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ALL THE REST MUST BE TRANSLATED: LÉVINAS'S NOTION OF SENSE

It is generally agreed that Lévinas's political thought has seriously weakened the appeal and force of his ethics. In the preface to his monograph *Lévinas and the Political*, Howard Caygill mentions such an event: In a radio broadcast of 1982, after the massacres in an Israel-occupied area in Lebanon, Lévinas manifested "a coolness of political judgement that verged on the chilling, an unsentimental understanding of violence and power almost worthy of Machiavelli."¹ This put him in mind of Lévinas's saying, "in alterity we can find an enemy."² Caygill felt that that was not the philosopher who has been widely known as a staunch advocate for the priority of ethical alterity. The perplexity that arose from such an experience drove him to reread Lévinas with a view of his political judgment. In one section entitled "Threatening others" in his book, Caygill deals with the few texts of Lévinas's that bear upon the relation with non-Western cultures.

Caygill does not refer to an article predating his book, that is, Robert Bernasconi's article "Who Is My Neighbor? Who Is the Other?: Questioning 'the Generosity of Western Thought.'"³ This article addresses relevant problematics in Lévinas's notion of the other and in his claim of the generosity of Western thinking with regard to understanding other traditions. Another related article is Sonia Sikka's "How Not to Read the Other? 'All the Rest Can Be Translated.'"⁴ It accuses Lévinas of subsuming all particular others into a general notion of the Other.

The most recent article is Andrew McGettigan's "The Philosopher's Fear of Alterity: Lévinas, Europe and Humanities 'without Sacred History.'"⁵ While Bernasconi seems to be inclined to differentiate Lévinas's proper philosophical corpus from his occasional speeches that convey an appalling message with respect to non-Western traditions, McGettigan argues for the consistency of Lévinas's ethics with his biased view of other cultures. For him, Lévinas's ethics cannot be accepted as a neutral philosophical construction. It is

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firmly tied to a specific tradition, that is, Judaic heritage as derived from the “Sacred History.” Caygill holds a similar view as McGettigan’s in observing that Lévinas’s claims with respect to cultural others are “rigorously consistent with his philosophy,” which “recognizes the inevitability of war.”⁶ Other critics of Lévinas include Simon Critchley. Although he has not yet voiced his criticism in writing, in his opening speech at Hangzhou International Conference on Lévinas held in September 2006, Critchley stresses in particular that Lévinas’s thinking manifests a deep-seated ignorance of and prejudice against non-Western cultures. He also expresses hope that Chinese philosophers pay attention to this problem.

The present article aims to explore Lévinas’s view concerning the relation between Western tradition and non-Western cultures from the perspective of his notion of sense as thematized in his article “Meaning and Sense” published in 1964. The above-mentioned contributions have not yet considered this facet of Lévinas’s thinking from such a perspective and have hardly dealt with the relevant article. In “Meaning and Sense,” Lévinas engages in a confrontation with contemporary French phenomenologists whose thinking shows a tendency toward a horizontal view of meaning and who celebrate multiculturalism. Lévinas attempts at reinstating the classical theme of transcendence through thinking on the alterity of the Other. For this purpose, he formulates the notion of sense (*le sens*) as distinct from meaning (*la signification*). Sense is absolute and transcendent. It precedes and makes possible the meaning of all cultures. It provides unity and orientation by means of which one could make sense of other cultures. For Lévinas, there is an essential difference between Western tradition whose scaffold, in his view, consist in Judaic and Greek heritage, and non-Western traditions wherein is absent the “Sacred History.” Cultural pluralism necessarily causes chaos and disorder. Only sense can render non-Western traditions intelligible, and thus creates unity and order.

I. SENSE AND MEANING

A Platonic view of meaning has dominated Western philosophical tradition for thousands of years. According to this view, intellect and the intelligible belong to two separate realms. The intelligible, that is, meaning, has its own reality and is independent of the way in which it is reached. It is prior to and determines language and culture through which it finds expression. The Platonic soul can rise above concrete historicality and bodily existence and ascend to the level of meditating on the idea.

