Article
So Near, So Far: Emmanuel Levinas and Vladimir Jankélévitch

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Abstract: The purpose of my article is to shed light on the relationship of proximity and distance that linked two major figures of 20th-century French philosophy: Emmanuel Levinas and Vladimir Jankélévitch. This article presents a comparative study of their respective views on Metaphysics and Ethics. It also deals with their contribution to the reflection on the fact of “Being Jewish”, the theme that was at the center of the preoccupations of these two artisans of the renewal of Jewish thought in France after the Shoah. I conduct a comparative analysis between the key concepts of their philosophy: Levinas’ “There is” and “Otherness” and Jankélévitch’s “I-know-not-what” and “Ipseity”. I point out the difference between Levinas’ ethics of Otherness and Jankélévitch’s morality of paradox. In the section on “Being Jewish”, I highlight the crucial distinction they both made between racism and anti-Semitism and the very different meaning they gave to it.

Keywords: metaphysics; ethics; French philosophy; Judaism; anti-Semitism; “There is” (“Il y a”); I-know-not-what; ipseity; otherness; paradox; hyperbole

1. Introduction

It is not easy to compare two personalities as strong, two works as fruitful and original as those of Emmanuel Levinas and Vladimir Jankélévitch. As Levinas wrote, “In whatever circles and in whatever capacities he moved, Vladimir Jankélévitch was in addition to the allegiances, categories and functions to which his person may lay claim... Vladimir Jankélévitch” (Levinas 1993a, p. 85). In the same way, Emmanuel Levinas was Emmanuel Levinas, in addition to all the affiliations and categories in which one would be tempted to confine him.

There is thus little to be gained by focusing on the influences—either real or presumed—they may have had on each other. I prefer concentrating on the felicitous nature of the encounter between two minds fueled by the same sources—Russian literature, Bergson’s philosophy—marked by the same historical events—the War, the Holocaust, the founding of the State of Israel, and haunted by the problem of humanity or—as Jankélévitch said—the “humaneness” (l’hominité) of man.

Levinas described this convergence as a “kind of pre-established harmony”. This manifested itself on more than one occasion in places they both frequented: Jean Wahl’s Collège de philosophie shortly after the War, where Levinas heard “the inimitable sonority of Vladimir Jankelevitch’s lofty and inspired speech, uttering the unheard in the Bergsonian message, formulating the ineffable, and drawing a packed hall at the Philosophical College” (Levinas 1987, pp. 33–34). This started in the 1960s, at the Colloques des intellectuels juifs de langue française (Judaken 2013) where the two men had numerous opportunities to dialogue. In 1960, Jankélévitch was a member of Levinas’ Ph.D. jury (his Doctorat d’État), which was published a year later as Totality and Infinity.

The exchanges between Jankélévitch and Levinas have left traces in their writings. Although relatively rare, the references they made to each other are significant. Levinas made knowing nods to Jankélévitch in his philosophical writings and in the Talmudic readings he gave in his presence. He paid tribute to his memory in a text that was published in July 1985 and which was reprinted in Outside the Subject. Although Levinas’ name hardly appears in Jankélévitch’s writings, his philosophy is not absent.

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In his homage to Jankëlévitch, Levinas discussed his metaphysics—the “I-know-what” and the “almost nothing”—and his ethics. Then, he addressed a theme that was particularly close to his heart: Jankëlévitch’s link to a Judaism lived as a “religion with neither rites, nor worship, nor Hebrew...A religion with or without God? Surely only God can decide” (Levinas 1993a, p. 89).

Following Levinas’ homage, I will examine various aspects of his relationship with Jankëlévitch: the way in which Jankëlévitch made use of the Levinasian trope of “There is” to elaborate the key notions of his own metaphysics: the “I-know-not-what” and the “Almost-nothing” (“Le je-ne-sais-quoi et le Presque-rien”); Levinas’ and Jankëlévitch’s view of ethics as “first philosophy”; and their conception of “Being Jewish” and their approach to racism and anti-Semitism as well as to the meaning of the State of Israel.

