

PHST-4112: Levinas

Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

Fall 2023

Fr. Justin Gable, O.P., Ph.D.

Monday, 12:40-3:30 PM

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Classroom: TBD

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Course Description and Objectives:

Emmanuel Levinas is without doubt one of the most influential philosophical figures in continental philosophy in the last century. A student and translator of Edmund Husserl, Levinas's early work had a decisive impact on the reception of phenomenology in France. In 1961, Levinas published his first *magnum opus*, *Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité* [*Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*], providing a singular new description and interpretation of the event of encountering another person, while simultaneously revolutionizing phenomenology. In 1974, Levinas publishes his second *magnum opus*, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* [*Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*], which reconceives his conception of the relation with other as radical responsibility (substitution) rather than exteriority. From the 1950's onward, Levinas also published a number of essays on Jewish thought and readings of the Talmud.

This course, an advanced seminar for M.A. and Ph.D. students, will constitute a survey of the thought of Emmanuel Levinas and include detailed readings of his most important works. The course will begin with a review of phenomenology and foundational phenomenological concepts before proceeding to examine Levinas's essays on Judaism and his two great masterworks, *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*. Thus, while a certain familiarity with the history of philosophy on the part of the student is presumed, no prior coursework in phenomenology is required.

By the end of the semester, students will have gained an appreciation and comprehension of various aspects of Levinas's thought, including the main contours of his interpretation of Judaism; his appropriation and critique of the philosophies of Husserl, Heidegger, and Hegel; his account of ethics as a response to violence (particularly the *shoah*) and its roots in the totalizing, anonymous, and impersonal discourse of western metaphysics; and fundamental concepts of his ethical philosophy, such as alterity, the face, transcendence, fecundity, atheism, the saying and the said, substitution, and the third.

Course Requirements:

As an advanced seminar course, this class will focus primarily on the discussion of assigned texts, although the instructor will provide background material in lecture form from time to time. Students will be expected to carefully prepare assigned readings in order to actively participate in the conversation and raise thoughtful questions in class. Each week a student will be asked to lead the class discussion by introducing a particular text and raising several substantive questions for discussion. Presentations and the careful preparation of assigned readings are meant to foster student capacities for self-direction and collaborative learning (DSPT Institutional Goals A3 and B1). Because this class is structured as a seminar, attendance and participation in the discussion is essential. Absences of any kind will *significantly* affect a student's final grade. Students with disabilities or whose first language is not English are encouraged to speak with the instructor about any special needs they might have.

Students will be evaluated according to the quality of their class participation and leadership of class discussions, and a final research paper of 15-20 pages. These assignments are designed to help students develop their own critical thinking on Levinas's thought and issues surrounding the encounter between the same and the other. They also offer students the opportunity to show their growth in the DSPT's institutional goals of integrative thinking, self-direction, collaborative learning, and leadership (Institutional Goals A1-3 and B1). All sources in the final research paper should be cited using proper "Turabian" format (see Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Ninth Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018). Students should conscientiously avoid plagiarism, and are

asked to consult the *DSPT Student Handbook* for the DSPT's policies regarding academic honesty. A **paper proposal** consisting of a description of the student's thesis, the methodology to be used, and the significance of the project, along with a preliminary bibliography of a minimum of 10 sources in Turabian format, should be submitted by **November 13**, and will be factored into the final grade for the research paper. The **final research paper** is due no later than **December 15, 2023**. Late papers will be accepted, but will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., from an A to A-) for each day past the date due.

Grading: Weekly Class Participation: 25%

Class Presentations and Discussion Leadership: 25%

Final Research Paper: 50%

Assigned Texts:

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969. ISBN-13: 978-0820702452. Paperback. Used from \$24.28.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998. ISBN-13: 978-0820702995. Paperback. Used from \$32.

Weekly reading assignments will be taken from these assigned texts, as well as from readings posted on Moodle (<http://moodle.gtu.edu>).

Course Schedule:

9/11: Introduction to the Course

Levinas as a Jewish Thinker

Difficult Freedom, pp. 3-23, 30-38, 50-58, 142-48, 151-53; 159-66 (56 pgs.)

