delineate it. In essence, there is no escape from the fate that "the I can only be me." Levinas encapsulates this notion by stating that "being is, at bottom, a weight for itself" (Ev: 114=65). For the individual, their existence becomes a "weight" that must be borne indefinitely, an absurd "weight" that cannot be shed throughout life. Amidst the unbearable absurdity, the I *should like to hide* one's existence, acknowledging

that the I has no choice but to endure and *cannot hide* its own being. Thus, the individual experiences "shame." In this manner, Levinas depicts human existence as radically bearing its own existence, offering an interpretation of "facticity" that diverges from Heidegger's perspective.

4. The Ethical "Weight" of the Existence of Me

As we have explored in the preceding section, the concept of "shame" in Levinas's early article "On Escape" (1935) suggests bearing the absurd "weight" that "I can only be me." Subsequently, in *Totality and Infinity* (1961), Levinas discusses that the genesis of moral consciousness, found in the welcoming of the Other and measuring oneself against infinity, is embodied as "shame" (TI: 82=84). Here, "shame" not only signifies engagement with facticity but also holds moral significance. Moreover, Levinas explicitly integrates his concept of "the Other" into the context where "shame" is utilized, implying a close connection between the I being riveted to its existence and the ethical relationship with the Other within the concept of "shame." This brings to question the manner in which they are linked. To address this inquiry, this section delves into how Levinas elaborated on the "I" bearing "facticity" after the publication of "On Escape." Firstly, we examine the draft for his lecture "Teachings" (1950), crafted during the transition from "On Escape" (1935) to *Totality and Infinity* (1961). In this lecture, Levinas revisits the notion of the I being riveted to its existence from a perspective distinct from the "absurdity" discussed in "On Escape." This discussion offers a crucial viewpoint revealing the interconnectedness of the I being riveted to its existence and its ethical relationship with the Other in moral consciousness.

Levinas raises a poignant question in his lecture "Teachings," asking "Doesn't the drama of not having chosen one's existence unravel when the I learns that the I has been chosen?" (Œ2: 184). Here, he suggests the possibility that one "learns" that the I that is riveted to its existence "is the I" that is "being created and elected" (Œ2: 184). By examining existence through the lens of "creation," Levinas underscores the inherent connection with the origin, already inscribed in the fact of being riveted to one's existence. Within this framework, the notion of "my ipseity" finds residence in the "election," signifying the creaturely nature of the I, fashioned by the Creator (Œ2: 186; Œ2: 184-185). Through this reevaluation of existence, Levinas endeavors to reassess the absurdity

of the I being riveted to its existence in light of its election by the Creator[11].

Thus, the absurdity of the I being riveted to its existence is reevaluated through the lens of "being elected." However, the notion of "being elected" is not apprehended by revisiting the origin and "the vision of God" to understand what the Creator is (Œ2: 186). Following the lecture "Teachings," Levinas delves into the concept of "election" further in *Totality and Infinity*. Here, Levinas posits that the I is "an election" (TI: 274=245) and proceeds to elucidate the sense of being elected in *Totality and Infinity*. Specifically, concerning the responsibility that the I bears towards the Other, Levinas asserts that "no one can replace me" in it and "no one can release me" from it; "to be unable to shirk: this is the I" (TI: 275=245). While the concept of "election" portrays the I as "a creature" in the lecture "Teachings," it signifies the I as the one bearing responsibility to the Other in these statements in *Totality and Infinity*. This shift in emphasis is rooted in Levinas's interpretation of the relationship between the Creator (God) and the Other. Levinas contends that "the Other … is indispensable for my relationship with God" (TI: 77=78) and "it is our relationships with men … that give to theological concepts the sole signification they admit of" (TI: 77=79). In essence, Levinas does not forsake the perspective of "election by the Creator" in his exploration of "election by the Other." Instead, he posits that it is precisely in being elected by the Other that one's existence as "a creature" is imbued with sense[12]. Thus, the sense of the I's existence is not derived from getting out of absurdity by apprehending the Creator, but rather, it is conferred by the Other when the I is needed and elected, bearing its existence as irreplaceable.