2. Metaphysics and Ontology: “I-Know-Not-What” and “There Is”

In *Philosophie Première*, his treatise on metaphysics published in 1953, Jankëlévitch referred explicitly in a footnote to an article entitled “There is” (“Il y a”). Originally published by Levinas in 1946 in the journal *Deucalion*, it appeared a year later in *Existence and Existents*. This reference proves that very early on, Jankëlévitch was reading Levinas attentively. He was one of the first to grasp the fecundity of “There is”, the basic kernel and the core of *Existence and Existents*. The appearance of the “There is” in *Philosophie première* is not a hapax. Although Levinas’s name was no longer explicitly mentioned, this formula reappeared, several times, in 1957, in Jankëlévitch’s work, *Le je-ne-sais-quoi et le presque-rien* (Hansel 2012, pp. 53–56).

Levinas himself explained the reasons that led him to make of “There is” the “pièce de résistance” of *Existence and Existents* (Levinas 1995). On many occasions, he recalled the “fundamental distinction” between the “There is” and the Heideggerian “es gibt”, a “term fundamentally different from it” and that “was never neither the translation of, nor a way to stand out from, the German expression and its connotations of abundance and generosity” (Levinas 1993b).

Contrary to Levinas, Jankëlévitch’s interest in the “There is” is not explained by “a profound need to leave the climate of that philosophy [of Heidegger]” (Levinas 1995, p. 19). As early as 1938, he said without ambiguity what he thought of Heidegger. In his metaphysics of “boredom”, he described the condition of the “isolated”, “becoming aware of his forsaken situation, of his ‘Geworfenheit’, as we say today”. Furthermore, to leave no doubt about his contempt for this philosophical fashion, he noted: “An expression of a certain Heidegger, which is all the rage in the Parisian salons. Will be worn a lot this winter” (Jankëlévitch 1938, p. 152). After the war, and in view of his complicity with Nazism, he did not hesitate to mock the “galimatias of Mr. Heidegger” (Jankëlévitch 1986a, p. 42).

Jankëlévitch’s interest in the Levinasian “There is” was not, therefore, due to the anti-Heideggerian connotations that it covers. To understand the reason for this interest, one must, rather, evoke the trait of mind that was peculiar to him: his taste for paradox that shocks and awakens thought, i.e., “Paradoxology” as a way of philosophizing (Hansel 2012, pp. 40–42). In reading the texts in which Jankëlévitch dealt with the “There is”, one observes a quite astonishing phenomenon: while referring to Levinas, he reversed the meaning of this theme by understanding it in a completely different way.

Through the concept of “There is”, Levinas highlighted the anonymous nature of “existence without existents”, of Being in itself, of its generality and its neutrality. By contrast, Jankëlévitch conferred a strong positive meaning to the traits which give Being its impersonal, neutral, and stifling nature. He used “There is” as a model which enabled him to analyze the paradoxical nature and the particular mode of presence of “I-know-not-what”.

At first glance, there should be a complete contradiction between the “almost nothing” characteristic of the “I-know-not-what” and the excess of Being of the “There is”. In fact, there is a dense web of relationships linking the two notions. Levinas’ “Existence without existents” is not “nothing”, nor is it something determined, but rather Being in general. The “I-know-not-what” is also not nothing: while
assimilating its presence to an “unattainable and ineffable charm” (Jankélévitch 1957, p. 64), Jankélévitch endowed it with “effectiveness”. The “I-know-not-what” is that “diffuse and pervasive grace which endows a work of art with an atmospheric nescioquid (I-know-not-what)” (Jankélévitch 1986b, p. 143). Here, Jankélévitch quoted Plotinus:

“Beauty is not inherent to symmetry itself. It is something else, a kind of light which shines with symmetry and which makes it deserving of love.” (Jankélévitch 1980, I, p. 822)

The light or the charm is “this circulation of grace on the surface of beauty” (Jankélévitch 1980, I, p. 82).

This is why a face with regular features but devoid of the “I know-not-what” which gives it its charm can leave us totally indifferent. Although it is not “nothing”, the “I-know-not-what” is nevertheless not “something”: any attempt to attribute the charm of its diffuse but effective presence to having such-and-such qualities would come down to dissipating it. Defining the “I-know-not-what” would in fact reify it, it would turn it literally into a thing.

Acknowledging the presence of “I-know-not-what” without reifying it: this is the reason for Jankélévitch’s affinity with Levinasian “There is”. The “There is” makes manifests the existence of a reality that simply IS. “There is” and not there is something. “There is” is a statement of presence in general, and effective presence. Jankélévitch went as far as to say that the “I-know-not-what is anonymous because it is un-nameable from the start” (Jankélévitch 1986b, p. 147).

