

Unattainable Peace and Imperfect Praxis¹

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"No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of burning children." *Irving Greenberg³*

"[If] millions [were] kept permanently happy on the one simple condition that a certain lost soul on the far-off edge of things should lead a life of lonely torture ... how hideous a thing would be its enjoyment when deliberately accepted as the fruit of such a bargain?" *William James⁴*

I. Introduction

According to its own recent study, the American Psychological Association (APA) was complicit with the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and the Central Intelligence Agency in facilitating and justifying the torture of detainees during the Bush "war on terror," likely motivated by the hundreds of millions of dollars funneled to member psychologists by the DoD.⁵ The report stated that many emails and discussions were found "regarding how best to position APA to maximize its influence with and build its positive relationship with the Defense Department," but "we found little evidence of analyses or discussions about the best or right ethical position to take in light of the nature of the profession and the special skill that psychologists possess...that presumably allows psychologists to be especially good at both healing and harming."⁶ The APA is now apologetic for its participation in "enhanced interrogation," but around half of the American public believes the CIA was justified in its use of torture and brutal interrogation techniques against suspected terrorists and that it is sometimes justified to use water boarding and other aggressive interrogation tactics to get information from a suspect.⁷ In other words, if torture is efficacious, nearly half of the population believes it to be justifiable.⁸

We have in recent years seen multiple media reports of drone strikes that have killed children and other “collateral” victims.⁹ Between 2004 and 2013, U.S. drone strikes killed between 2,500 and 3,600 people, with somewhere between 400 and 900 of those being civilians.¹⁰ The justification given for the drone attacks and for the innocent lives lost is that killing the people targeted is necessary to keep the U.S. safe and secure.

Is a moral action “credible” that causes babies to burn? Is enjoyment acceptable when we know or strongly suspect that it depends upon tortured, lost, and lonely souls?¹¹ How does this work if we are infinitely responsible? The conference’s organizers invited us “to consider the modern dilemmas and contexts of peace and proximity.” I chose to focus on ethical dilemmas in politics. Torture and drone attacks are exemplars of ethical dilemmas, real and intentional judgments for which we bear responsibility, even if we are not APA members or military drone pilots. We are members of a profession and of a nation that undertook and undertakes these actions. It is appropriate that such measures move front and center as we discuss infinite responsibility.

I planned this paper as a review of two ethicists who, like Levinas, start with a belief or faith in a perfect source of ethical motivation, an infinite standpoint (i.e., transcendent and/or absolute). I anticipated discussing how they approach praxis, especially political praxis, and then comparing and contrasting them to what we can glean from Emmanuel Levinas’s writings and interviews. While the theologian-ethicists I chose were Christians, their rationales have resonances with Levinas. They start with the absolute or transcendent and move to praxis derived from that basis. While they do not cite the quasi-phenomenological face of the other or the exposure of subjectivity to ethical demands, they still struggle with the movement from “be ye . . . perfect”¹² to action that is inevitably inadequate, incomplete, and insufficient.

As I wrote this paper, I become more invested in wanting the paper to actually matter. I awoke to new questions and found literature I was previously not aware of. As a result, I deviate a bit from my abstract, though the theme remains intact, how we approach the permissible in morality. I start by discussing Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy, focused on the issue of praxis, and move into the thought of the two ethicists. I then discuss how Levinas seemed to approach politics and the difficulty of separating Levinas's philosophy from his politics and his religion from his philosophy. I end with a brief plea to return to the roots of ethics through other phenomenologies and to attempt to find other forms of political praxis, not to bow to the fate of tolerating burning children and torture.

II. A Levinasian Praxis?

“We are all responsible for all and for all men and before all, and I more than all the others”¹³ is the Dostoyevsky quotation that Emmanuel Levinas repeated frequently to summarize his philosophy of infinity. Most of what Levinas has written emphasizes that it is the weight of this responsibility that constitutes the self. Infinite responsibility for everything and everyone is his precondition for consciousness, language, and the movement of time, and that infinite basis becomes the foundation for all ethical decisions, systems, and methods,¹⁴ but how that constitutive responsibility translates to praxis remains problematic. Levinas himself indicated that praxis was not his project, but that such a project was possible.¹⁵ However, I have significant doubts.

Derrida viewed Levinas's ethics as an “Ethic of ethics,” which could “occasion neither a determined ethics nor determined laws without negating and forgetting itself.”¹⁶ The attempt to respond to everyone would result in thorough irresponsibility.¹⁷ Critchley states that what Levinas offers “is a plumb line, a guideline, a rule of thumb for action, nothing more.”¹⁸ Further,

he states, “the most pacific ethics has to negotiate with violence and war. Levinas gives us an ethics with dirty hands, not some angelic abstraction from the political realm, as some contend.”¹⁹

If infinite responsibility is to be prescriptive, then how do I respond to every other and the endless needs of each? The self is limited. Indeed, the usual meanings of many of Levinas’s terms ratify this assessment of inadequacy: restless, obsessed, accused, hostage, passive, persecuted. While Levinas states that the “proximity of the neighbor in its trauma . . . exalts and elevates me,”²⁰ it is notable that he uses the singular other in this sentence. Consider the personal toll of unceasingly responding to multitudinous others.

I claim that what is consistent with Levinas’s philosophy is that *all* praxis, *all* interpersonal behavior, *all* language, regardless of how brutal, is the result of being thrown into the world of finitude by an infinite demand. His phenomenology (or quasi-phenomenology) is of the impetus of the ethical élan. How it should become praxis is political judgment.

But Levinas clearly does not equate all systems of morality and indicates that moral systems can become unhinged from their ordinary ground. He says that if “the moral-political order totally relinquishes its ethical foundation, it must accept all forms of society including the fascist or totalitarian. . . . The state is usually better than anarchy – but not always.”²¹ Such a statement, however, leads into a quandary that I will explore more toward the end of this paper, the question of whether Levinas makes this claim based in his philosophy or his politics. The two are not necessarily compatible, and if we rely on his political assessment to guide us, we might just as well dump the entire philosophy as a foundation for praxis. It is a leap to go from a phenomenology of the ethical base of subjectivity to advocating how it should be translated into a moral praxis.

Nonetheless, from Levinas's viewpoint, any moral-political systems which have pulled away from the ethical may - in the name of responsibility (which is infinite) - need to be challenged. In every moral system, it is important to return to its source. Hansel notes that for Levinas, "[j]ustice ... must constantly perfect itself, doubt itself, attenuate its rigors." "[J]ustice... needs to be brought back to its point of origin ... moderated by a final goodness. Ethics yields its place to politics but reappears in the last instance."²² So ethics *must*, in its infinite responsibility to more than one other, move into the ontological realm of system, justice, and apportionment, but *should* return to its roots to check itself.²³ I will use this standard to assess the ethicists I present.