The implication of the absurd (non-sense) existence of me being given a sense by the Other transforms the understanding of the fact that the I exist. This transformation can be described by integrating discussions over the "weight" of existence found in both the early article "On Escape" and *Totality and Infinity*.

As Levinas stated in the early article "On Escape," the I is riveted to its existence, regardless of one's hopes, burdened by bearing the absurd "weight" that "I can only be me." The I *should like to hide* and get out of its existence due to this absurdity, yet it

---

[11] Yotetsu Tonaki (2021) suggests that Levinas "needs the concept of creation" for the purpose of "thinking beyond the limit of thrownness and facticity" within Heidegger (260). Behind Levinas's discussion of "creation," there is considerable influence from the thought of Franz Rosenzweig. Levinas himself acknowledges his familiarity with Rosenzweig's philosophy as early as 1935 (Poirié 1987, 121), suggesting that this encounter played a role in shaping Levinas's departure from Heidegger (Cohen 1994, 236). Given these contexts, it is essential to explore how Levinas accepts and develops the concept of "creatureliness (Kreatürlichkeit)" from Rosenzweig in his depiction of human beings as "creatures." This area warrants further analysis.

[12] If we interpret it in this manner, there arises a need for further discussion. Specifically, we must explore how the significance of "election by the Creator" is reinterpreted through Levinas's discussion of "election by the Other." This aspect presents an avenue for future analysis.

cannot hide it and must endure it, leading to a profound sense of "shame." However, as discussions of "election" inherited from the lecture "Teachings" to *Totality and Infinity* reveal, the Other imparts a sense to the absurdity of the I's existence; the sense is ethical in nature. According to Levinas, when the I is needed and elected by the Other, it is "unable to shirk" the responsibility it bears towards the Other (TI: 275=245). In essence, the very existence of the I is a response to the "election" by the Other, as the I is already chosen by the Other before it even decides whether to accept this "election." Therefore, the I must embrace its existence. The I that bear its existence as an elected one experiences "shame" in the sense of "the consciousness of moral unworthiness" (TI: 82=83) for existing as the mere absurd "weight" of "I can only be me." The I *should like to hide* itself due to "shame," yet it *cannot hide* it because its very existence is a response to the Other. The I must exist as a response to others because it is morally "ashamed" of itself. At this juncture, the I can be interpreted as bearing the "weight" of "the I must be me" while experiencing "shame" as an irreplaceable being who has always borne the responsibility of being elected by the Other.

Thus, the "weight" of the existence of me is reversed from the absurd "weight" that "the I can only be me" to the "weight" in the ethical sense that "the I must be me"; therefore the manner in which the I exists is transformed[13]. As stated above, per Levinas, being riveted to the existence of me is closely linked to having a relationship with the Other in moral consciousness because of the possibility that the sense of the "weight" that the I exists is reversed.

5. Addressing the Aporia in the Theory of the Other in the Philosophy of Education

As established in Section 1, the theory of the Other encounters an aporia. This theory acknowledges that, on one hand, despite efforts to undertake a "project" to comprehend the Other, understanding remains elusive due to the inherent Otherness of the Other. On the other hand, the educational "project" cannot be forsaken. Various arguments have emerged concerning the tension inherent in this aporia within the philosophy of education. In this section, drawing the preceding discussion of Levinas, we will confront the tension

---

[13] Rodolphe Calin highlights Levinas's identification of a distinct "weight" of existence in the relationship with the Other, separate from the notion of "facticity," through Levinas's term "glory" (Calin 2011, 30-32). Nevertheless, Calin does not explicitly delineate the ways in which the "weights" of existence in these two contexts differ and resemble each other.

stemming from this aporia once more and profoundly question the educational "project." Consequently, we will elucidate the ethical relationship between the educator and the educand.