By emphasizing its analogy with the neutral and impersonal “There is”, Jankélévitch highlighted the indefinable nature of the “I-know-not-what” which can, at best, provide a “glimpse”, whose “quiddity” can be expressed without ever piercing its “quiddity”: one can say it is, without ever being able to say what it is. Hence, science is a “nescience”, perpetually alternating between “scio” and “nescio”, between “I know” and “I do not know”.

Four years after Philosophie Première was published, Jankélévitch’s interest in “There is” was further confirmed in Le Je-ne-sais-quoi et le Presque-rien. Once again, he reversed the meaning of the Levinasian notion by giving it a positive meaning, and relating it to the key components of his metaphysics, or as he termed it, to the “first things” (“les choses premières”). I will look briefly at three examples: time, love, and freedom.

As a disciple of Bergson, Jankélévitch considered that “being is entirely becoming, and fully temporal” (Jankélévitch 1980, I, p. 25). Time or “becoming” is “the supreme I-know-not-what” or the “There is in its continuous form” (Jankélévitch 1980, p. 69). I sense the “quiddity” of time—the fact that “it is”, without knowing its “quiddity”—“what it is”.

Similarly, love, Eros, is this “I-know-not-what” that vanishes as soon as our mind—Psyche”—imagines it knows its nature or its “quid”. Freedom is—like Pascal’s God—what one can only have a “half-gnosis” (“demi-gnose”) of: concealed as regards its nature, it is patently apparent with respect to its “there is”, meaning its existence.

What is unthinkable and ineffable in time, love, God, or freedom is their “ipseity”—what makes a thing or a being itself and not something else, or to use Jankélévitch’s definition in Philosophie première: “Ipseity is as much myself as the “himself” of the other” (Jankélévitch 1986b, p. 263).

3. From Metaphysics to Ethics

In his homage to Jankélévitch, Levinas stated that he had a concept of ethics as first philosophy. The identity between ethics and first philosophy does not appear explicitly in Jankélévitch’s works. That said, their titles eloquently express the priority he gave to morality from the beginning of his philosophical journey. In Le Paradoxe de la morale, his last work, he persists in considering “moral philosophy” as “the first problem of philosophy”. In his eyes, “the moral problematic plays with regard to the other problems the role of an
“a priori” (Jankélévitch 1989b, pp. 7–8). This is true, in particular, for critical speculation, which the moral problematic both “preempts” and “encompasses”.

Jankélévitch and Levinas thus shared the idea that ethics is neither a normative system, nor a branch of the “philosophical tree”, even if it is the highest one, but “first philosophy”. The search for a middle way is also profoundly foreign to them. For Jankélévitch, love “expects from me not a platonic response, but an act: I am personally concerned, urgently challenged by the drastic urgency of a request in which my whole life is immediately and passionately involved” (Jankélévitch 1989b, p. 40). As for Levinas, “to live for you” is “to live for you to the point of dying”, to the point of dying for the other, and in her place.

For Jankélévitch, morality is an extreme requirement that manifests itself in this principle stated in 1949, in Traité des vertus and reiterated in Le paradoxe de la morale: “Everyone has rights except me”: “we do not have rights, it is always the other who has rights”.

One finds in Jankélévitch’s and Levinas’ works many other texts which testify to their common concern for ethics. In his 1959 article on “Bergson and Judaism” (Jankélévitch 1989a), Jankélévitch contrasted philautia, or the Greek notion of self-love—Aristotle’s “mirror-friend” and alter ego—with the Biblical commandment to love one’s neighbor as oneself. The selfish Ego is “that adipose figure who says I, Me, We others (‘nous autres’), who intercepts the Sun and the song of the larks” (Jankélévitch 1986b, pp. 201–2). When in his 20s, Jankélévitch made fun somewhat ironically of one of his friends who poured out stories of his vacation without ever asking him what was new: “How horrible they are—these people who are mesmerized by their own egos, by their trips, their health, their examinations, their interesting Selves and their precious innards” (Jankélévitch 1995, p. 104).

3 By contrast to egotism, love of one’s neighbor is where “the ego is in a sense enucleated of its own ego” (Jankélévitch 1989a, p. 282). Likewise, Levinas talked in Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence about the “denucleation” of the Self responsible for the Other (Levinas 1998, p. 64).

