that Heidegger subordinates 'every relation with existents to the relation with Being', and then imagining that 'freedom comes from an obedience to being' (TI, 45). As we have seen, Levinas finds in Heidegger first the neutralisation of alterity in the neutral third term – Being – and then, through this mediation, the understanding of Being in terms of freedom and obedience – precisely the paradox of legislation described by Rousseau in *The Social Contract*.

The language of Levinas's reading of Heidegger undergoes a subtle transformation in the course of the paragraph, one that is parallel to that deployed in the characterisation of the teaching of Socrates. In it the political entailments of ontology are brought to the foreground. The definition of freedom is couched in terms of the 'autarchy of the I' and ontology itself, 'as first philosophy is a philosophy of power' (TI, 46). The remainder of the discussion now focuses on the meaning of this phrase.

Levinas immediately sharpens the claim that ontology is a philosophy of power by claiming that it is also the philosophy of the state. It is at this point that the argument for the inextricability of state politics and war returns to prominence, along with the critique of the armed peace secured by the state. Against the Hegelian claim that reason, universality and freedom unite in a philosophy of right or the state, Levinas argues that the political peace advocated by the philosophy of power is not secured against war. Ontology 'issues in the State and in the non-violence of the totality, without securing itself against the violence from which this non-violence lives, and which appears in the tyranny of the State' (TI, 46). The state becomes the neutral third term that equates differences in the name of totality: it offers peace, but at the price of the domination of alterity. Here Levinas is transparently questioning the claim of the modern state to realise freedom and equality, showing that the equality in question involves the suppression of differences. The claims for equality may found a kind of peace, but in the name of totality and at the expense of alterity.

The critique of the state is consistent with Levinas's preoccupation with the revolutionary principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. Its development in *Totality and Infinity* does not advocate the utopian rejection of liberty and equality in the name of fraternity, but proposes instead to supplement them with a concept of fraternity as the welcoming of the other. However, before returning to the justification of fraternity, Levinas takes the opportunity to complete his critique of Heidegger.

The reading of Heidegger develops the themes of 'Place and Utopia' and 'Heidegger, Gagarin and Us' considered in Chapter 2 of this book. It consists in a defence of global technology on the grounds that it is able to disrupt place and the paganism associated with it. Levinas argues that, for Heidegger, the freedom that consists in obedience to the truth of being is 'accomplished in existing as builder and cultivator, effecting the unity of

the site which sustains space' (TI, 46). This view is consistent with the earlier understanding of the state as providing the unity of the site, or 'totality', that sustains a certain notion of space. This is a notion of space as territory or place that Levinas will later question with reference to the State of Israel, in his essay 'Space is not One-Dimensional'. He now links this notion of space with the destiny of sedentary peoples, making the provocative claim that 'Heidegger, with the whole of Western history, takes the relation with the Other as enacted in the destiny of sedentary peoples, the possessors and the builders of the earth' (TI, 46). The sedentary peoples, as opposed to the nomadic, found their relations to their territory and to the other on possession: 'Possession is pre-eminently the form in which the other becomes the same, by becoming mine' (TI, 46). By not calling into question possession and the same, Heidegger's philosophy is a 'philosophy of injustice' and a defence of tyranny.

The already complex links between ontology, the unity of the site and possession are given a further dimension by Levinas's defence of the liberating effects of world technology and the critique of the idolatry of the possession. The first line of argument is intimated through a critique of Heidegger's casting of technology in terms of the oblivion of being:

> Heideggerian ontology, which subordinates the relationship with the Other to the relation with Being in general, remains under obedience to the anonymous, and leads inevitably to another power, to imperialist domination, to tyranny. Tyranny is not the pure and simple extension of technology to reified men. (TI, 46–7)

Tyranny or imperialist domination extends 'the unity of the site which supports space' to the world – here the earlier discussion of the unstable expansive properties of totality are implicitly linked to Levinas's earlier critique of National Socialism, effecting a link between the philosophy of injustice and Nazi tyranny. Yet this is not the outcome of technology, which Levinas regarded favourably as disrupting sedentary totality. Rather, 'Its origin lies back in the pagan "moods", in the enrootedness in the earth, in the adoration that enslaved men can devote to their masters' (TI, 47). The devotion of the possessed, those who through terror submit to the domination of their master and with this to totality and the masters of that totality, verges on idolatry. It amounts to the renunciation of responsibility – transferring responsibility to the totality – and the implied commitment to war against whatever threatens that totality. It is to privilege the fixed identity provided by the totality – the same – over the constant questioning of identity provoked by the responsibility for the other.