III. *Fletcher*

In 1966, a couple of years before I started college, Joseph Fletcher published a book entitled Situation Ethics: The New Morality.²⁴ An Episcopal priest and professor at Episcopal Divinity School, he later became the first professor of medical ethics at the University of Virginia. Fletcher founded a morality on certain absolutes that are reminiscent of Levinas. Situation ethics, he states, rejects "all 'revealed' norms or laws but the one command - to love God in the neighbor." "Only the commitment to love is categorically good."²⁵ In his assessment:

*Christian situation ethics has only one norm or principle or law . . . 'love' - the agapē of the summary commandment to love God and the neighbor. Everything else without exception, all laws and rules and principles and ideals and norms, are only contingent, only valid if they happen to serve love in any situation.*²⁶

Agapē, the Greek term used by early Christians to refer to the self-sacrificial love of God for humanity, is the love to be emulated.²⁷

While there are certainly differences between Levinas's and Fletcher's foundations, there are great similarities as well. Levinas emphasizes love, love without concupiscence - without

lust - throughout his discussions of the an-archic source of ethics.²⁸ He stresses that “love without reward is valuable”²⁹ and “[p]hilosophy is the wisdom of love at the service of love.”³⁰ “Love your neighbor,” he says; “all that is yourself; this work is yourself; this love is yourself.”³¹ “God is the commandment of love... God is the commandment to love. God is the one who says that one must love the other.”³² Levinas, rather than using *agapē*, uses the Hebrew *hesed* (frequently translated as “loving kindness”) to explain the relationship between love and *tsedek* (justice or righteousness).³³ Fletcher’s *agapēic* foundation of morality is arguably close enough to that of Levinas that his approach of moving from ethical impetus to praxis should be of interest.

Fletcher lays out the approach through a series of propositions:

1. “Only one ‘thing’ is intrinsically good; namely, love: nothing else at all.”³⁴
2. “The ruling norm of Christian decision is love: nothing else.”³⁵
3. “Love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed: nothing else.”³⁶
4. “Love wills the neighbor’s good whether we like him or not.”³⁷
5. “Only the end justifies the means: nothing else.”³⁸
6. “Love’s decisions are made situationally, not prescriptively.”³⁹

He proposes to modify the utilitarian hedonic calculus, but rather than calculating the amount of pleasure and pain that results from an action, he proposes an *agapēic* calculus that would determine the “greatest amount of neighbor welfare for the largest number of neighbors possible.”⁴⁰ Love is determined – presumably – by the number of people affected by a decision, and all in all, all people are equal. However, a person who might be more valuable in helping others has more priority than one who does not. In choosing who to carry out of a burning building, “if the choice is between your own father and a medical genius who has discovered a cure for a common fatal disease, you carry out the genius if you understand *agapē*.”⁴¹ Love is obligated to “calculate both the immediate and the remote consequences of its decisions.”⁴²

Fletcher closes his book with some moral situations for us to consider. A woman told

him an American intelligence agency wanted her to have sex with an enemy spy, a married man, so that he could be blackmailed, a case of “patriotic prostitution and personal integrity.”⁴³ He wrote of a friend who had been diagnosed with a degenerative disease; expensive pills could retard the disease for as much as three years, but not taking the pharmaceuticals would result in his death within three years. His friend had a life insurance policy that would pay off with sufficient funds to support his wife and children if he died within a few months, but the company would surely cancel it if he lived past the date of renewal. The moral question was whether to forego medication so that his family would be provided for.⁴⁴ Fletcher’s final moral dilemma for us to consider is the question of the bombing of Hiroshima.⁴⁵

Moving away from such scenarios, we have an example of the real ethical advice that Fletcher gave in an article entitled “The Right to Die” published in The Atlantic Monthly in 1968.⁴⁶ The situation involved the birth of a baby with Down’s syndrome. The first part of the article, written by the baby’s father, relates how he was told after the diagnosis that typically parents make one of two choices, to take such children home or to institutionalize them. Both parents decided to place the child in a private sanatorium where children were “kept warm, fed, and sheltered. Nothing more.” The children were not immunized, provided oxygen, or provided any other supportive measures. The boy died of heart failure and jaundice shortly after admission. The father writes, “I believe now is the time for a sane and civilized and humane approach to euthanasia.”

Fletcher’s part of the article discussed his agreement with the father that euthanasia needed to become part of a societal discussion. He explains that passive euthanasia was the method used with the infant, and he argues in favor of active euthanasia. Fletcher states, “The only serious ethical question about means and ends is, ‘Is the flame worth the candle?’ Is the cost

of the necessary means proportionate to the value of the end sought? Is the payoff worth the input?"⁴⁷ Further, he states:

People in the [parents'] situation have no reason to feel guilty about putting a Down's syndrome baby away, whether it's "put away" in the sense of hidden in a sanitarium or in a more responsible lethal sense. It is sad; yes. Dreadful. But it carries no guilt. True guilt arises only from an offense against a person, and a Down's is not a person. . . . Guilt over a decision to end an idiocy would be a false guilt, and probably unconsciously a form of psychic masochism. There is far more reason for real guilt in keeping alive a Down's or other kind of idiot, out of a false idea of obligation or duty, while at the same time feeling no obligation at all to save that money and emotion for a living, learning child.⁴⁸

Clearly, Fletcher gives lip service to the infinite demand of love, and he makes pronouncements as though he is omniscient, not limited in knowledge or wisdom. It is significant that four of his initial propositions end with the words, "nothing else," that he judges a person with Down's as a non-person (note how general this is for a situational ethic), and that he states that the boy was "kept warm, fed, and sheltered" by the institution: "Nothing more." One is reminded of the Romanian orphanages where caretakers also kept children warm, fed, and sheltered but did not hold or bond with them, a situation that significantly affected how the children developed.⁴⁹ One is also reminded of the orphanage studies by René Spitz and the anaclitic depression that infants suffer after being taken from parents.⁵⁰ In other words, there is the strong possibility that for some of these institutionalized children, if they had been given "something more," their humanness might have become apparent.