French phenomenologists, as represented by Merleau-Ponty and influenced by anthropologists such as Lévi-Strauss, oppose the Platonic dualistic view of meaning. They stress that there is an intrinsic correlation between intellect and the intelligible. They belong to each other. What has been rigorously separated as two unrelated realms in Platonism are ascribed a quasi-consanguine relation. Language is regarded as the place where the inseparable connection between meaning and intellect is originated. The social-political and bodily existence of human beings is considered to be the precondition for cognizance and understanding. For these contemporary phenomenologists, meaning is not a self-sufficient entity that is external to its concrete expression. One must acquire meaning on the basis of sensibility and language in which sensibility is embodied. The multiplicity and variation of culture and history do not form an obstacle for getting close to meaning and essence. Rather, they provide the avenues through which alone meaning can be obtained. In the meantime, historical and cultural factors are absorbed into meaning. The way in which meaning is acquired is an indispensable component of it.⁷

These convictions imply a pluralistic view of Being and meaning. According to this view, Being is not a monistic Parmenidian self-identity. There can no longer be a single totality of Being; instead, there can only be a plurality of beings that resist being subsumed under a totality. Likewise, there cannot be an ultimate judgment. Instead, there can only be ad hoc judgments. This does not mean that French phenomenologists have dispensed with any sense of unity. They believe that the unity of Being resides in the mutual understanding among human beings and the mutual penetration of different cultures. The achievement of mutual understanding has nothing to do with the mediation of a common language that is independent of relevant cultures and can convey ideal meaning.

To use Merleau-Ponty's terminology, universality can only be "lateral" (*latéralement*). It lies in "being able to penetrate one culture from another," just as one learns another language on the basis of one's mother tongue.⁸ One must abandon the idea of a universal grammar and the notion of ideal meaning based on this idea. One must also reject the presumption that the progress of civilization is owing to the purification of immature elements of language and to the separation of truth and meaning from the particularity of cultures. All cultures lie on the same plane. Western tradition is also determined by history and culture. The pluralistic notion of meaning does not entail a rejection of the idea of Being. Rather, it is precisely through plurality that human beings attain an understanding of the essence and measure of Being. In order to overcome Platonism, philosophy must

unite with anthropology, which investigates concrete elements of cultures.

Lévinas resolutely opposes himself to this pluralistic notion of Being and multiculturalism as derived from it. In "Meaning and Sense," he severely criticizes the view of meaning that restricts meaning to immanence and thus eliminates the dimension of transcendence. For Lévinas, the turn to culture and history is in essence a kind of disorientation (*désorientation*) that is consequent upon modern atheism. In opposition to this trend of thinking, Lévinas formulates the idea of sense. Sense is "the primordial event (*événement primordial*) in which all the other steps of thought and the whole historical life of being are situated."⁹ Sense carries ethical weight. It is both unique and has a single direction. It is the most primordial ethical movement oriented toward the absolute Other.

Lévinas compares sense to Rome in the idiom "All roads lead to Rome." Lévinas writes, "What is lacking is the sense of all, the Rome to which all roads lead, the symphony in which all meanings sing, the song of songs."¹⁰ It is what is ultimate. The turn from cultural meaning to sense is a leap away from self toward the Other. It is unrelated to history in the ordinary sense of the word. For Lévinas, what is absurd is not the lack of meaning, but the mutual insulation among meaning-totalities, and the absence of sense that alone can guide meaning. The absence of sense is the same as the death of God. The crisis of sense is at the same time the crisis of monotheism. Sense is senseless without God.

Sense is universal and cannot be impeded by any empirical matters. On the contrary, the unique and universal sense grants meaning to the concreteness of the world. The absoluteness of sense resides precisely in this dissymmetry. Concreteness needs sense for the sake of its justification. In the mean time, sense out of its surplus is present in the immanent secular historicity. In this sense, Lévinas states that sense is not another world behind the world of meaning.¹¹ Therefore, it could be said that there is an intersection between sense and meaning. While elaborating on the significance of sense, Lévinas also offers a unique explanation of meaning. He distinguishes meaning from cultural expression. Meaning is not arbitrary and therefore cannot be ascribed to cultural expression. Meaning does not belong to culture. It originates in a dialogue with the Other and thus belongs to the order of ethics and is prior to culture. It is what enables people to make judgments on culture. For Lévinas, cultural meaning, which is what is ultimate to the multiculturalists, is in the last analysis only the leftover fragments after the unity of ideal meaning is broken up. In spite of this delineation, it seems that sometimes Lévinas is using the word "meaning" in two different senses. One is the authentic meaning as

led and oriented by sense. It is transcendent and possesses inner necessity. The other is cultural meaning as expounded by the multiculturalists. Immanent to culture, it is arbitrary and plural. There is not, and does not need to be, a unitary ideal meaning.