Optional: Chalier, "Levinas and the Talmud"

9/18: An Introduction to Phenomenology

Levinas' Phenomenological Roots

Dan Zahavi, "Phenomenology"

Selections from Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*

Optional: Levinas, "Ethics of the Infinite" (with Richard Kearney)

9/25: Levinas on Husserlian Phenomenology

Levinas, "Reflections on Phenomenological 'Technique,'"

"The Ruin of Representation," "Intentionality and Metaphysics," and

"From Consciousness to Wakefulness"

Optional: Overgaard, "On Levinas's Critique of Husserl"

10/2: Levinas With and Against Heidegger

Frede, "The Question of Being: Heidegger's Project" (30 pgs.)

Levinas, "Is Ontology Fundamental?" from *Basic Philosophical Writings* (10 pgs.)

Totality and Infinity, Preface (10 pgs.)

Optional: Taminaux, "The Presence of *Being and Time* in *Totality and Infinity*" and

Fagenblat, "Levinas and Heidegger: The Elemental Confrontation"

Optional: selections from Peperzak, *To the Other*

10/9: The Other and the Reduction to the Same

Totality and Infinity, I (A-D) (72 pgs.)

Optional: selections from Peperzak, *To the Other*

10/16: The Transcendence of the Other

Totality and Infinity, II (A-E) (75 pgs.)

Optional: Cohen, "Transcendence and Salvation in Levinas's *Time and the Other* and
Totality and Infinity"

10/23: No Class (Reading Week)

10/30: The Face-to-Face

Totality and Infinity, III (A-C) (60 pgs.)

Optional: Diane Perpich, "Levinas and the Face of the Other"

11/6: Fecundity and Filiality

Totality and Infinity, IV (A-G, Conclusions) (53 pgs.)

Optional: Moyaert, "The Phenomenology of Eros:
A Reading of *Totality and Infinity* IV.B"

11/13: Derrida's Critique of Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*

"Violence and Metaphysics" (75 pgs.)

Optional: Edward Baring, "Levinas and Derrida"

11/20: Levinas on Time and Discourse

Otherwise than Being, I-II (59 pgs.)

Optional: Peperzak, "Through Being to the Anarchy of Transcendence" and
Waldenfels, "Levinas on the Saying and the Said"

11/27: Levinas on Radical Responsibility

Otherwise than Being, III-IV (68 pgs.)

Optional: Bernasconi, "What is the Question to Which 'Substitution'
is the Answer?"

12/4: Levinas on Justice and the Infinite

Otherwise than Being, V-VI (55 pgs.)

Optional: J. Aaron Simmons, "Levinas, Politics, and the Third Party"

12/11: Ricoeur on Levinas

Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, Tenth Study

Optional: Cohen, "Moral Selfhood: A Levinasian Response to Ricoeur on Levinas"

12/15: Final Research Paper Due by 5 PM

N.B.: The instructor reserves the right to revise the course syllabus as the need arises.

Additional Resources

The following is a list of supplemental and suggested readings. They are by no means required reading for the course, but may be of some interest to students wishing to do additional research on various aspects of Levinas's thought.

Primary Sources

Levinas, Emmanuel. *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*. Second Edition.

Translated by André Orianne. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995. [*La théorie de l'intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1970.]

----. *On Escape*. Translated by Bettina G. Bergo. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003. [*De l'évasion*. Montpellier, France: Fata Morgana, 1982.]

----. *Existence and Existents*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis, The Hague and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978. [*De l'existence à l'existant*. Second edition. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1986.]