I have previously argued that – from a Levinasian standpoint - the "useless" emotional states of guilt, worry, and grief are evidence of the other-directedness of subjectivity and are hallmarks of the human, evidence of a taking on of responsibility that does not benefit the self.⁵¹ Fletcher throws away the human meaning of guilt and writes it off as "psychic masochism," pathologizing and trivializing an important territory of human existence. Fletcher emphasizes that each ethical decision is situational and that every situation is different, but he contradicts

himself with general assertions such as “a Down's is not a person,” a pronouncement that flies in the faces of those persons with the syndrome who speak, work, love, play, and show all the indicators of being people.

Fletcher's insistence on adequation is facilitated by his notion of temporality. For Fletcher, love “is” the impetus of ethical action and “is” justice. For Levinas, however, the impetus of ethical action, whether it is the “Desire” for the Other, the “Good,” the “saying,” the “Third,” subjectivity, the “Infinite,” “anarchic responsibility,” “obsession,” or one of myriad descriptive terms for how one is moved to act for justice – all are not in the present, Being, now. The other draws us into the future, and subjectivity is in an immemorial past; past and future are the only parts of time that can “hold” infinity. For Levinas, love and justice are bound tightly but are not equivalent.⁵² The ethical impetus “is” not justice; the latter both derives from the former and attempts to move toward the former. We are always subjected to the fact that our finite actions are not all that is obligated. Fletcher's phrases, “nothing else” and “nothing more” serve to shelter him from responsibility and limit obligation. Such artificial constraints on one's infinite obligations seem to be intended to guard the one who makes moral decisions, not provide the most love to the most people.

IV. Niebuhr

Reinhold Niebuhr was born in Missouri to a German Evangelical minister's family. He, one brother, Helmut Richard (H. Richard), and a sister, Hulda, went on to become Christian academic educators and theologian-ethicists. Both Reinhold and H. Richard's writings were significantly influential - influential beyond seminaries and universities, during the mid-part of the Twentieth Century, a different cultural time in American history when theology – beyond the simplistic and omnipresent vocal fundamentalism of today - was part of the national discourse.

In 1948, Reinhold's visage was displayed on the cover of *Time Magazine*.⁵³ In 1964, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In this day and age, he is likely best known for his composition of the Serenity Prayer, adopted by the 12-step movements and itself illustrative of problems inherent in moral action.⁵⁴ Admiration for and influence by Niebuhr has been expressed by such varied notables as Martin Luther King, Jr., Jimmy Carter, Barack Obama, Arthur Schlesinger, George Kennan, John McCain, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Hans Morgenthau.⁵⁵

Introducing the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr is complicated by a common dilemma involving discussing a person's work, the fact that – through their lives - people change their minds and opinions. However, despite those alterations in ideas, Niebuhr consistently maintained a thoughtful and reflective approach to speaking and writing his belief. Unlike Fletcher, he was nuanced in his ideas and did not claim that the best course was the ideal course and that the best one can do leaves one guiltless. Niebuhr's published works emphasize real historical and political dimensions of ethics.

His intellectual history is one of significant shifts in approaches toward politics. In the early part of the Twentieth Century, Niebuhr was a strong advocate for U.S. involvement in World War I. After the Versailles agreement⁵⁶ and what he saw as a diminution of Wilsonian ideals, he moved into pacifism and support for the social gospel,⁵⁷ a movement that emphasized applying Christian ethics to societal problems, with the intention of bringing the Kingdom of God to Earth. He railed against what he believed to be the exploitive manner in which Henry Ford treated his workers and his use of a manufactured innocent Christian piety to maintain power.⁵⁸ In the 1930s, his pacifism moderated, his support for the social gospel waned, and he became a socialist. He critiqued the U.S., and he critiqued himself.⁵⁹ He became a proponent of

what has been called neo-orthodoxy, a movement that among other things emphasized a transcendental God.⁶⁰ This theological stance remained for the rest of his life. The notion of a “distant” God matched his assessment of the human dilemma.

As his theology changed, so did his approach to war. While he criticized Roosevelt’s military buildup, he argued that American intervention in foreign conflicts might be necessary. In a fascinating 1932 issue of *Christian Century*, he – a professor of Christian ethics at Union Theological Seminary, and his brother, H. Richard – a Yale professor of Christian ethics, debated about what to do in light of the Japanese invasion of China. H. Richard argued for nonintervention in an article entitled “The Grace of Doing Nothing,” stating that because of the “real” God, the “actual processes of history will inevitably and really bring a different kind of world with lasting peace.”⁶¹ Reinhold Niebuhr’s rebuttal, “Must We Do Nothing?” stated that U.S. complicity helped to create a Japan “which expresses itself in terms of materialistic imperialism,” and “we must try to dissuade Japan from her military venture, but must use coercion to frustrate her designs if necessary” In a crucial summary of the approach he would take to ethics for the rest of his life, he stated:

I am forced to admit that I am unable to construct an adequate social ethic out of a pure love ethic. I cannot abandon the pure love ideal because anything which falls short of it is less than the ideal. But I cannot use it fully if I want to assume a responsible attitude toward the problems of society. . . . [A]s long as the world of man remains a place where nature and God, the real and the ideal, meet, human progress will depend upon the judicious use of the forces of nature in the service of the ideal.⁶²

Consistent with this, Niebuhr’s subsequent changes were based upon pragmatic ways by which the best course could be navigated, with an understanding that perfection would never arise. In the 1940s he quit socialism and became a strong advocate for intervention into the war in Europe. He founded a journal to combat Christian pacifism, *Christianity and Crisis*, and – in the first issue – stated its purpose, that “there are historic situations in which refusal to defend the

inheritance of a civilization, however imperfect, against tyranny and aggression may result in consequences even worse than war.”⁶³ During the Cold War, he became a supporter of Soviet containment (a strong influence on George Kennan) and nuclear deterrence,⁶⁴ but also in the 1950s became a critic of the degree to which America boosted its military and ideology in light of the Cold War. In the 1960s he initially supported U.S. involvement in Vietnam, but in 1966 became a critic of the war on both pragmatic and moral grounds.⁶⁵

In Niebuhr’s 1932 book, Moral Man and Immoral Society,⁶⁶ he documented his break with the social gospel movement and also contended that the moral force is strongest at the level of the individual. Individual persons are motivated to be other-directed, but this altruism becomes diluted and unfulfilled as collective dynamics unfold. At the national level, for a number of reasons, the state attenuates the selfless ethical impetus of the individuals that compose it. Nation-states act in their own selfish interest.⁶⁷ Ethical individuals are punished, and “nations crucify their moral rebels with their criminals upon the same Golgotha....”⁶⁸ Loyalty to the nation, patriotism, is a “high form of altruism when compared with lesser loyalties and more parochial interests” but the “paradox is that patriotism transmutes individual unselfishness into national egoism.”⁶⁹ Moral discourse at the national level is afflicted with hypocrisy used to disguise state selfishness. The dishonesty of the nation “is a necessity of political policy if the nation is to gain the full benefit of the individual....”⁷⁰