Lévinas's notion of sense is integrally connected with his philosophy of the Other (*Autrui*). According to him, contemporary philosophy attaches importance to analyzing the hermeneutic structure of society, history, language, and the sediments of culture as embodied in meaning. However, it lacks the dimension of the Other. Lévinas raises such an incisive interrogation:

Has a third dimension not been forgotten; the direction toward the Other who is not only the collaborator and the neighbour of our cultural work of expression or the client of our artistic production, but the interlocutor, he to whom expression expresses, for whom celebration celebrates, both term of an orientation and primary signification?¹²

The Other is not only a necessary participant in cultural expression, it is also the interlocutor with whom expressions converse. Cultural expression is already in relation with the Other before they become associated with being. The presence of the Other is the condition of possibility for cultural expressions. The Other cannot be subsumed into the totality of what is expressed. It reveals itself behind the assemblage of being. In essence, the Other is equivalent to sense. It is what alone initiates meaning into being. Lévinas relates the Other with face as well. The Other manifests himself in a face. The face in its nudity is without any cultural ornament and is detached from the world. "The signifyingness of a face in its abstractness is in the literal sense of the term extra-ordinary."¹³

Lévinas compares the epiphany (*épiphanie*) of the Other with the epiphany of sense. The Other is present in the context of meaning as a whole and finds expression in multifarious cultures and languages. However, the *epiphany* of the Other is solely related to sense that is independent of the meaning available in the world. Epiphany is a radically different mode from manifestation. In terms of the manifestation of the Other, the Other is somewhat related to the world; in contrast, in terms of the epiphany of the Other, the Other is without any context and mediation. The Other "involves a signifyingness of its own."¹⁴ In the same vein, sense is abstract and absolute. It does not coalesce into meaning in the ordinary world. In contrast with sense, cultural meaning belongs to the mundane historical world. In being revealed in the historical world horizontally (*horizontalement*), it also reveals the horizon of the world. The epiphany of sense breaks through the horizontality of cultural meaning. The epiphany of sense is at the same time the epiphany of the Other.

Lévinas distinguishes between the epiphany of sense and the givenness of sense. In terms of its epiphany, sense is absolute revelation that is outside of every order and completely independent of the world. It is a revelation in the revelation, an opening in the opening.¹⁵ In epiphany, sense necessarily divests itself of any form. At this level, sense cannot be reduced to meaning as understood by the pluralists. It is clear that Platonic elements are at work in Lévinas's notion of sense. In terms of its givenness, sense is given in a specific culture and language. At this level, one could say that sense is synonymous with meaning in the authentic sense. In paying attention to the specificity of cultures, Lévinas attempts to adjust Platonism's overemphasis on abstractness.

Lévinas's orientation of thinking is closely related to his consideration of non-Western cultures. His notion of sense that is unitary and transcendent aims at overcoming the pluralistic view of being and multiculturalism. In the following section I discuss some of his speeches on non-Western cultures.

II. AFRO-ASIATIC CIVILIZATIONS AND WESTERN TRADITION

Lévinas has never explicitly discussed Afro-Asiatic civilizations and their relation with Western tradition in his proper philosophical works. However, in some short articles and interviews, he touches upon this issue. In "The Russo-Chinese Debate and the Dialectic" (1960), an article published in *Esprit*, Lévinas raises such a question: "In abandoning the West, does not Russia fear to drown itself in an Asiatic civilization which, it too, is likely to carry on existing behind the concrete appearance of dialectical resolution?"¹⁶ What occasioned Lévinas's composing this article was the Sino-Soviet conflict that became public in 1960. He deliberately avoided using the term "Soviet Union," a term with a strong political overtone, and instead uses "Russia," which conveys a sense of cultural heritage belonging to Western civilization. Even Marxism originates in the West. In the eye of Lévinas, in spite of the adoption of Marxism in China, the factors of Asiatic heritage remain active. Even after the presumed realization of an equal and universal communist state with no differentiation of classes, the cultural particularity of Asiatic tradition would still be retained. He comments on the Asiatic heritage in rather disparaging terms:

The yellow peril! It is not racial, it is spiritual. It does not involve inferior values; it involves a *radical strangeness*, a stranger to the weight of its past, from where there does not filter any familiar voice or inflection, a lunar or Martian past.¹⁷