The conventional exploration of the theory of the Other in the philosophy of education, as discussed in Section 1, continues to advance discussions around undertaking a "project" for fostering ethical relationships, while acknowledging inherent difficulty in understanding the Other. They certainly consider conflicting dynamics. However, when viewed through Levinas's perspective, these discussions implicitly frame the inability to comprehend the Other as a "failure" of education, while affirming the educational significance of the "project" within the context of educational objectives and responsibilities. Conversely, if we interpret the impossibility of understanding the Other not as the "failure" of education but as education's potential "shame," the tension inherent in the aporia of the theory of the Other in the philosophy of education takes on a different dimension. Even if one wished to get rid of the tension from the education, such detachment is impossible; instead, the tension constitutes the essence of education itself. Consequently, the aporia is reframed as the absurdity that defines the very essence of education.

The educator bears the inherent absurdity that defines the essence of education. However, this acknowledgment does not preclude the possibility of the educator and the educand establishing an ethical relationship. Considering what the educator should be in the light of Levinas's argument, the educator intends to establish the ethical relationship by educational "project" with aims and responsibility but cannot understand the Other because he or she is riveted to his or her own existence. The educator is a being accepting one's fate with resignation because they are forced to bear such absurd "weight." At the same time, however, the educator always already exists as an elected being by the educand if we consider based on Levinas's discussion of "election." Therefore, even if the aims that the educator set cannot be achieved through "project," the words that he or she speaks and the way that he or she is present are always already his or her very response to the educand. That makes the educator, who regards the fact that one exists as the absurd "weight" and has been bearing the "weight," feel shame, and then gives the "weight" an ethical sense. Since no one else can replace the position that is elected by the educand, the educator is called for readiness to bear its own "weight" by the educand. In this way, when the resignation to the fact that "the I can only be me" is transformed to the readiness to the fact that "I must be me," the educator is neither naively affirming educational "project" nor simply eliminating the orientation of educational "project" and leave it to chance. In this balance, a path to the ethical relationship between the educator

and the educand is opening.

According to Levinas's discussion, the ethical relationship between the educator and the educand is not necessarily accomplished through the "project" undertaken by the educator. Our examination of the concept of "shame" reveals that the aporia in the theory of the Other in the philosophy of education—where conflicting views on the impossibility of understanding the Other and the necessity of educational "project" coexist—is not something to be overcome initially. Instead, it is what the educator must bear, without resolving its conflicting nature, as the intrinsic "weight" of their existence. In essence, the educator is tasked by the educand to shoulder the responsibility of existing within this aporia. By embracing the dual "weight" of remaining within the tension of the aporia while striving to understand the educand through the educational "project," rather than attempting to resolve the tension outright, the educator's very mode of existence fosters an ethical relationship.

Conclusion

This paper explored the ethical relationship between the I and the Other, focusing on the concept of "shame" in the context of the "weight" of existence of one's own existence. It elucidated that the aporia within the theory of the Other in the philosophy of education should not be immediately overcome through educational "project." Rather, Levinas suggests that educators should embrace the aporia and carry the dual "weight" of their existence, which diverges from simply relinquishing attempts to understand the educand through the educational "project." Only by doing so can an ethical relationship between the educator and the educand truly flourish.

This perspective implies that the inherent paradox of education itself—where educators continually strive towards an unattainable utopia—is not inherently ethical behavior. Our daily endeavors to understand the Other, whether in formal education settings or in various interpersonal interactions—the relationship between adult and child and interactions among people who live in various cultures and speak different languages—, are haunted by the impossibility of fully comprehending the Other. However, when viewed through the lens of Levinasian philosophy, the act of engaging in the educational "project" inherently expresses one's response to the Other. Thus, anyone involved in educational endeavors can cultivate an ethical relationship with the Other by shouldering the existential "weight" inherent in the pursuit of ideals and by existing as one elected by the Other.