Within the nation, privileged classes develop their own hypocrisy and self-deception. They “assume that their privileges are the just payments with which society rewards specially useful or meritorious functions.”⁷¹ It is “the habit of privileged groups to deny the oppressed classes every opportunity for the cultivation of innate capacities and then to accuse them of lacking what they have been denied the right to acquire.”⁷² A problem that arises from the

disparity between the classes is that to bring about equality results in instability. “No society has ever achieved peace without incorporating injustice into its harmony. Those who would eliminate the injustice are therefore always placed at the moral disadvantage of imperiling its peace.”⁷³

Violent revolution is one way of attempting to achieve justice and equality. But obtaining sufficient unity among the various classes is one impediment to such a means. Another is the fact that a successful revolution requires a strong central political force, which will likely be a source of its own injustice and inequality.⁷⁴ Attempting to achieve equality through democratic means has its own pitfalls. For example, faith in education as the engine that will drive reform is unfounded. “It would be pleasant to believe that the intelligence of the general community could be raised to such a height that the irrational injustices of society would be eliminated. But unfortunately there is no such general community.”⁷⁵

Niebuhr’s consideration of the dilemma of justice leads him to conclude that we must do a constant balancing act in order to achieve the best we can. There is no escape from the self-interest of groups. The ethical impetus stems from the selfless individual, but “[t]here is not enough imagination in any social group to render it amenable to the influence of pure love.”⁷⁶

Niebuhr consistently separated the demand for justice – what Levinas terms “ethics” – from the actual and messy process of fumbling for the most justice possible. While not equivalent to Levinas’s philosophy, the resemblances are clear. In this volume, Niebuhr did not discuss the origin of the individual’s ability to be selfless, but he emphasized that it was at the individual level that the ethical arises. From there, selflessness dissipates as the forces for justice confront social forces of cohesion, self-interest, and hypocrisy. Love is not justice, but in Niebuhr’s view, it continues to push for as much justice as it can. But such movement will result

in perpetrating further injustice⁷⁷ All actions, whether intended to be good, have unintended consequences. In The Irony of American History, Niebuhr said, “[P]ower cannot be wielded without guilt....”⁷⁸ In an essay that addressed a world threatened by nuclear war, he said, “[W]e know that we cannot do good without also doing evil.”⁷⁹

As noted, despite the significant theological and methodological differences between Niebuhr and Levinas, there are commonalities. Returning to the earlier commentary on Levinas by Hansel (“Ethics yields its place to politics but reappears in the last instance”), Niebuhr’s theology of forgiveness addresses the issue of the return. Where Fletcher seems to make a decision and then move on without looking back, Niebuhr’s multiple revisions and increased focus had him repeatedly review earlier positions he had taken. We cannot hope to do things perfectly, he maintained, but we must persist in attempting to do the best we can. And we count on God’s grace to forgive us for getting things wrong and getting things partly wrong. Still, we must continue to do what we can.⁸⁰ But if we are to accept that the quest for – the demand for – perfection translates into the best for the most, then how do we determine the most? It is difficult to find a calculus with Niebuhr, especially knowing that we are dealing with infinite responsibility.

The 1970 Nobel Peace Prize was given to Norman Borlaug, the creator of the “Green Revolution” that increased food production substantially starting in the 1960s. Borlaug has been cited as saving a billion human lives, since his work assisted in staving off predicted famines and starvation in an increasingly populated world.⁸¹ In the early 1990s, Daniel Quinn published a novel entitled Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit.⁸² A clear message in the book is that feeding the world contributes to increasing populations. The cross-breeding of grains and monocultural agriculture that Borlaug promoted is said to contribute to increasing stress upon the

planetary ecosystem and promoting the use of fossil fuels. Contrasting the approaches taken by Borlaug and Quinn illustrates one problem with infinite obligation. Simplistically, if we did not feed the world, increase its standard of living, contribute to the health of the living billions, would we benefit far more people who are yet unborn? What is the best course? If we apply a finite criterion, such as the best for the most *who are currently alive*, the course becomes clearer. But if I am responsible for everyone and everything, including the unborn, including everything – the universe - what do I do?

Niebuhr believed that we need to be immersed in current history and politics in order to steer the best course. He chose to advocate for intervention in the war in Europe, containment of the Soviet Union, and nuclear armaments - all to benefit the most people. But maybe pacifism in the face of evil will eventually have a cumulative effect on how people of the future act and behave, such that it would be a better course to not take up arms. In moral choices, we make bets at the roulette wheel, motivated by infinite responsibility but lacking infinite knowledge. The odds for the outcomes are not clear, the future too contingent. So we end up with the familiar arguments in the marketplace of moral ideas. Is it better that we intervene? Will “shock and awe” bring “enduring freedom”? One fears that moral choices might become aesthetic choices, biased by our limitations.

V. *Ad Hominem*

There is a hagiographic undercurrent in Levinas study. I understand that the unique philosophical conception of Levinas, the “otherwise than being” that provides the move into justice and morality, is of great interest to philosophers and ethicists. I am one of those who have been indelibly influenced by his thought. Earlier I introduced the question regarding the compatibility of Levinas’s philosophy and his politics. It is common to look to Levinas as

though his phenomenology, Talmudic meditations, interview responses, and essays on contemporary Jewish life are all part and parcel of the same inspired approach to the world, as though what he had to say in his various writings all stem from his phenomenology.

Over the last twenty years or so, there have been various controversies regarding things that Levinas said in writing or in interviews and the interpretations of those statements as flying in the face of the way that he has been interpreted in the past. My intention here is to mention a few of these in the context of challenging the way that we practitioners have approached Levinas. Emmanuel Levinas is not known for simple language, something that incessantly interferes with understanding and which fosters multiple interpretations.⁸³ Additionally, although he admits that his philosophical and “confessional” genres have the “same source of inspiration,” he draws “a line of demarcation between them as distinct methods of exegesis, as separate languages.” He said, “I would never . . . introduce a Talmudic or biblical verse into one of my philosophical texts to try to prove or justify a phenomenological argument.”^{84,85} Levinas’s “confessional” texts include a broad range of commentary on Talmud, Israel’s status in the world, the nature of humanity in non-Western cultures, and other observations and interpretations. He frequently uses the same language in his philosophy and in his other genres.