In spite of Lévinas's immediate disclaimer that his usage of "yellow peril" is not meant to show racial prejudice, as Caygill rightly observes, "[i]t is difficult to imagine any circumstances in which the phrase 'the yellow peril' cannot be racist."¹⁸ Caygill also suggests that the consignment of Asia to the moon or to Mars figuratively strips Asians of their humanity.¹⁹ The phrase "radical strangeness" is resonant with Lévinas's suggestion elsewhere that the Asiatic is a stranger to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.²⁰ The long history of Asiatic tradition lacks genuine significance, because it does not have the dimension of transcendence. Only the Sacred History constitutes the authentic history. What can prevent Russia from being drowned in Asiatic civilization is its insoluble bond with Western civilization.

In another short article entitled "Jewish Thought Today," Lévinas lists three events in the twentieth century that have exerted decisive influence upon the development of Jewish thought: first, the rise and defeat of anti-Semitism and the massacre of one-third of Jews by National Socialists; second, the revival of Zionism and the foundation of the State of Israel with Zionism as its political underpinning;²¹ third, "[t]he arrival on the historical scene of those underdeveloped Afro-Asiatic masses who are *strangers* to the Sacred History that forms the heart of the Judaic-Christian world."²² To those "underdeveloped Afro-Asiatic masses," the Sacred History, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have no significance. As Lévinas sees it, the main demands of Afro-Asiatic people are in terms of material sustenance. While affirming their right to make these demands, he worries that they might endanger the authenticity of the State of Israel and marginalize Jews and Christians.

During an interview, Lévinas observes,

I often say, though it's 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.²³

How should one understand the saying that all the rest is dance? During another interview, while reiterating similar claims and supplements that his saying is not meant to be racist, Lévinas provides such an example: When the African people bury their dead, instead of crying, they go ahead to dance. At the interviewer's comment that this is also a way (albeit weird for Westerners) of expressing sadness of loss, Lévinas responds, "Yes, certainly, to that extent I am still a philosopher. But it gives the impression of a dancing civilization in which they cry in another way."²⁴ In these comments, Lévinas 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. Lévinas 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.

In treating Judaic and Greek traditions as the core of Western civilization, Lévinas ascribes absoluteness and universality to these two traditions, especially the former, which is in fact only one among other traditions. He states that being a Jew after Auschwitz is not a particularity but a modality; in this sense, “everyone is a little Jewish, and if there are men on Mars, one would find some Jews there.”²⁵ On another occasion, he observes, “every time the Jews are implicated, something universal is at stake.”²⁶ These utterances seem to assume an open attitude toward other nationalities; however, they presuppose the thesis that the particularity of Jews is universality at the same time. The metaphor of Mars reminds one of Lévinas’s description of the alien history of Asiatic civilization as a “lunar or Martian past” in his article “The Russo-Chinese debate and the dialectic.”²⁷ The statement “if there are men on Mars, one would find some Jews there” means that Western civilization alone, which takes Judaeo-Greek traditions as the core, can ascribe meaning to other cultures, whereas other cultures do not possess the power of comprehending and disclosing the meaning that their traditions may embody. The notion of the Sacred History, which constitutes the source of the superiority and uniqueness of Europe, must be promoted in the contemporary world situation.

Sikka raises severe criticisms of Lévinas’s privileging of the Jews. She takes issue with Lévinas’s dedication in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, which is to all the victims of anti-Semitism. For her, the label “anti-Semitism” subsumes all the “hatred of the other man” under this term and thus obscures the specificity of other forms of hatred and thus fails to address the suffering of other victims than the Jews in its specificity. For example, the massacre of Indians at Amritsar by British soldiers cannot simply be called anti-Semitism.²⁸

Lévinas would not find such a contention really challenging. For him, Judaism forms a special intellectual tradition. Only from Judaism is derived the idea of the other man. As he writes in a Talmudic commentary, “In question is the other man, who descends from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But do not become alarmed. We are not in the presence of a racist idea here.”²⁹ For Lévinas, that he ascribes unique significance to Judaism should not be taken to be a partiality, let alone racism. In acknowledging the particularity of Judaism, he grants unique universality to it. For this reason, non-Jews can share in this heritage, and perhaps *must* do so. What can also be noted is that the other man, or the Other, in Lévinas’s thinking, is integrally asso-