- . *Time and the Other*. Trans. Richard A. Cohen, Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987. [*Le temps et l'autre*. Montpellier, France: Fata Morgana, 1979.]
- . *Discovering Existence with Husserl*. Trans. Richard A. Cohen and Michael B. Smith, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998. [*En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1982.]
- . *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969. [*Totalité et Infini: Essais sur l'Extériorité*. *Phaenomenologica* 8. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961.]
- . *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1978. [*Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*. *Phaenomenologica* 54. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974.]
- . *Transcendance et intelligibilité*. Geneva, Switzerland: Éditions Labor et Fides, 1984. English translation in *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Simon Critchley, Adriaan Peperzak, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- . *Of God Who Comes To Mind*. Trans. Bettina G. Bergo, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998. [*De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*. Second edition, corrected and enlarged. Paris: J. Vrin, 1986.]
- . *Humanism of the Other*. Translated by Nidra Poller. Chicago: Illinois University Press, 2003. [*Humanisme de l'autre homme*. Montpellier, France: Fata Morgana, 1972.]
- . *Proper Names*. Translated by Michael B. Smith. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997. [*Noms propres: Agnon, Buber, Celan, Delhomme, Derrida, Jabès, Kierkegaard, Lacroix, Laporte, Picard, Proust, Van Breda, Wahl*. Montpellier, France: Fata Morgana, 1976.]
- . *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*. Translated by Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1985. [*Éthique et infini: Dialogues avec Philippe Nemo*. Paris, France: France Culture, 1982.]
- . *Outside the Subject*. Translated by Michael B. Smith. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, Meridian, 1993. [*Hors sujet*. Montpellier, France: Fata Morgana, 1987.]
- . *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*. Translated by Barbara Harshav and Michael B. Smith. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. [*Entre Nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre*. Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, Collection Figures, 1993.]
- . *God, Death, and Time*. Translated by Bettina G. Bergo, Stanford, CA: Stanford

University Press, 2000. [*Dieu, la mort et le temps*. Ed. Jacques Rolland. Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, Collection Figures, 1993.]

----. *Alterity and Transcendence*. Translated by Michael B. Smith. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. [*Altérité et transcendance*. Montpellier, France: Fata Morgana, 1995.]

Secondary Sources

- Aikin, Scott F. and J. Aaron Simmons. "Levinasian Otherism, Skepticism, and the Problem of Self-Refutation." *The Philosophical Forum* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 29-54.
- Batnizky, Leora. *Leo Strauss and Emmanuel Levinas: Philosophy and the Politics of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Bergo, Bettina. "Ethics as First Philosophy." In *The Routledge Companion to Phenomenology*, ed. Sebastian Luft and Søren Overgaard: 348-59. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Bernasconi, Robert. "What is the Question to Which 'Substitution' is the Answer?" In *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi: 234-51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- . "The Third Party: Levinas on the Intersection of the Ethical and the Political." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 30, no. 1 (January 1999): 76-87.
- . "The Violence of the Face: Peace and Language in the Thought of Levinas." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 23, no. 6 (1997): 81-93.
- Bernet, Rudolf. "Levinas's Critique of Husserl." In *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi: 82-99. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Burggraeve, Roger. *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love: Emmanuel Levinas on Justice, Peace, and Human Rights*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2002.
- Cohen, Richard A. *Levinasian Meditations: Ethics, Philosophy, and Religion*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2010.
- Critchley, Simon. *The Problem with Levinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

- Dahl, Espen. *Phenomenology and the Holy: Religious Experience After Husserl*. London: SCM Press, 2010.
- Dalton, Drew M. *Longing for the Other: Levinas and Metaphysical Desire*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2009.
- Dastur, Françoise. "The Question of the Other in French Phenomenology." *Continental Philosophy Review* 44 (2011): 165-78.
- De Vries, Hent. *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*. Translated by Geoffrey Hale. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 2005.
- . "Adieu, à dieu, a-Dieu." In *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature and Religion*, ed. Adriann T. Peperzak: 211-20. New York and London: Routledge, 1995.
- Drabinski, John. *Sensibility and Singularity: The Problem of Phenomenology in Levinas*. Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Dudiak, Jeffrey. *The Intrigue of Ethics: A Study of the Idea of Discourse in the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2001.
- Hart, James G. "'We,' Representation, and War-Resistance: Some Para-Husserlian Considerations." In *Phenomenology, Interpretation, and Community*, ed. Lenore Langsdorf, et al.: 127-41. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996.
- Horowitz, Asher and Gad Horowitz, eds. *Difficult Justice: Commentaries on Levinas and Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.
- Janicaud, Dominique. *The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology*. Translated by Bernard G. Prusak. In *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2000.
- Jonkers, Peter and Ruud Welton, eds. *God in France: Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God*. Leuven: Peeters, 2005.
- Katz, Claire Elise. *Levinas, Judaism, and the Feminine: The Silent Footsteps of Rebecca*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003.
- Kosky, Jeffrey L. *Levinas and the Philosophy of Religion*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- . "Contemporary Encounters with Apophatic Theology: The Case of Emmanuel Levinas." *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 1, no. 3 (Fall 2000).