For example, in 1982, after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, there was a massacre of Palestinians in a neighborhood and adjacent refugee camp (700 to 800 victims according to Israel, 2000 to 3500, according to Palestinian sources). The murders, carried out by Phalangist militias authorized by Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon to enter the areas, included not only the intended Palestine Liberation Organization militants, but also women, children, and other men.⁸⁶ In a radio interview shortly after, Levinas was asked about the massacre by Solomon Malka, a former student of his (who authored his biography⁸⁷), and Alain Finkielkraut (who

authored The Wisdom of Love).⁸⁸ While much of what Levinas said about the incident was oblique, what led to controversy was the following exchange. Malka stated: “Emmanuel Levinas, you are the philosopher of the “other.” Isn’t history, isn’t politics the very site of the encounter with the “other,” and for the Israeli, isn’t the “other” above all the Palestinian?”

Levinas responded:

My definition of the other is completely different. The other is the neighbor, who is not necessarily kin, but who can be.” And in that sense, if you’re for the other, you’re for the neighbor. But if your neighbor attacks another neighbor or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least then we are faced with the problem of knowing who is right and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust.⁸⁹

In other words, an other is the person who comes from on high to draw me into responsibility, but who must be a potential family member? And alterity takes on a different character? Does this mean that it no longer calls me into responsibility? Does the enemy not have a face?

To which of Levinas’s genres does this belong? Caygill characterized his response as “chilling” and states that “it opens a wound in his whole œuvre.”⁹⁰ Tahmasebi-Birgani, in Emmanuel Levinas and the Politics of Non-Violence, sees no problem in what he said⁹¹ and continues in her book to show commonalities between Levinas and Gandhi. Lin Ma, a Chinese philosopher, puts this response in a context of Levinas’s belief that only “from Judaism is derived the idea of the other man.”⁹² Are Levinas’s comments, which carry the terminology and seriousness of his philosophical works, philosophical? Are they phenomenological, i.e., grounded in bracketed experience? Are they political? How do we differentiate Levinas’s philosophy and/or unique phenomenology from his other works, and, if I may, his prejudices?

In a 1986 interview, Levinas was asked about structuralism and Levi-Strauss. He stated: “But my reaction is primarily - it is worse I know than primitive – can one compare the scientific

intellect of Einstein with the savage mind (*la Pensée sauvage*)?” Bernasconi interpreted

Levinas’s comment:

This gesture, which calls itself primitive while dismissing what it truly regards to be primitive, is, of course, another way in which some Europeans retain their sense of superiority, thereby allowing themselves a sense of cultural mastery.⁹³

Bernasconi brought forth another set of statements of Levinas, what he termed “the most shocking indication of Levinas’s failure to appreciate other cultures and his privileging of the Greek and Judaic at their expense”:

[Levinas said] “I always say – but in private – that the Greeks and the Bible are all that is serious in humanity. Everything else is dancing.” [Levinas] added that this was true the world over, and, as if he had not already said enough, he uttered the phrase that too often in the history of the last two centuries has served to confirm what it denies: “this is not racism...” These remarks were not a momentary aberration. Another interview contains these lines: “I often say, although it is a dangerous thing to say publicly, that humanity consists of the Bible and the Greeks. All the rest can be translated: all the rest – all the exotic – is dance.”⁹⁴

In the interview, Levinas was asked about his notion that “all the rest . . . is dance.” He talked about South African people, who – he said - dance instead of cry when they bury their dead. In a profound irony, Lin Ma, the Chinese philosopher writes:

In these comments, Levinas identifies humanity with the Bible and the Greeks, which alone represent spiritual seriousness. In contrast, African civilization, as a dancing civilization, is superficial and frivolous. There is no need to attach importance to traditions outside of the Bible and the Greeks. Levinas seems to be ignorant of the fact that there is a lot of dancing in Christian churches, if the congregation is black, in Africa, America, and Europe.⁹⁵

Simon Critchley’s response to Levinas’s “racist” comment about non-Europeans, the exotic, as “dance,” is “*let’s dance*, let’s dance all night, let’s party hearty.”⁹⁶ And Lin Ma concluded her article: “Insofar as Levinas gives traditions ‘without Sacred History’ any thought, his solution is to ‘generously’ provide them with meanings *within* and *by* the Sacred Tradition.”⁹⁷

If we look to the man for the political implications of his philosophy, we are likely to privilege Christian over pagan, West over East, Jew over Arab, and white over black or brown. If Levinas's philosophy, his quasi-phenomenology, is to be the guide - rather than his unexpected Eurocentricism and separation of people into two groups, Greek-Jew and exotic - it is important to make clear demarcations between his philosophy and his other pronouncements.

But his philosophy also needs to be reexamined. McGettigan asserts that Levinas's philosophy is not separate from his other works, that they are all imbued with a fear of "a valorization of alterity that would not orient around the transcendence resulting from 'Sacred History' distilled into ideas." He argues that Levinas's philosophy rests on "shaky sources" and "evinces the easy, armchair belief in superiority which is constitutive of prejudice and discrimination...."⁹⁸

It is time for us, time for you, to follow in Al Lingis's footsteps, to perform the ethical phenomenologies necessary to see the limits of Levinas's hermeneutics, to confirm or disconfirm, rather than continually cite him as textual support for sermonic lessons. Two years ago at this gathering I suggested it was time to question Levinas's philosophical monotheism, to examine for ourselves the limits of our subjective response to the other person, animals, and the world. I also argued that Levinas was not candid when he disavowed the biblical source for his cherished concept, the Face.⁹⁹ Levinas had an interpretive matrix, a hermeneutic that includes the literary and religious background he describes in the different versions of *Signature*,¹⁰⁰ the anti-Semitism he endured even in his studies in Germany, the war, his imprisonment, the murder of his parents and siblings, the shelter provided to his wife and daughter by French monks, the struggle to reconcile his admiration of Being and Time with Heidegger's Nazism, and the years of learning Talmud from Chouchani. And Levinas's phenomenology of subjectivity requires that the call to more than one other be from a "He," an *ille*, one God who comes to mind, a single

God “not contaminated by Being.”¹⁰¹ How much of this philosophical monotheistic move to enshrine illeity is influenced by his religious monotheism? How much of his desire to translate Hebrew into Greek guided and preceded his phenomenological investigations?