ciated with the Judaic tradition. The proper Other in his philosophy is the Other of height, not of horizon, nor of any ontic difference. While Lévinas often gives the concrete example of the Other as “the weak, the poor, ‘the widow and the orphan,’”³⁰ Bernasconi rightly points out that those “descriptive terms that identify the Other in his or her needs are not being employed solely descriptively;”³¹ they are more than examples. They “evoke a specific tradition and so give a historical determinacy to the way the issues are presented that cannot be ignored.”³² In the mean time, Lévinas ascribes a “radical strangeness” to other cultures.³³ As Lévinas writes in *Totality and Infinity*, “The alterity of a world refused is not the alterity of the Stranger but that of the fatherland which welcomes and protects.”³⁴ Other cultures are the Stranger because they have no sense of the Sacred History and lack the dimension of transcendence. During a discussion on the occasion of a conflict between Israel and Palestine, a conversant raises such a question: “Emmanuel Lévinas, 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?” Lévinas responds:

My definition of the other is completely different. The other is the neighbour, who is not necessarily kin, but who can be. And in that sense, if you’re for the other, you’re for the neighbour. But if your neighbour attacks another neighbour 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. There are people who are wrong.³⁵

It is clear that, for Lévinas, the alterity of transcendence is in a completely different order from the alterity of Strangers, who could be potential enemies. There is an abysmal distance between these two kinds of alterity.

III. SENSE AND NON-WESTERN CULTURES

Lévinas’s orientation of thinking is undoubtedly connected with the spread of other cultures in the Western world. When history enters into the twentieth century, Western philosophers are confronted with, in Husserl’s words, “a plethora of works” about Indian philosophy, Chinese philosophy, and so on, which “are placed on a plane with Greek philosophy and are taken as merely different historical forms under one and the same idea of culture.”³⁶

The popularity of non-Western cultures and languages is evident in Lévinas’s use of a Frenchman’s learning Chinese language as an example in “Meaning and Sense”:

For a Frenchman there does exist the possibility of learning Chinese and passing from one culture into another, without the intermediary of an Esperanto that would falsify both tongues which it mediated. Yet what has not been taken into consideration in this case is that an orientation is needed to have the Frenchman take up learning Chinese instead of declaring it to be barbarian (that is, bereft of the real virtues of language) and to prefer speech to war.³⁷

It seems that Lévinas cannot refuse to acknowledge the fact that it is not impossible for a Frenchman to learn Chinese because this is part of the reality at his time. However, behind his surface discourse, there are such presuppositions: First, Chinese language can be declared to be barbarian. If this is the case, instead of trying to learn it, the Frenchmen can go to war with the Chinese. Lévinas's consideration is obviously unilateral. Bernasconi rightly remarks that Lévinas seems unaware that the Chinese also learn to speak French.³⁸ Second, what is primordial is an orientation toward the cultural other. Lévinas takes advantage of the ambiguity of the French word *sens* as meaning both sense and direction. Sense is the source of such an orientation that makes it possible for a Frenchman to choose to learn this foreign language in the first place, instead of rejecting it as barbarian. Why does Lévinas mention war? One is put in mind of his statement "in alterity we can find an enemy" on the occasion of conflict between the Israeli and the Palestinian. In formulating the notion of sense and orientation, Lévinas seems to be looking for a mild way in which the superiority of Western tradition can conquer other cultures. Lévinas continues to write:

One reasons as though the equivalence of cultures, the discovery of their profusion and the recognition of their riches were not themselves the effects of an orientation and of an unequivocal sense in which humanity stands. One reasons as though the multiplicity of cultures from the beginning sunk its roots in the era of decolonization, as though incomprehension, war, and conquest did not derive just as naturally from the contiguity of multiple expressions of being—the numerous assemblages or arrangements which it takes on in the diverse civilizations. One reasons as though peaceful coexistence did not presuppose that in being there is delineated an orientation which gives it a unique sense.³⁹

These remarks contain sharp criticisms of French phenomenologists. As Lévinas sees it, the richness and variety of cultures are not always, as cultural pluralists attempt to show, something positive. From it derives incomprehension, conflict, and conquest as well. Contemporary French phenomenologists have unfortunately forgotten the existence of these negative aspects that are at work at the initial stage of the discovery of other cultures. At the root of peaceful coexistence lies sense and orientation. Such an orientation gives meaning to alien

cultures. Sense is that by means of which any element from other cultures can be acknowledged and made sense of, by means of which such a multiplicity of cultures can be manifested at all. Without sense, there will be much greater possibility of war and conflict.

