



Universiteit  
Leiden

The Netherlands

## **Moving beyond identity: reading the Zhuangzi and Levinas as resources for comparative philosophy**

Berenpas, M.

### **Citation**

Berenpas, M. (2024, July 3). *Moving beyond identity: reading the Zhuangzi and Levinas as resources for comparative philosophy*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3765943>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3765943>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

**Moving Beyond Identity:  
Reading the Zhuāngzǐ and Levinas  
as Resources for Comparative  
Philosophy**

Martine Berenpas

The printing was supported financially by Leiden University

Layout: Proefschrift AIO | Katarzyna Kozak

Cover: Proefschrift AIO | Guntra Laivacuma

ISBN: 978-94-93353-81-7

© 2024 Martine Berenpas

The copyright of published articles has been transferred to the respective journals. No parts of this thesis may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission of the author, or when appropriate, the publisher of the manuscript.

# **Moving Beyond Identity: Reading the Zhuāngzǐ and Levinas as Resources for Comparative Philosophy**

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van  
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,  
op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,  
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties  
te verdedigen op dinsdag 18 juni 2024  
klokke 11.15 uur

door  
**Martine Berenpas**  
geboren te Warnsveld  
in 1979

**Promotor:** Prof. dr. D.L. Berger

**Co-promotor:** Dr. R. Uljée

**Promotiecommissie:**

Dr. Frank Chouraqui

Prof. dr. Joachim Duyndam (University of Humanistic Studies)

Prof. dr. Robin Wang (Loyala Marymount University)

Prof. dr. Susanna Lindberg

Dr. Jingjing Li

*Don't be a medium possessed by your name,  
Don't be a stockroom for schemes.  
Don't take the weight of affairs on your shoulders,  
Don't be the man in charge of wisdom.*

*The Zhuāngzǐ*

*Maybe you will always be  
Just a little out of reach*

*Guster- Satellite*



# Table of contents

References for Levinas' Works	10
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction</b>	<b>13</b>
§1.1 Doing Comparative Philosophy	14
§1.2 Comparing the Incomparable: The <i>Zhuāngzǐ</i> and Levinas	15
§1.3 Comparative Philosophy and the Problem of the Tertium	17
§1.4 The Problem of Theoretical Colonization	20
§1.5 The <i>Zhuāngzǐ</i> and Levinas: Reconfiguring the Self-Other Relation	23
§1.6 Pursuit and Relevance of the Study	30
<b>Chapter 2. The Theory of Comparison and its Methods</b>	<b>37</b>
§2.1 Comparative Philosophy as a Discipline	39
§2.2 The Problem of Incommensurability and Objectivity	44
§2.3 The Comparative Process	48
§2.4 Heidegger and Hermeneutical Phenomenology	50
§2.5 Gadamer and the "Fusion of Horizons"	54
§2.6 Family Resemblance Concepts and Quasi-Universals	56
§2.7 Conclusion	61
<b>Chapter 3. Rethinking the Relation to the Other: Levinas on Culture, Immanence and Transcendence</b>	<b>65</b>
<i>Part I: Escaping Primitivism: Transcendence as Paternal Fecundity</i>	67
§3.1 Levinas' Critique on the Western tradition and the Metaphysics of "Vision"	67
§3.2 The Embodied Self as Transcendent and Immanent	70
§3.3 Preconditions of Responsibility: Enjoyment, Dwelling, Labour, and Possession	74
§3.3.1 Enjoyment	75
§3.3.2 Dwelling	75
§3.3.3 Labour and Possession	76
§3.3.4 Egological Economical Culture	77
§3.4 The Encounter with the Other	77
§3.4.1 The Welcoming of the Feminine	77
§3.4.2 The Face of the Other	79
§3.5 Transcendence and the Birth of the Son	81
§3.6 The Relation to the Other as the Attestation of Transcendence	84



<u>Part II: Levinas on Cultures and the Cultural Other</u>	86
§3.7 Meaning and Sense	87
§3.8 The Philosophical Determination of the Idea of Culture	91
§3.9 History and Paternal Brotherhood	92
§3.10 Questioning Levinas	96
§3.11 Transcendence, Immanence, and the Cultural other	103
<u>Part III: Europe and the Infinite Task of Moving beyond Identity</u>	106
§3.12 Immanence and the Problem of Culture	106
§3.13 Truth, Language and Dialogue	108
§3.14 Infinite Responsibility and Comparing the Incomparable	115
§3.15 Transcendence as Interruption	119
§3.16 Europe and the Duty of Moving Beyond Identity	123
§3.17 Conclusion	129
<b>Chapter 4.       The Zhuāngzǐ on the Self-Other Relation:                     Finding the Pivot of Dào</b>	<b>133</b>
<u>Part I: The Masters Of The Pre-Qin Period</u>	135
§4.1 Contextualizing the Zhuāngzǐ	135
§4.2 The Teachings of the Masters	138
§4.3 Genuineness and Living Out One's Full Lifespan	143
<u>Part II: Dào, Self-Transformation And Perspectivism</u>	151
§4.4 What is Debatable is not Dào	151
§4.5 Knowledge and Truth	156
§4.6 Bringing Clarity	166
§4.7 The Deconstruction of the Calculative Heart-Mind	169
<u>Part III: Harmonizing Perspectives And (Self) Nourishment</u>	177
§4.8 Fasting the Heart-Mind	177
§4.9 Emotions, Debate and Social Relations	185
§4.10 The Problem of Politics	193
§4.11 Adepts Who Do Not Rely on the Eyes or Heart-Mind	198
§4.12 Non-Obstruction and Connection	203
§4.13 The Pivot of Dào	208
§4.14 Conclusion	216