It is time to separate the man from the philosophy, to move away from a prophet model. We need a philosophy that can inform without the question of a potentially racist praxis of privilege. It is time to move into ethical phenomenologies from a variety of standpoints, cultures, identities. Circa 1936, Benjamin Whorf wrote a frequently misunderstood article on the Native American Hopi language. Of significance here is his attention to metaphysics embedded in languages. “Every language contains terms that have come to attain cosmic scope of reference, that crystallize in themselves the basic postulates of an unformulated philosophy, in which is couched the thought of a people, a culture, a civilization, even of an era. Such are our words reality, substance, matter, cause, and . . . space, time, past, present, future.” For the Hopi, he states, “we should probably speak of the subjective realm as the realm of *hope* or *hoping*. Such a term in Hopi is the word most translated *hope* – *tunátya* – *it is in the action of hoping, it hopes, it is hoped for, it thinks or is thought of with hope.*”¹⁰² What would a phenomenology of ethics be from this interpretive matrix, this hopeful non-Hebrew/non-European culture? (Maybe we would have alternatives to Heidegger’s *es gibt* and Levinas’s *il y a*.) I do not accept that it is only from the Bible and sporadic Western philosophers that people learn to acknowledge the other person - or obtain the language to describe recognition of the other person. I am with Simon Critchley: *let’s dance*, let’s dance all night, let’s party hearty! Let us learn of other depths, other humanness, other sacred histories. Let us translate exotica into Hebrew, Greek, English, French - and our other colonial languages, attempting to be humble as we do so.¹⁰³

VI. *Reprise: Burning Children and the Tortured Innocent*

When Phan Ti Kim Phúc was nine years old, she fled a napalm aerial attack by South Vietnamese planes that fatally burned two of her cousins. She tore off her flaming clothes and ran naked down the road, yelling “too hot, too hot.” A famous Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of her was taken by Nick Ut just before he put her and other children in a jeep and drove them to a hospital.¹⁰⁴ None of the ethicists I have mentioned (Fletcher, Niebuhr, or Levinas) would seem to challenge the propriety of burning children in the pursuit of what has been calculated as a greater good. They might debate the propriety of the specific conflict, as Niebuhr opposed the Vietnam War, but if the attack had been in Hamburg during World War II, Phúc would have been regrettable collateral damage.¹⁰⁵

Is anything permissible if it is outweighed in some way by the good – or better – situation it leaves others in? Is it all right to condone the rape of young boys by Afghan police and military commanders if it engenders cooperation between them and the U.S. military?¹⁰⁶ Is it ok to leave innocent prisoners in Guantanamo Bay? In an interview last year, Dick Cheney was asked about the 25% of the Guantanamo detainees who turned out to be innocent of participation in conflict against U.S. forces: “You’re okay with that margin of error?” Cheney’s response was, “I have no problem as long as we achieve our objective.”¹⁰⁷

End Notes

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- ¹ Paper given at the *Psychology for the Other Seminar*, Seattle University, November 14, 2015.
- ² Dean of Instruction, Front Range Community College, Longmont, Colorado 80502. Email: drh.email@yahoo.com or david.harrington@frontrange.edu.
- ³ Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust," in Eva Fleischer, ed., *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1977, p. 23.
- ⁴ James, William. "The moral philosopher and the moral life." *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy: Human Immortality*. New York: Dover Publications, 1956, p. 188.
- ⁵ Haraz Ghanbari, "Torture, American-style: The role of money in interrogations," *Vanity Fair*, July 14, 2015. <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2015/07/torture-american-style-hoffman-report>
- ⁶ "Terror, torture and psychology: How America's psychologists ended up endorsing torture," *The Economist*, July 28, 2015. <http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracynamerica/2015/07/terror-torture-and-psychology>
- ⁷ Connor Adams Sheets, "CIA torture report poll: Half of Americans say enhanced interrogation was 'justified,'" *International Business Times*, December 15, 2014. <http://www.ibtimes.com/cia-torture-report-poll-half-americans-say-enhanced-interrogation-was-justified-1758576>; and CBS News Poll: Torture and Reaction to the Senate Intelligence Report, December 11-14, 2014. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/250168165/CBS-News-Poll-Senate-Torture-Report#download>
- ⁸ The argument regarding torture frequently pits morality against efficacy. John McCain, who was tortured during the Viet Nam War, opposes torture on moral grounds: "Most of all, I know the use of torture compromises that which most distinguishes us from our enemies — our belief that all people, even captured enemies, possess basic human rights, which are protected by international conventions the U.S. not only joined, but for the most part authored." <http://www.startribune.com/the-cia-report-we-are-better-than-this/285435121/> Diane Feinstein attacked U.S. use of torture also on the grounds that it was ineffective: See <http://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases?ID=f3271910-3fad-40a5-9d98-93450e0090aa>
- ⁹ E.g., <http://www.asiantribune.com/node/62242>, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-greenwald/us-drone-strikes-are-caus_b_2224627.html
- ¹⁰ "Why did America kill my mother?" *Huffington Post*, October 29, 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/29/pakistani-drone-victim-congress_n_4171975.html
- ¹¹ See Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*, New York: Harper & Row, 1975, for a plotless short story based upon James's quotation.
- ¹² Matthew 5:48, King James Version.
- ¹³ Fyodor Dostoyevsky. (1957.) *The Brothers Karamazov* (Constance Garnett, Trans.). New York: New American Library, p. 264. Cited in George Kunz, (1998). *The Paradox of Power and Weakness*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, p. 11.
- ¹⁴ "The foundation of consciousness is justice." Emmanuel Levinas. *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence* (Alphonso Lingis, Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981, p. 160.
- ¹⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo* (Richard A. Cohen, trans.), Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985, p. 90.
- ¹⁶ "It is true that Ethics, in Levinas's sense, is an Ethics without law and without concept, which maintains its non-violent purity only before being determined as concepts and laws. This is not an objection: let us not forget that Levinas does not seek to propose laws or moral rules, does not seek to determine a morality, but rather the essence

of the ethical relation in general. But as this determination does not offer itself as a theory of Ethics, in question then, is an Ethics of Ethics. In this case, it is perhaps serious that this Ethics of Ethics can occasion neither a determined ethics nor determined laws without negating and forgetting itself.” Jacques Derrida, “Violence and Metaphysics: An essay on the thought of Emmanuel Levinas,” Writing and Difference (Alan Bass, Trans.) London: Routledge, p. 138.

¹⁷ Judith Butler, “Precarious Life,” in Peter Atterton & Matthew Calarco (Eds.), Radicalizing Levinas, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010, p. 7.

¹⁸ Simon Critchley, The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology, Brooklyn NY: Verso, 2012, p. 225.

¹⁹ The Faith of the Faithless, p. 225.

²⁰ Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence, p. 124.

²¹ Richard Kearney, “Ethics of the Infinite,” Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, p. 66.