Ipseity and Otherness

Levinas and Jankélévitch both taught about the wonder of a glance that is no longer turned toward the Self but toward the Other. However, there are significant differences between them. They consist in the distance separating a morality of ipseity from an ethics of Otherness (Hansel 2012, pp. 95–97). In 1939, in an article entitled “On Ipseity”4, Jankélévitch based his moral philosophy on the absolute oneness of the individual—an argument which he implemented after the War in his virulent rejection of any prescription of Nazi war crimes. Ipseity is “the pure and incomparable fact of our existence as a person” (Jankélévitch 1994, p. 179). To grasp this fact of being, or the “quiddity” in its purity, amounts to considering it independently of its “quiddity”—of the contents with which one fills it, or of the affiliations by which one ordinarily defines a person. Ipseity must be envisioned in itself, and not in terms of “this” or “that”.

The distance between Levinas and Jankélévitch—between the ethics of the Other and the morality of ipseity—can be found in their analyses of responsibility (Hansel 2017). At first glance, Jankélévitch appeared to place his ethics under the heading of love, a term which Levinas always used with circumspection. However, this love can be related, because of its radicality, to the infinite responsibility for the Other. For Jankélévitch, as for Levinas, responsibility is total, absolute, and asymmetric: “I only have duties without rights, the Other only has rights without duties” (Jankélévitch 1989b, p. 162).

Responsibility is also non-transferable such that no one can be substituted for me: that is the meaning of “substitution” in Levinas’ Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence (Levinas 1998)5. The uniqueness of the self is due to the non-transferable character of the responsibility, to the fact that “I can substitute myself for all, but nobody can substitute himself for me”. The overwhelming “burden” of my “non-transferable” responsibility makes me irreplaceable; the election to serve others is “a supreme dignity of the unique”. To be myself, to be unique, holds to this infinite responsibility which “exclusively falls to
me”. The self is “hostage”, it is responsible for the responsibility of others, for faults that it has not committed. Without preaching sacrifice or suicide, Levinas exalted “dying for the other”.

These key themes of *Otherwise than Being* already appeared in the final pages of *Totality and Infinity*: “To utter “I”, to affirm the irreducible singularity in which the apology is pursued, means to possess a privileged place with regard to responsibilities for which no one can replace me and from which no one can release me. To be unable to shirk: this is the I” (Levinas 1969, p. 245).

Levinas often referred to Jankélévitch when he used the term “ipseity” which describes, in *Totality and Infinity*, “the ipseity of the I” as “remaining outside the distinction between the particular and the general” (Levinas 1969, p. 118). In *Otherwise than Being* where his ethics took a radical turn, Levinas went so far as to state that “the ipseity, in the passivity without arche characteristic of identity, is a hostage” (Levinas 1998, p. 114). This “passivity” is precisely “a substitution of me for the others” (Levinas 1998, p. 114).

For Jankélévitch, by virtue of the absolute oneness connected to my quality as an ipseity, I am the only one to be able to fulfill this duty which behooves me. As he formulated it: “It refers to me. I have to do it” (Jankélévitch 1989b, p. 37) These words of Jankélévitch drew a parallel between death and responsibility by applying to them the paradox that was so dear to him: conjugated in the third person, responsibility becomes commonplace. My responsibility is only the particular case of a general law that states that all men have rights and duties, that duty is something that is shared. Conjugated to the first person, it reveals itself irrefutably mine, proscribing evasions, pretexts, and escape routes.

Levinas conceived the oneness of the self—his “election”—as being conditioned by responsibility for the Other. On the contrary, to Jankélévitch, the oneness of the individual did not depend on the relationship with the other. It is inscribed from the start in its being, its essence. For Levinas, responsibility is heteronomous. In contrast with the traditional notion of morality, ethics does not consist in a quest for one’s own perfection. Ethical duty does not have its origin in the subject herself, in her will or her free choice, but from the outside—“exteriority”—in the face to face with the Other. As Levinas stated in *Totality and Infinity*, with the revelation of the Other, my freedom becomes “unjust” and is “invested” with an infinite responsibility for her.

By contrast, Jankélévitch’s “metempirical” responsibility has its source in my ipseity—in my will and, even, my “intentionality”. Like Gabriel Marcel and other 20th-century French philosophers, he used this key term of Husserl’s phenomenology in a non-Husserlian sense. For him, there can be no moral action without the “intention” to turn to the Good and that, according to the Platonic formula, “with the whole soul”.