Lévinas's notion of sense provides him with a way of mediating the relation between Western tradition and other cultures. Sense does not come from out of nowhere; it originates in Judeo-Greek tradition. As explicated in the first section of the present article, Lévinas thematizes sense along the same lines as he does with the Other, who manifests himself in a face. In distinguishing between the epiphany of sense and the givenness of sense, he seems to be trying to do justice to the concreteness of culture and history. The epiphany of sense highlights its transcendence; the givenness of sense points to the side of concreteness. However, Lévinas only takes into consideration the historical concreteness of Western tradition to a limited extent. As Bernasconi argues, Lévinas deliberately avoids addressing the fact that "many Western Europeans" consider the Jews "not just a stranger, but even the archetypical alien," although Judaism is normally admitted to be a constitutive component of Western culture.⁴⁰

Lévinas admits that Platonism is vanquished. However, it is vanquished by the very means which the idea of universality issued from Plato provides. During an interview in 1980, when the interviewer mentions that apart from Judaic and Greek cultures, there are Mongolian and Indian cultures, Lévinas remarks,

It is Europe which, alongside of its atrocities, invented the idea of "de-europeanization"; that is a victory for European generosity. For me, certainly, the Bible is the model of excellence; but I say that while knowing nothing of Buddhism.⁴¹

Lévinas sings praises for the superiority and generosity of Europe. Although Western civilization has been acutely disparaged with respect to its ugly history, the resources of overcoming its sickness can only come from this civilization itself, because only this civilization embraces the notion of universality and enjoys the power of interpretation out of generosity. The last remark, which is similar to Lévinas's qualification that "this is not racism" in speaking of African culture, seems to be an attempt to preempt criticism of Euro-centrism or racism. In a certain sense, such remarks serve as the footnote to the philosophical corpus of a majority of Western philosophers. They seem to be saying: That I have not touched upon, let alone considered, non-Western cultures is due to my ignorance of them. Please do not regard me as an advocate of Eurocentrism or racism.

From our discussion in this article, it can be seen that Lévinas ascribes an essential difference between Western tradition and non-Western cultures. Their difference is not one of degree and surface

appearance, but of depth and essence. Only in Western civilization can one find the notion of transcendence and of Sacred History, whereas Afro-Asiatic civilizations are restrained within immanence and lack their own means to understand themselves. As McGettigan rightly observes, the face in Lévinas's philosophy is "tied to a particular historico-cultural formation: the 'culture issued from monotheism.'"⁴²

Lévinas's line of thought is somewhat similar to Heidegger's with respect to the origin and status of philosophy. For Heidegger, philosophy is Greek in its origin and nature; the expression "Western-European philosophy" is a tautology.⁴³ Philosophy is something particular and universal at the same time. The role of philosophy in Heidegger is analogous to that of the Sacred History in Lévinas. However, Heidegger differs from Lévinas in that he does not propound the idea that people from other traditions can share in philosophy. The reason behind this is probably that, if this would be the case, then philosophy would lose its uniqueness. Nevertheless, Heidegger does not deny the possibility that there could be a genuine East-West dialogue after Western philosophical tradition has accomplished its self-transformation.⁴⁴

Lévinas's formulation of the notion of sense represents a response to pluralistic approaches to meaning. To him, cultural pluralism will necessarily bring about chaos. Only sense as he propounds it can provide an orientation to understanding and evaluating various cultures. Only Western civilization is able to understand other cultures "that never understood themselves."⁴⁵ For Lévinas, not only "all the rest can be translated,"⁴⁶ but also "all the rest *must* be translated." This is because only in this way can there be a unity of intelligibility in the world, and can transcendence be safeguarded. Translating other cultures with sense as the guide is an effective way to avoid, if at all possible, unnecessary wars and conflicts. It could be said that Heidegger gives non-Western cultures serious thought even though he did not really find a place for them in his scheme of thinking. Insofar as Lévinas gives traditions "without Sacred History" any thought, his solution is to "generously" provide them with meaning *within* and *by* the Sacred Tradition.