²² Georges Hansel, “Ethics and Politics in the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas,” in Joëlle Hansel (Ed.), Levinas in Jerusalem: Phenomenology, Ethics, Politics, Aesthetics, Amsterdam Studies in Jewish Philosophy, 14, Springer, 2009, p. 73.

²³ In terms of the political, it is the “liberal State and democracy” that should be preferred. “Democracy is superior because it has internal mechanisms of correction, improvement, and checks on its own legislation.” *Ethics and Politics in the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas*, p. 74.

²⁴ Joseph Fletcher, Situation Ethics: The New Morality, Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 1966.

²⁵ Situation Ethics, p. 26.

²⁶ Situation Ethics, p. 30.

²⁷ At the time of Fletcher’s writing, a great deal of discussion in Anglo-American Christian groups was devoted to the discussion of *agapē* and differentiation of it from other forms of love, such as *eros* and *philia*. Both of these latter forms – though important to human communal life - contain rewards for the self, whereas *agapē* was seen to remain purely other-directed. See, for example, C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves, New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1960.

²⁸ Tamara Wright, Peter Hughes, & Alison Ainley, “The Paradox of Morality: An Interview with Emmanuel Levinas,” in Robert Bernasconi & David Wood (Eds.), The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other, Routledge, 1988, p. 174.

²⁹ *The Paradox of Morality*, p. 175-176.

³⁰ Otherwise Than Being, p. 162.

³¹ Emmanuel Levinas, Of God Who Comes to Mind (Bettina Bergo, Trans.), Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 91.

³² *The Paradox of Morality*, p. 175-176.

³³ Salomon Malka, “Entretien de Emmanuel Lévinas,” Lire Lévinas, Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1984, p. 111.

³⁴ Situation Ethics, p. 57.

³⁵ Situation Ethics, p. 69.

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- ³⁶ Situation Ethics, p. 87.
- ³⁷ Situation Ethics, p. 103.
- ³⁸ Situation Ethics, p. 120.
- ³⁹ Situation Ethics, p. 134.
- ⁴⁰ Situation Ethics, p. 95.
- ⁴¹ Situation Ethics, p. 115.
- ⁴² Situation Ethics, p. 98.
- ⁴³ Situation Ethics, p. 164.
- ⁴⁴ Situation Ethics, p. 166.
- ⁴⁵ Situation Ethics, p. 167-168.
- ⁴⁶ Bernard Bard & Joseph Fletcher, "The Right to Die," The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 221, April 1968, p. 59-64. Available <http://www.riverbendds.org/index.htm?page=timeline.html>
- ⁴⁷ *The Right to Die*.
- ⁴⁸ *The Right to Die*.
- ⁴⁹ Cf. Jon Hamilton, "Orphans' Lonely Beginnings Reveal How Parents Shape A Child's Brain," National Public Radio, February 24, 2014. <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2014/02/20/280237833/orphans-lonely-beginnings-reveal-how-parents-shape-a-childs-brain>
- ⁵⁰ René Spitz, Psychogenic Diseases in Infancy: An Attempt at Their Classification (Film), Psychoanalytic Research Project on Problems of Infancy, New York University Film Library, 1952. https://ia801406.us.archive.org/26/items/PsychogenicD/PsychogenicD_512kb.mp4
- ⁵¹ David R. Harrington, "A Levinasian Psychology? Perhaps..." Edwin E. Gantt & Richard N. Williams. Psychology for the Other: Levinas, Ethics and the Practice of Psychology, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002, p. 222-224.
- ⁵² "In no way is justice a degradation of obsession, a degeneration of the for-the-other, a diminution, a limitation of archaic responsibility, a neutralization of the glory of the Infinite...." Otherwise Than Being, p. 159.
- ⁵³ <http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19480308,00.html>
- ⁵⁴ The standard version of the prayer is "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." The earliest version appears to be a statement that Niebuhr wrote in 1932 and used in various prayers after: "The victorious man in the day of crisis is the man who has the serenity to accept what he cannot help and the courage to change what must be altered." Fred Shapiro, "I Was Wrong About the Origin of the Serenity Prayer," Huffington Post, May 15, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/15/serenity-prayer-origin_n_5331924.html
- ⁵⁵ John Blake, "How Obama's Favorite Theologian Shaped His First Year in Office," CNN, February 5, 2010. <http://www.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/02/05/Obama.theologian/> "Reinhold Niebuhr," Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reinhold_Niebuhr

⁵⁶ Ronald Stone, Professor Reinhold Niebuhr: A Mentor to the Twentieth Century, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992, p. 28.

⁵⁷ Richard Wightman Fox, "Reinhold Niebuhr's 'Revolution,'" *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1984, p.87.

⁵⁸ *Reinhold Niebuhr's "Revolution,"* p. 88-89.

⁵⁹ Wilfred McClay points out that a theological criticism of liberalism Niebuhr made in 1939 - "Liberalism is little more than faith in man, exemplifying that perversion of the will, that betrayal of divine trust, which is sin" - was a self-critique; McClay states, "[H]e was liberal through and through, so he was critiquing his own beliefs, his own system." "Obama's Favorite Theologian? A Short Course on Reinhold Niebuhr," *Pew Research*, June 26, 2009) <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/05/04/obamas-favorite-theologian-a-short-course-on-reinhold-niebuhr/>

⁶⁰ "Niebuhr countered that the orthodox 'myth' of God as creator, judge, and redeemer was a superior notion in several respects. Only a distant creator could spark a never-ending quest for justice: If all men were creatures of the same creator, they all deserved equal treatment. Only an exacting judge could serve as an ultimate vantage point from which the quest for justice could be held under constant criticism. Only a forgiving redeemer could supply the grace to persevere in moments of despair." *Reinhold Niebuhr's 'Revolution,'* p. 92.

⁶¹ ⁶¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Grace of Doing Nothing," Richard B. Miller (Ed.), War in the Twentieth Century: Sources in Theological Ethics, Louisville KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, p. 6-11.

⁶² Reinhold Niebuhr, "Must We Do Nothing?" Richard B. Miller (Ed.), War in the Twentieth Century: Sources in Theological Ethics, p. 12-21.