At this point Levinas returns to the themes of war and peace and the need for a philosophy of fraternity. Within the philosophical tradition now linked with the 'sedentary history' of the West, conflicts between the same

and the other are resolved by reducing the other to the same through the medium of third, apparently neutral terms, whether in theory 'or, concretely, by the community of the State, where beneath anonymous power, though it be intelligible, the I rediscovers war in the tyrannic oppression it undergoes from the totality' (TI, 47). The war of expansion of the totality or 'unity of the site' against its external other is paralleled by the war against its internal others, those who do not conform to its 'universal' dictates of equality. Against this philosophy of war, injustice and tyranny, Levinas restates 'the effort of this book', which is 'towards apperceiving in discourse a non-allergic relation to alterity, towards apperceiving Desire – where power, by essence murderous of the other, becomes faced with the other and "against all good sense", the impossibility of murder, the consideration of the other, or justice' (TI, 47). Here Levinas poses the alternative of an ethical philosophy of justice that welcomes alterity and the excessive desire that it provokes, seeing in it the possibility of a responsibility for the self and the other otherwise denied.

In his discussion of the occlusion of the other by the philosophical tradition, Levinas distinguished between the theoretical resolution of the conflict of other and same and the concrete resolution of the 'community of the state'. The distinction between the theoretical and the concrete, which informs the very architecture of *Totality and Infinity*, is nevertheless put in question by the general argument for the priority of the movement of orientation over the terms oriented. Yet it persists, and as a residue of the very Platonism that elsewhere Levinas puts in question, it powerfully determines the direction of his argument.

The opposition of the theoretical and the concrete also informs Levinas's view of the ethical alternative to ontological injustice where the theoretical 'effort' to apperceive a 'non-allergic relation to alterity' is given a 'concrete' instantiation. Levinas writes, 'Concretely our effort consists in maintaining, within anonymous community, the society of the I with the Other – language and goodness' (TI, 47). As will be seen, this concrete instantiation begs interpretation. It can be regarded in terms of the fraternal supplement to the liberty and equality of the modern state, and thus linked with a powerful reformist current in republican theory, or it can be regarded as accepting the necessity of the fraternal community to be given a political form, one that is indebted to ontology and tied to a territorial site. The first case is important for understanding Levinas's general notion of the political, the second for the particular politics of the State of Israel. The repetition of the opposition of theory and the concrete will prove increasingly disruptive in Levinas's later thought, producing a split between Israel as a 'utopia of the human'[6] and the violent internal and external politics of the State of Israel.

At this point we move forward to the discussion of possession and habitation in Section II, Part D, entitled 'The Dwelling'. The importance of this

discussion lies in Levinas's elaboration of a mode of dwelling that is not necessarily sedentary, not dependent on the possession of a site and thus not rooted exclusively in political ontology. The discussion in 'The Dwelling' is prepared by the comments on enjoyment and labour that conclude Section II, Part C, 'I and Dependence'. Levinas takes up again the critique he had developed during the post-war period of philosophies such as Marxism that are based on a movement of need and satisfaction that assumes scarcity. Labour is not motivated by lack, but by ensuring the persistence of the 'plenitude of enjoyment' against 'the unknown that lurks in the very element it enjoys' (TI, 144). It is the insecurity posed by the future threat to enjoyment rather than the experience of lack in the present that provokes labour,[7] the 'nothingness of the future' opening an 'interval of time in which possession and labour are inserted' (TI, 146). This view of the motivation of labour has a number of important consequences for Levinas's concept of dwelling and for his understanding of the political.

The first consequence involves an acknowledgement of the 'force' of Marxist views of the importance of labour, albeit from a 'different perspective'. Marx's distinction between work – driven by scarcity – and labour as an expression of human 'species being' is not entirely remote from Levinas's purposes. But for him the 'proletarian condition…in which need prevails over enjoyment' is but a limited case (TI, 146). For Levinas, enjoyment of labouring in freedom, thus 'ensuring oneself against life's uncertainty', is the normal condition from which the proletarian condition diverges. Indeed, he sees the latter condition as closer to Heidegger and 'the absurd world of *Geworfenheit*' in which being thrown into a situation of need prevails over the enjoyment of freedom.

As earlier, in the critique of Marxism developed in the 'Hitlerism' essay, Levinas proceeds to a defence of freedom. Enjoyment is aligned with freedom, as is insecurity regarding the future. However, in *Totality and Infinity* Levinas's argument does not end here, but proceeds to an ethical derivation of enjoyment: 'The passage from instantaneous enjoyment to the fabrication of things refers to habitation, to economy, which presupposes the welcoming of the Other' (TI, 146). From this premiss Levinas opposes two understandings of exteriority – one based in lack, the other in excess. The first exteriority consists in troubling the moment of enjoyment by the 'heterogeneity of the world', the negation of enjoyment represented by material constraint and lack. The shock of encountering this exteriority negates the freedom of the I, which thus discovers its extreme dependence upon the material world. This shock contrasts with that of the second exteriority, that of the encounter with the infinity of the other, that enriches freedom by separating I and the material world and opening an interval of time for possession and labour.