References

Works of Emmanuel Levinas

Quotations from works of Levinas follow the abbreviations below and are indicated as (abbreviation: number of pages in original text=number of pages in English translation).

Ev: *De l'évasion* [1935]. Paris: Fata Morgana. Le livre de Poche. 2011. (*On escape*. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2003.)

Œ2: *Œuvres 2. Parole et silence et autres conférences inédites au Collège philosophique.* Paris: Grasset-IMEC. 2011.

TI: *Totalité et Inifini: Essai sur l'extériorité* [1961]. Paris: Martinus Nijhoff. Libre de poche. 1990. (*Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press. 1969.)

Other Works

Anjiki, Yuhei. 2020. "…Shinaosu" Seicho Moderu ni kansuru Hihanteki Kento: Kyoikugaku ni okeru Tasharon no Jikomujun no Mondai ni shoten o atete (Critical Study of the Growth Model Characterized by "Redoing": Focusing on the Problem of Self-contradiction in the Educational Theory of the Other) *Kyoikugakukenkyu* 87, no.1:13-24.

Bernasconi, Robert. 2012. Levinas's Ethical Critique of Levinasian Ethics. Eds. Scott Davidson and Diane Perpich. In *Totality and Infinity at 50*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press:253-269.

Calin, Rodolphe. 2011. Préface. In *Œuvres 2. Parole et silence et autres conférences inédites au Collège philosophique*. Paris: Grasset-IMEC:13-42.

Cohen, Richard A. 1994. *Elevations: The Height of the Good in Rosenzweig and Levinas*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Heidegger, Martin. 1957. *Sein und Zeit*. (8. Unveränderte Aufl.) Tübingen:Max Niemeyer Verlag. (*Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper. 1962.)

Hiraishi, Koki. 2011. Taritsu ni yoru Jiritsu: Rebinasu ni okeru "Osie" no Gainen o megutte (Autonomy by Heteronomy: over the Concept of "Teaching" in Levinas) *Kyoikutetsugakukenkyu,* no.104:114-132.

Hiraoka, Hiroshi. 2019. "Jiko e no Genzen" kara "Jiko no moto deno Genzen" e:

Rebinasu ni okeru Jikosei no toi o megutte (from "Presence to the Self" to "Presence in the Self": the Question of "the Ipseity" in Levinas) *Levinas-kenkyu,* no.1:54-64

Imamura, Hitoshi. 1994. *Kindaisei no Kozo: "Kuwadate" kara "Kokoromi" e* (t*he Structure of the Modernity: from "Project" to "Attempt"*) kodansha.

Kotegawa, Shojiro. 2015. *Yomigaeru Rebinasu: "Zentaisei to Mugen" Dokkai* (*Reviving Levinas: Philosophical Lecture of "Totality and Infinity"*) suiseisha.

Maruyama, Yasushi. 2002. Kyoiku to iu Higeki, Kyoiku ni okeru Tasha: Kyoiku no Koroniarizumu o Koete (Tragedy of Education, the Other in Education: Beyond the Colonialism of/in Education) *Kindaikyoiku-forum* 11:1-12.

Miyadera, Akio. 2009. Kyoiku no Gainen Kitei no Arikata: Kihanshugi to Jijitushugi no Sohan (Defining/Defending the Concept of Education: a Conflict between Normativism and Factualism) *Kyoikutetsugakukenkyu,* special 100th anniversary issue:56-70.

Moati, Raoul. 2012. *Événements Nocturnes: Essai sur Totalité et Infini*.Paris: Hermann. (*Levinas and the Night of Being: A Guide to Totality and Infinity*. Trans. Daniel Wyche. New York: Fordham University Press. 2017.)