⁶³ Reinhold Niebuhr, "Christian Faith and the World Crisis," *Christianity and Crisis*, February 10, 1941. <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=381>

⁶⁴ Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Atomic Bomb," Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr (D. B. Robertson, Ed.), Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962, 232-233. See also Ian E. Van Dyke, "'Serenity' in an Uncertain Age: Reinhold Niebuhr and America's Quest for Responsible Atomic Hegemony," <http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/eras/files/2015/01/Eras-162-05-Van-Dyke-Neibuhr.pdf>. See also Paul F. Boller, Memoirs of an Obscure Professor, Texas Christian University Press, 2013, in which Boller quotes a 1945 *Christianity and Crisis* article penned by Niebuhr, "Our Relations with Japan." Niebuhr confessed to "'a strange disquiet and lack of satisfaction' over victory because it was secured, or at least hastened, by the use of the atomic bomb." p. 196.

⁶⁵ Gary Dorrien, "Introduction." Reinhold Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, University of Chicago Press, 1944/2011, p. ix – x.

⁶⁶ Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932/1960.

⁶⁷ Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 84.

⁶⁸ Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 88-89.

⁶⁹ Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 89.

⁷⁰ Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 95-96.

⁷¹ Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 117.

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- ⁷² Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 118.
- ⁷³ Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 129.
- ⁷⁴ Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 169-199.
- ⁷⁵ Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 213.
- ⁷⁶ Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 272.
- ⁷⁷ Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. 241.
- ⁷⁸ The Irony of American History, p. 37.
- ⁷⁹ Reinhold Niebuhr, "Faith for a Hazardous Future," in Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics : His Political Philosophy and Its Application to Our Age as Expressed in His Writings (Harry R. Davis & Robert C. Good, Eds.), Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007, p. 338.
- ⁸⁰ It would be worthwhile to explore the commonalities and resonances within Levinas's Jewish philosophy and Niebuhr's Christian theology, including Niebuhr's approach to grace and forgiveness and Levinas's notion of "pardon." Cf. Emmanuel Levinas, Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority (Alphonso Lingis, Trans.), Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969, p. 282-285.
- ⁸¹ "Norman Borlaug," *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Borlaug
- ⁸² Daniel Quinn, Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit, New York: Bantam Books, 1992.
- ⁸³ In a 1931 article, "*Fribourg, Husserl et la phénoménologie*," he presented Husserl's phenomenology in a clear and succinct manner to those not schooled in philosophy, but he did not continue that style. Emmanuel Levinas, "*Fribourg, Husserl et la phénoménologie*," Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande 5, May 15, 1931, p. 402-414.
- ⁸⁴ Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers, p. 54.
- ⁸⁵ However, it needs to be said that while Levinas may not provide a Talmudic or biblical verse to "prove or justify" his philosophy, he *does* introduce such verses. E.g., Emmanuel Levinas, God, Death, and Time (Bettina Bergo, Trans.), Stanford University Press, 1990, pp. 268, n. 11; 270, n. 9; 282, n. 9; 283, n. 2; 284, n. 5; 285, n. 6 & 7; 288, n. 5; 290, n. 4; Otherwise Than Being, pp. 192, n. 24 & 26; 193, n. 32; 195, n. 14; 198, n. 5; 199, n. 11, 15, 16, 17, 19, & 22.
- ⁸⁶ The following year, the scandal resulted in Defense Minister Ariel Sharon's resignation and a U.N. Commission "concluded that the massacre was a form of genocide." Sabra and Shatila Massacre, *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabra_and_Shatila_massacre
- ⁸⁷ Solomon Malka, Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy (Michael Kigel & Sonja M. Embree, Trans.), Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006.
- ⁸⁸ Alain Finkielkraut, The Wisdom of Love (David Suchoff & Kevin O'Neill, Trans.), University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
- ⁸⁹ Emmanuel Levinas & Sean Hand, The Levinas Reader, Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1989, p. 294.
- ⁹⁰ Howard Caygill, Levinas & the Political, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 192..
- ⁹¹ Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani, Emmanuel Levinas and the Politics of Non-Violence, University of Toronto Press, 2014, p. 111-112.

⁹² Lin Ma, p. 606.

⁹³ Robert Bernsaconi, "Who is my Neighbor? Who is the Other?" Claire Elise Katz & Lara Trout (Eds.), Emmanuel Levinas: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers, Routledge, 2004, p. 16.

⁹⁴ *Who is my Neighbor? Who is the Other?* p. 16-17. See Raoul Mortley, French Philosophers in Conversation, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 18.

⁹⁵ Lin Ma, "All the Rest Must Be Translated: Levinas's Notion of Sense," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 2008, p. 605-606.

⁹⁶ Simon Critchley, "Five Problems in Levinas's View of Politics," Peter Atterton & Matthew Calarco (Eds.), Radicalizing Levinas, State University of New York Press, p. 44.

⁹⁷ *All the Rest Must Be Translated: Levinas's Notion of Sense*, p. 610.

⁹⁸ Andrew McGettigan, "The Philosopher's Fear of Alterity: Levinas, Europe, and Humanities 'Without Sacred History,'" *Radical Philosophy*, November/December 2006, p. 23.

⁹⁹ David R. Harrington, "Heel-Sneak, Niche-Thief, Future-Eater, and the Nature of Change (Or Zamen's Face)," *Eleventh Psychology for the Other Seminar*, Seattle University, November 16, 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, "Signature," William Canavan (Trans.), *Philosophy Today*, Spring, 1966, p. 31-33; "Signature," M.E. Petrisko (Trans.), *Research in Phenomenology*, 1978, p. 175-189; "Signature," Séan Hand (Trans.), Difficult Liberty: Essays on Judaism, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1990.

¹⁰¹ Otherwise Than Being, p. xlii.

¹⁰² Benjamin Lee Whorf, "An American Indian Model of the Universe," Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf (John B. Carroll, Stephen C. Levinson, Penny Lee, Eds.), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012, p. 30. <http://www.generalsemantics.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/articles/etc/8-1-whorf.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ "Phan Thi Kim Phúc," *Wikipedia*. The photograph's authenticity was questioned by Richard Nixon, despite his clear knowledge that pouring flaming jellied gasoline on civilian villages would result in fatal and/or debilitating burns. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phan_Thi_Kim_Phuc

¹⁰⁵ "The suffering of the innocent is one of the most terrible things in the collective enterprise of man. When, towards the end of the Second World War, we started to bomb Germans into submission, we bombed Hamburg first, the city that more anti-Nazi votes than any other German city. These anguishes are the facts of life as we find them in history." Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Providence of God," The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1986, p. 39.

¹⁰⁶ Joseph Goldstein, "U.S. Soldiers Told to Ignore Sexual Abuse of Boys by Afghan Allies," *New York Times*, September 20, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/21/world/asia/us-soldiers-told-to-ignore-afghan-allies-abuse-of-boys.html>

¹⁰⁷ *Meet the Press* transcript, December 14, 2014. <http://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/meet-press-transcript-december-14-2014-n268181>