- Mensch, James L. *Levinas's Existential Analytic: A Commentary on Totality and Infinity*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015.
- . *Hiddenness and Alterity: Philosophical and Literary Sightings of the Unseen*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2005.
- . *Ethics and Selfhood: Alterity and the Phenomenology of Obligation*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003.
- . *Postfoundational Phenomenology: Husserlian Reflections on Presence and Embodiment*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2003.
- Miller, Hugh. "Reply to Bernhard Waldenfels, 'Response and Responsibility in Levinas.'" In *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature, and Religion*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak: 53-58. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Overgaard, Søren. "Other People." In *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology*, ed. Dan Zahavi: 460-79. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- . *Wittgenstein and Other Minds: Rethinking Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity with Wittgenstein, Levinas, and Husserl*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- . "On Levinas' Critique of Husserl." In *Metaphysics, Facticity, Interpretation: Phenomenology in the Nordic Countries*, ed. Dan Zahavi, et al.: 115-138. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003.
- Peperzak, Adriaan. *Beyond: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997.
- . *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature, and Religion*. New York and London: Routledge, 1995.
- . *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993.
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- Schroeder, Brian and Silvia Benso, eds. *Levinas and the Ancients*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008.
- Sebbah, François-David. *Testing the Limit: Derrida, Henry, Levinas, and the Phenomenological Tradition*. Translated by Stephen Barker. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012.

- Simmons, J. Aaron. *God and the Other: Ethics and Politics After the Theological Turn*.
Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011.
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International Journal of Philosophical Studies 20, no. 3 (July 2012): 437-60.
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Introduction*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.
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Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008.
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Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson: 393-400. London: Bloomsburg Academic, 2013.
- . "The Imperfect: Levinas, Nietzsche, and the Autonomous Subject." In *Nietzsche and
Levinas: "After the Death of a Certain God,"* ed. Jill Stauffer and Bettina Bergo: 33-47. New
York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Tallon, Andrew. "Nonintentional Affectivity, Affective Intentionality, and the Ethical in Levinas's
Philosophy." In *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy,
Literature, and Religion*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak: 107-22. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Waldenfels, Bernard. *Phenomenology of the Alien*. Translated by Alexander Kozin and Tanja
Stahler. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011.
- . *The Question of the Other. The Tang Chun-I Lecture for 2004*. Albany, NY: State University
of New York Press, 2007.
- . "Levinas and the Face of the Other." In *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, ed. Simon
Critchley and Robert Bernasconi: 63-81. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- . "Response and Responsibility in Levinas." In *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of
Emmanuel Levinas for Philosophy, Literature, and Religion*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak: 39-52.
London: Routledge, 1995.
- Werhane, Patricia H. "Levinas's Ethics: A Normative Perspective Without Metaethical
Constraints." In *Ethics as First Philosophy: The Significance of Emmanuel Levinas for
Philosophy, Literature, and Religion*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak: 59-68. London: Routledge,
1995.
- Westphal, Merold. *Levinas and Kierkegaard in Dialogue*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University
Press, 2008.

Wyschogrod, Edith. "Language and Alterity in the Thought of Levinas." In *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi: 188-205. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Zahavi, Dan. *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

----. "Phenomenology." In *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Dermot Moran: 661-92. London: Routledge, 2008.

----. *Self-Awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999.