Morgan, Michael L. 2009. *Discovering Levinas*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Okamoto, Tetsuo. 2012. Kyoiku no Imi to Siso (the Sense and Thought of Education) In *Ningen to Kyoiku o Katarinaosu: Kyoiku Kenkyu eno Izanai* (*Deconstruct Our Images of Human Nature and Education: An Alternative Way of Inquiry*), ed. Sumeragi Norio, 2-41. Mineruva Shobo.

Ono, Fumio. 2002. Kyoikutetsugaku ni okeru Tasha Kaishaku no Giho no Kisei ni tsuite: Rebinasu to Buba no Hikaku o toshite (On the Mechanism of Arts of. Interpreting Others in the Philosophy of Education: Lévinas and Buber) Kyoikutetsugakukenkyu no.85:59-75.

Ono, Fumio. 2019. Kyoiku ni okeru Gijutsu eno toi to Patosu eno toi: Moroi Bubun ni tatsu Kyoikutetsugaku e (the Questions to Techonology and Pathos in Education: Philosophy of Education Standing on the Fragile Foundation) In *Ima, Kyoiku to Kyoikugaku o Toinaosu: Kyoikutetsugaku wa nani o kyumei si, nani o tenbosuru ka* (*Now, Rethinking Education and Pedagogy: What does Philosophy of Education Investigate and See*), ed. Morita Hisato and Matsuura Yoshimitsu, 268-310. Toshindo.

Poirié, François. 1987. *Emmanuel Levinas*. Lyon: La Manufacture.

Rolland, Jacques. 2011. Sortir de l'être par une nouvelle voie. In *De l'évasion*. Paris: Fata Morgana. Le Livre de Poche:9-88. (Getting Out of Being by a New Path. In *On Escape*. Trans. Bettina Bergo, 3-48. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2003.)

Saito, Naoko. 2002. Kyoiku no Kibo (Education's Hope) *Kindaikyoiku-forum* 11:27-36.

Sakurai, Yoshiki. and Ozeki Tatsuya. 2019. Kyoikugaku ni okeru Tasharon no Mondai: Kyoikutekikankeiron to Toyaron no shiten kara (the Theory of the Other in Pedagogy: from the Perspective of the Theory of Educational Relationship and the Theory of Human (Trans)formation) In *Kyoikutekikankei no Kaishakugaku* (*Hermeneutics of Educational Relationships*), ed. Maruyama Yasushi and Yamana Jun, 97-112. Toshindo.

Sato, Yoshiyuki. 2000. *Rebinasu no Rinri: Kao to Keijijogaku no Hazama de* (*Ethics in Levinas: between the "Face" and Metaphysics*), Keisoshobo.

Standish, Paul. 2001. Learning *from* Levinas: The Provocation of Sharon Todd, *Philosophy of Education 2001*. Ed. Suzanne Rice:75-77.

Takahashi, Mai. 2003. Tasha to "Deau" Chihei: Rikai no Choetsu to Rikai no Boryokusei ni kansite no Ichikosatsu (Where We "Meet" the Other: A Study on the Transcendence and Violence of Understanding) *Kyoikutetsugakukenkyu* no.87:46-66

Todd, Sharon. 2001. On Not Knowing the Other, or Learning *from* Levinas. *Philosophy of Education 2001*. Ed. Suzanne Rice:67-74.

Tonaki, Yotetsu. 2021. Rebinasu no Kuwadate: "Zentaisei to Mugen" to "Ningen" no Tasosei (*Levinas's Project: Totality and Infinity and the Multilayered Human*)

Wakabayashi, Kazuya. 2021. Shinri to Haji: Emanyueru Rebinasu no Datsu-Sonzaironteki Sisaku (Truth and Shame: De-existential Thoughts in Emmanuel Levinas) *Syukyogakukenkyushitsukiyo* no.17:84-98.

Williams, Emma. and Standish, Paul. 2018. Sound not Light: Levinas and the Elements of Thought, In *Levinas and the Philosophy of Education*. Ed. Guoping Zhao. Ambingdon and New York: Routledge:38–51.