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ENDNOTES

1. Howard Caygill, *Lévinas and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1.
2. *Ibid.*, 1.

3. Robert Bernasconi, "Who Is My Neighbour? Who Is the Other?: Questioning 'the Generosity of Western Thought,'" in *Emmanuel Lévinas: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, vol. 4, eds. Claire Katz and Lara Trout (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), 30.
4. Sonia Sikka, "How Not to Read the Other? 'All the Rest Can Be Translated,'" *Philosophy Today* 43, no. 2 (1999): 28.
5. Andrew McGettigan, "The Philosopher's Fear of Alterity: Lévinas, Europe and Humanities 'without Sacred History,'" *Radical Philosophy* 140 (2006): 15–25. I received an earlier draft of McGettigan's paper in 2004 on the occasion of discussing Heidegger's notion of the Asiatic on "Philos-L," an e-mail link owned by Stephen Clark. I hereby express my gratitude to McGettigan and Philos-L.
6. Caygill, *Lévinas and the Political*, 192–93.
7. For Lévinas, these convictions are well reflected in Merleau-Ponty's notion of "fundamental historicity." On all four occasions when Lévinas mentions him in his *Otherwise than Being or beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981) 45, 70, 160, 167, he refers to his notion of "fundamental historicity." See also Emmanuel Lévinas, "Meaning and Sense," in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 43, originally published as, "La Signification et le Sens," in *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1972). The English edition is also available in Emmanuel Lévinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 75–108.
8. Lévinas, "Meaning and Sense," 57.
9. *Ibid.*, 46.
10. *Ibid.*, 47.
11. *Ibid.*, 51.
12. *Ibid.*, 52.
13. *Ibid.*, 53.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Heidegger attaches importance to the opening as well, and he often takes the opening to be equivalent with Being. From the perspective of Lévinas's thinking, this orientation of thinking still remains to be immanent and horizontal.
16. Emmanuel Lévinas, "Le débat russo-chinois et la dialectique," in *Difficile liberté: essais sur le judaïsme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1963), 226; emphasis added. This article is not included in the English version of *Difficult Freedom*.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Caygill, *Lévinas and the Political*, 184.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Emmanuel Lévinas, "Jewish Thought Today," in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, ed. Seán Hand (London: Athlone Press, 1990).
21. As some scholars point out, Lévinas sets himself against Zionism, but never against the State of Israel. See Rudi Visker, *The Inhuman Condition: Looking for Difference after Heidegger and Lévinas* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 35.
22. Lévinas, "Jewish Thought Today," 159–66, 160; emphasis added.
23. Cited in Raoul Martley, *French Philosophers in Conversation* (London: Routledge, 1991), 18.
24. Emmanuel Lévinas, "Intention, Ereignis und der Andere: Gespräch zwischen Emmanuel Lévinas und Christoph von Wolzogen am 20. Dezember 1985 in Paris," in *Humanismus des anderen Menschen* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1989), 140.
25. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Entretiens avec le Monde. I. Philosophies* (Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 1984), 147.
26. Emmanuel Lévinas, "Ideology and Idealism," in *The Lévinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1989/1996), 293.
27. Lévinas, "Le débat russo-chinois et la dialectique," 226.
28. Sikka, "How Not to Read the Other?," 196–97.
29. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 98.

30. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 83.
31. Bernasconi, "Who Is My Neighbour?," 5–30.
32. *Ibid.*, 7.
33. Lévinas, "Le débat russo-chinois et la dialectique," 226.
34. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969/2002), 41.
35. Seán Hand, ed., *The Lévinas Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1989), 294.
36. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, ed. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 279.
37. Lévinas, "Meaning and Sense," 46.
38. Bernasconi, "Who Is My Neighbour?," 22.
39. Lévinas, "Meaning and Sense," 46.
40. Bernasconi, "Who Is My Neighbour?," 23. Bernasconi points out "Western" Europeans as the archetypical anti-Semitists. However, according to some European scholars (personal communication), anti-Semitism was on the whole more predominant in Slavic-speaking countries than in Western and Southern Europe (particularly in the nineteenth century). This might be behind the fact that the Nazis put most of their concentration camps in Poland, but none in Western Europe.
41. Lévinas, *Entretiens avec le monde. I. philosophies*, 147.
42. McGettigan, "The Philosopher's Fear of Alterity," 15.
43. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. William Kluback and Jean T. Wilde (Schenectady: The New College and University Press, 1956), 29.
44. For a thematic treatment of Heidegger's view, see Lin Ma, *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event* (New York/London: Routledge, 2008).
45. Lévinas, "Meaning and Sense," 58.
46. Cited in Martley, *French Philosophers*, 18.