4. Being Jewish

Whereas Jankélévitch formulated an ethics of “paradox”, Levinas’ ethics took the form—in particular, starting with *Otherwise than Being*—of a hyperbole. This feature once again highlights their similarities and differences. Their similarity lies in the importance they ascribed to the idea of alterity—to the fact that the Other is absolutely other than me. Their distance can be described as follows: whereas Levinas gave Otherness a hyperbolic meaning by taking it to the absolute, Jankélévitch tended more toward the specific paradox of humaneness—the fact that man is made up of both identity and alterity, of the desire to “be both the same and an Other”.

What is true for the humaneness of man is also true for “Being Jewish”. While acknowledging the “constitutional Otherness specific to Jews”, Jankélévitch chose the language of paradox to describe these “universal human traits”, this contradiction or split that characterizes the fact of being a Jew: “being oneself and another”, “near and far”, “similar and different” (“semblable–différent”). “Being similar and different” is the title under which Jankélévitch’s contributions to the Colloques des Intellectuels juifs de langue française have been collected in *Sources*.
Jankéévitch (1984) Levinas also participated in these events, where he presented his *Talmudic Readings*.

The theme of Otherness appeared in the presentation on “Judaism as an internal problem” Jankéévitch (1984) that Jankéévitch gave in 1957, during the first colloquium of French-speaking Jewish intellectuals. It was also at the center of the discussion that he subsequently engaged with such outstanding French intellectuals as the philosophers Jean Wahl and Pierre-Maxime Schuhl, the poet Edmond Fleg and, of course, Levinas. At the risk of disappointing some of his interlocutors, namely, Levinas and Fleg—who would have liked a slightly more substantial definition, Jankéévitch described his own Jewishness as an “I-know-what”, a metaphysical and ontological given, unknowable as to its nature—its “*quid*”—but unquestionable as to its existence—its “*quod*”. Jankéévitch also mentioned the “existential complication” represented by the “constitutional otherness of the Jews”, that “additional exponent of otherness which resides in the fact that it escapes all definition”.

Levinas and Jankéévitch both lived in “the presentiment” and then “the memory” of the “Nazi horror” (Levinas 1990, p. 291). They could not but agree on what makes the extermination of the Jewish people into an event without parallel in history: “Racist crimes are an assault against the human being as *human being*, not against such-and-such a person, inasmuch as he is this or that: communist, Free-mason, or ideological adversary, for example. No, the racist truly aimed at the ipseity of the being, that is, at the human of every human being” (Jankéévitch 1986a, p. 22). Likewise, Levinas shared with Jankéévitch a radical distinction between racism and anti-Semitism. As he pointed out, “Jankéévitch never consented to the trivializing of these atrocities committed by Europeans in a Christian Europe, to view them, as sociologists, as a particular case of xenophobia or racism” (Levinas 1993a, p. 88). Subsuming anti-Semitism under a wider category amounts to “banalizing”—to “conceptualizing” it, so as to take from it that which gives it its character that is simultaneously tragic and scandalous.

Nevertheless, their divergence lies again in what separates the philosopher of paradox from the philosopher of hyperbole.

In accordance with his ethics, which excludes reduction of the other to the same, Levinas considered anti-Semitism as aimed to an Otherness that is absolute, total, and infinite. As he made clear in his moving dedication in *Otherwise than Being*, it is the hatred of the Other man, of absolute Otherness as such—it is the hatred of “humanity in man”. Jankéévitch, on the other hand, defined anti-Semitism in terms of the “similar–different” paradox (Hansel 2013, pp. 118–19). The Jewish being brings to paroxysm the fundamental human contradiction that consists in simultaneously wanting “to resemble” and “to be different”, “to be simultaneously the same and other”. That is the way Jankéévitch explained the “difficulty of being” that characterized the situation of many Jews in Western Europe after Emancipation: “We want to resemble the others, to assimilate, to enter into the herd in order to loose ourselves in it and melt into it. But we have also the desire to preserve in ourselves the perilous difference of which we are the bearers. We want to resemble everyone and to safeguard this dangerous originality that is ours and in which perhaps resides our dignity”. To be Jewish is to be affected by a conscience torn between two poles: the desire to be “like everyone” and the fact that one is irremediably different.