The encounter with the other preserves freedom from dissolution in material scarcity or self-destructive anxiety for the future. It opens an

'extraterritorial' space and time (Levinas refers always to 'extraterritoriality'), not specifying its spatial or temporal characters that allow for displacement and postponement. The future thus 'arises in its signification as a postponement and a *delay*', allowing for the 'mastery of the future' through labour and habitation (TI, 150). As a form of labour and habitation emerging from 'extraterritoriality', this occupation of space and time is not sedentary but nomadic. Nevertheless it remains an *occupation*, even if it is founded on the encounter with the other which defies the rules of formal and dialectical logic.

Levinas immediately emphasises that this is not a utopian celebration of a nomadic perpetual peace. The ethical statement that 'The welcoming of the face is peaceable from the first, for it answers an unquenchable Desire for infinity' is immediately qualified by the observation that 'War itself is but a possibility and nowise a condition for it' (TI, 150). While contingencies of struggle for scarce resources may be warlike, the labour and habitation informed by a freedom enriched by the infinity of the other is essentially pacific. But it should be noted that, even for the latter, war remains a possibility. The peace occasioned by the relation to the other does not rule out war, even though war is not of its essence.

The capacity for war is explored in the remainder of Section II. The argument is complex and perhaps, in the final analysis, Levinas holds back from exploring its full consequences. The most salient line of argument in Part D moves between material exteriority and the exteriority of the other. The I in its dwelling is under menace – its present possession is marked by 'consciousness of danger, fear, which is feeling par excellence' (TI, 166). Yet it is through the relation with the other that future time is granted, leaving the I as a 'being that is threatened, but has time at its disposal to ward off the threat' (TI, 166). Thus the 'relation with the other, with infinity, metaphysics' offers the time for labour, but also for overcoming obstacles, opposing other forces and 'forestalling danger' – in other words, for waging war. Yet the other, while opening the space for labour, habitation and war, at the same time throws all of these into question. The other 'paralyses possession', allowing me to 'free myself from the very possession that the welcome of the home establishes' (TI, 170–71). The other demands generosity – that I give away my possession and admit the other to the home – but also negates the murder that the threat to possession might provoke.

The other makes possible the time of labour and possession while also putting it into question. It makes possible the time of war while forbidding murder. This is because the other teaches the I, showing it to be implicated in a totality of opposed forces. Through this teaching, the I 'discovers itself as a violence, but thereby enters into a new dimension' (TI, 171). Levinas takes several precautions to ensure that the other cannot be considered to be on a war footing with the I that it has made and now challenges. The

other is above totality, not within it; the other is 'fundamentally pacific', not another freedom to oppose mine; its 'alterity is manifested in mastery that does not conquer, but teaches' (TI, 171). Its teaching is essentially moral, putting into question violence and substituting the word for war in a 'primordial dispossession, a first donation' (TI, 173). Yet there is need for more argument to sustain the claims that this dispossession is not an act of war, that we are still not duped by morality, or that the conditions of welcoming the other and making the donation are not themselves a possession that must be defended by war.

The question of necessary war is explored further in Part C, where Levinas contrasts the totalities of state and market with a pluralism born of the 'separation' occasioned by the relation to an other. This pluralism is defined by a 'social relation' which combines the relation with the other (*autre*) and with others (*autrui*), but in an excessive manner that refuses any closure in totality – 'an objectivity posited in the impossibility of total reflection, in the impossibility of conjoining the I and the non-I in a whole' (TI, 221). The social relationship, however, should not be assumed to be one of peace; indeed Levinas notes immediately that the 'foundation of pluralism' – the relation with the other – 'while maintaining [the terms that constitute a plurality] against the totality that would absorb them, it leaves them in commerce or in war' (TI, 221). The detailed discussion of war and commerce that now ensues develops the point made in Section B regarding the possibility of war that is opened by the encounter with the other.

Levinas begins by insisting that war and commerce are derivatives of the relation to the other, and not themselves the 'primordial form' of plurality. He states unambiguously that 'War and commerce presuppose the face and the transcendence of being appearing in the face' (TI, 222). Before exploring this claim directly he disqualifies a competing, Hegelian, definition of war that would identify violence with the outcome of the limitation that attends a totality. Violence does not consist in the limitation of the one by the other, since this 'is conceivable only within a totality where the parts mutually define one another' (TI, 222). Even in those cases of antagonism, the antagonistic forces remain capable of combining into a totality. The reason for Levinas's careful separation of violence from antagonistic relations within a totality lies in the importance he gives to his definition of peace. He is not satisfied with defining peace as the absence of violence, claiming unequivocally that 'the exclusion of violence by beings susceptible of being integrated into a totality is not equivalent to peace' (TI, 222). This is because totality 'absorbs the multiplicity of beings, which peace implies' – beings reduced to identity by becoming parts of a totality may be pacified but are not capable of peace, for 'Only beings capable of war can rise to peace. War like peace presupposes beings structured otherwise than as parts of a totality' (TI, 222). The bleak rigour of

Levinas's argument for the mutual implication – or to use his later term the *intrigue* of war and peace – is a key element in his attempt to redefine freedom in terms of time and alterity.