<b>Chapter 5.</b>	<b>Levinas, the <i>Zhuāngzi</i> and the Task of Moving Beyond Identity</b>	<b>221</b>
§5.1	Introduction	222
	<i>Part I: Comparative Philosophy as Levinasian Ethical Competence</i>	225
§5.2	Cultural Identity, Imperialism, and the Relation to the Cultural other	225
§5.3	The Ultimate Unsayability of the Other	228
§5.4	Comparative Philosophy as the Infinite Task of Moving Beyond Identity	233
	<i>Part II: Abiding At The Pivot: A Zhuangzian Perspective Of Ethical Competence</i>	237
§5.5	Abiding at the Pivot: Dissolving the Self-Other Dichotomy	237
§5.6	Quelling Expectations and Disputations	244
§5.7	Wandering and Clarifying	248
<b>Chapter 6.</b>	<b>Conclusion: Ethical Competence and The Self-Other Relation</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>Chapter 7.</b>	<b>Sources and Literature</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>Appendix</b>		
	Summary	270
	Samenvatting	273
	Acknowledgments	278
	Curriculum Vitae	279
	Propositions	280

## References for Levinas' Works

- ADV and BV      Levinas, E. *L'Au-delà du verset: Lectures et discours talmudiques*. Paris: Minuit, 1982. Transl. G.D. Mole, *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
- AE and OTB      Levinas, E. *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*. Paris: Livre de Poche, 1978. Transl. A. Lingis. *Otherwise than Being* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998).
- AHN and ITN      Levinas, E. *A L'Heure des Nations*. Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1988. Transl. M.B. Smith. *In the Time of the Nations*. (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).
- AT and AT'      Levinas, E. *Altérité et transcendance*. Paris : Livre de Poche, 1995. Transl. M.B. Smith. *Alterity and Transcendence* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999).
- CC                  Levinas, E. *Carnets de Captivité et autres Inédits. Œuvres 1*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2009.
- CPP                Levinas, E. *Collected Philosophical Papers*. Transl. A. Lingis Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1998.
- DEE and EE      Levinas, E. *De l'existence à l'existant*. Paris : J. Vrin, 1986. Transl. A. Lingis. *Existence & Existents*. (Pittsburgh : Duquesne University Press, 2008).
- DEHH             Levinas, E. *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*. Paris : Vrin, 2001.
- DL and DF      Levinas, E. *Difficile Liberté*. Paris : Albin Michel, 1976. Transl. S. Hand. *Difficult Freedom*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).
- DSS and NTR    Levinas, E. *Du sacré au saint*. Paris: Minuit, 1977. Transl. A. Aronowitz, *Nine Talmudic Readings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

- ELP                    Levinas, E. Eros, Littérature et Philosophie. Œuvres 3. Paris : Bernard Grasset, 2013.
- EN and EN'        Levinas, E. Entre nous. Paris : Livre de Poche, 1991. Transl. M.B. Smith and B. Harshav, *Entre Nous* (London: Athlone Press, 1998).
- EV and OE         Levinas, E. De l'Évasion. Paris: Fata Morgana, 1982. Transl. B. Bergo. *On Escape* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
- HS and OS         Levinas, E. Hors Sujet. Fata Morgana, 1987. Transl. M.B. Smith. *Outside the Subject* (New York: Continuum, 2008).
- HA and HO         Levinas, E. Humanisme de l'Autre Homme. Paris : Livre de Poche, 1987. Transl. R.A. Cohen, *Humanism of the Other* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
- LC                    Levinas, E. Liberté et commandement. Paris: Fata Morgana, 1994.
- LR                    Levinas, E. *The Levinas Reader*. Basil Blackwell, 1989. Edited by S. Hand.
- Tel and TI         Levinas, E. Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité. Paris : Livre de Poche, 1971. Transl. A. Lingis. *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004).
- TA and TO         Levinas, E. Le Temps et l'Autre. Paris: Fata Morgana, 1971. Transl. R. A. Cohen. *Time & the Other* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987).
- QEV                  Poirié, F. & Levinas, E. *Qui êtes-vous ?* Lyon : La Manufacture, 1987.