In using the paradox “to resemble—to be different”, Jankéévitch traced out a radical distinction between racism and anti-Semitism. By doing so, he did not aim at all at measuring which of the two hatreds is the strongest or the most intense, and even less to establish a hierarchy between them. The distinction he made is of a purely qualitative order. Racism, for instance, “the sentiment of the White person toward the Black person” is “a crude, primitive and simple sentiment that aims at the one whose skin is of a different color” (Jankéévitch 1984, p. 48). On the other hand, modern anti-Semitism has often aimed at Jewish people who, perfectly integrated into the societies of Western Europe, are no longer distinguished from their fellow citizens but by an infinitesimal alterity. Unlike with racism, “the sentiment of the non-Jewish person for the Jewish person aims at the one who is simultaneously similar and non-similar” (Jankéévitch 1984, p. 48). Otherness
that arouses racial hatred is visible, obvious, definable, maximal. By contrast, anti-Semitic hatred is directed against the “almost-similar” (“le presque-semblable”). It is motivated by minimal, impalpable, infinitesimal otherness to the extent that it often remains undetected by anti-Semites themselves. As a Bergsonian, Jankélévitch viewed this otherness as a principle of mobility, change, and anxiety, “preserving all men from the provincialism of the closed City” (Jankélévitch 1984, p. 45), encouraging surpassing and greater openness to “people who are only themselves” and who can so easily remain stuck, isolated in their attitudes towards themselves.

The fate of the State of Israel was particularly important to Levinas and Jankélévitch. Both thinkers considered that Israel had a mission which went beyond the political. In his homage to Jankélévitch, Levinas noted that “nor could the faithful affection Jankélévitch bore the State of Israel remain neutral from the religious point of view, despite the reservations he has allowed himself to express towards the politics of the Hebrew State” (Levinas 1993a, p. 88). What Levinas meant by “religion” here obviously had nothing to do with the observance of rituals or acceptance of a set of beliefs. Rather it is the hope of attaining, on the level of political structures, the ancient promise of social justice. This is what Jankélévitch called “moral messianism”, eschatological hope for unity and peace.

5. Conclusions

Jankélévitch and Levinas both initiated the renewal of morality in the 20th century. The “pre-established harmony” that, according to Levinas, existed between them did not prevent them from giving to this renewal a very different form: Levinas elaborated an ethics of otherness which took a hyperbolic form by radicalizing itself in Otherwise than being; Jankélévitch developed a morality of love which was cast in the mold of paradox. Their conception of “Being Jewish” and of racism and anti-Semitism also attests to their remarkable convergence and their irreducible divergence. “Near” and “Far”: their reading of the great Russian classics, where they both found their first intuitions, also bears the mark of their proximity and of their distance.

While Levinas was particularly fond of Dostoyevsky, Jankélévitch had little appreciation for his work, which he presented, ironically, as a “psychology of the underground” and a “philosophy of the underground”. He even confessed to “trying to deviate from the theses on Dostoyevsky so that they become theses on Tolstoy”. That said, both philosophers also liked to evoke that episode of War and Peace which depicts Prince Andrew, dying on the battlefield of Austerlitz, contemplating the sky where the clouds are chasing each other. Both were sensitive to the detachment of Prince Andrew, “reflecting on life and death, telling himself that all this is insignificant next to this sky”.

For Jankélévitch, a master of paradox, what mattered was the luminous blue of the sky, evocative of “mysteries in broad daylight”. For Levinas, a thinker of the hyperbole, it was its height and its eminence, indices of the transcendence and the “beyond Being”.

Their common predilection for Tolstoy, and the difference of inflection proper to their reading, reflect the secret of the relationship, made of proximity and distance, which united Levinas and Jankélévitch.

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Notes

1 My translation. See foreword to the second edition of Existent and Existents in the original French edition that has not been included in the English translation of the book.

2 Jankélévitch referred to Plotinus, Enneads, VI, 7, 22.
3 Letter to Louis Beauduc, 20 September 1924.
4 “De l’ipséité”, see Jankélévitch (1994).
5 See Levinas (1998, chp. 4, pp. 99–130) where these topics are dealt with.
6 See Georges Hansel (2009, p. 64), “Morals and Ethics”.
7 Jankélévitch insisted on the capital distinction between racism and anti-Semitism in a letter dated November 1980, right after the anti-Semitic terrorist attack at the Copernic Street synagogue in Paris, addressed to a group of students I belonged to, “so as to keep at bay any attempt of “banalization” of the Shoah”.

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