The theme of the postponement of the worst is central to Levinas's political thought. Here, too, peace is understood as the postponement but not eradication of war – 'there is' war. But in order to secure a convincing concept of peace it is necessary to establish a correspondingly implacable concept of war. War is thus cast as the 'supreme risk' in which 'The calculations that make possible the outcome of a play of forces within a totality do not decide…' (TI, 223). This risk is then tied to freedom, which Levinas again detaches from any relation to totality. For him freedom is not granted by a totality but is the outcome of the relation to the other, giving rise to the paradox of 'a being independent of and yet at the same time exposed to the other' (TI, 224) that opens the possibility of both war and peace.

The opening for war and peace is constituted by the temporal character of the being exposed to and yet independent of the other. For, in the situation of war and before 'the inevitable violence of death it opposes its time, which is postponement itself' (TI, 224). Levinas continues by defining freedom in terms of this postponement. Since the possibility of war is omnipresent for such a being, it remains 'primordially' exposed to violence – 'Violence does not befall it as an accident that befalls a sovereign freedom. The hold that violence has over this being – the mortality of this being – is the primordial fact. Freedom itself is but its adjournment by time' (TI, 224). From this discovery of freedom in postponement, Levinas then moves to a horrific phenomenology of war.

Levinas begins by describing the implications of freedom as postponement of violence for the body. He describes corporeity as 'the mode of existence of a being whose presence is postponed at the very moment of his presence. Such a distension in the tension of the instant can only come from an infinite dimension which separates me from the other, both present and still to come, a dimension opened by the face of the Other' (TI, 225). The freedom of postponement that is made possible by the other is also capable of provoking war, and in war the exposure to violence is, for Levinas, literally infinite. For, in war, 'violence does not aim simply at disposing of the other as one disposes of a thing, but, already at the limit of murder, it proceeds from unlimited negation. It can aim at only a presence itself infinite despite its insertion in the field of my powers. Violence can only aim at a face' (TI, 225). From the depths of this violent murder of the infinity in the other, Levinas looks in three directions, two of which emphasise the theme of responsibility.

The first is the direction of the radical account of freedom, here viewed not as a 'freedom *within* totality', the Hegelian freedom which would 'reduce freedom to the status of an indetermination in being' (TI, 225), but

as tied to infinity. To bear this freedom, to live in the perpetual postponement of suffering the worst, is a heavy responsibility. Perhaps even heavier is the responsibility of living in peace with the other. On this second path Levinas describes the other as fallen into 'the hands of forces that break him' – perhaps your or my hands? In this case the transcendence of the other 'is manifested positively in the moral resistance of the face to the violence of murder. The force of the Other is already and henceforth moral' (TI, 225). From this resistance rises the possibility of peace through the work of justice – the 'ethical epiphany' of the face that *demands* a response adds to the freedom manifest in the postponement of suffering violence the postponement of perpetrating violence.

The postponement of suffering and perpetrating violence points towards a peace or work of justice that cannot be included in a totality. The burden of the asymmetries is borne as responsibility, one which is absolved by its translation into a totality. The divestment of the burden of responsibility is achieved 'in an order in which the asymmetry of the interpersonal relation is effaced, where I and the other become interchangeable in commerce, and where the particular man, an individuation of the genus man, appearing in history, is substituted for the I and for the other' (TI, 226). Here is a reprise of the reduction of alterity to totality already seen in the section on enjoyment. With it the claims of totality are acknowledged in the identification of the I and the other. But the comforts of commerce are once again undermined by the ubiquity of war. Even commerce involves the postponement of death and violence; its anonymous exchange of equivalents has nested within it war or the 'contention with the invisible' that defers the moment of violence:

> Struggle must not be confounded with the collision of two forces whose issue one can foresee and calculate. Struggle is already, or again, *war*, where between the forces that confront one another gapes open the interval of transcendence across which death comes and strikes without being received. The Other, inseparable from the very event of transcendence, is situated in the region from which death, possibly murder, comes. (TI, 233)

The exchanges of commerce and the anonymous political order of the state remain on a war footing, haunted by the menace of ineluctable violence – suffered and perpetrated – but haunted also by the ethical promise of peace in the work of justice.

Peace and the 'work of justice'

Levinas's 'work of justice' is presented at the close of *Totality and Infinity* as the contrary to the 'work of the state'. But the contrast is