

## Philosophy MA Area - 2018

Faculty Examiner: Prof. John Caruana

The aim of this ARE is to provide you with mastery of certain topics, debates, and positions equivalent to a graduate-level survey course. This particular ARE covers the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. There are three questions. You should aim to write about 5 to 6 pages for each of your responses. Please aim to complete all three responses by the end of August.

We will meet at least three times over the spring and summer to discuss the readings. Please come prepared for these discussions. I will assume that you have done the readings. *Totality and Infinity* is a fascinating and provocative book. But it is also a very complex and dense text. For the purpose of this ARE, I don't expect you to read that text cover-to-cover. Before our meetings, I will advise you on the specific parts of the book that you need to look at. We will supplement the readings for *Totality and Infinity* with some shorter essays by Levinas. These particular essays are much more accessible than *Totality and Infinity* and, thus, very useful for getting a better handle on that book.

### Guiding Questions

1. How is Levinas's concept of metaphysics different from the traditional understanding of this term? How is it connected to what he calls "desire," and in what way is it different from "need." Explain how Levinas reads both Plato (particularly his conception of the 'Good beyond Being') and Descartes (specifically how he thinks of the finite-infinite relation) as exceptional moments within the history of metaphysics.
2. Levinas was trained in classical phenomenology. Nevertheless, he also departs from the thought of both Husserl and Heidegger, particularly in relation to how both of his former teachers conceive of the other person. Why does Levinas object to Husserl's notion of the other person as an "alter ego" in the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*? And what is Levinas's primary concern with Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein* (being-with) others?
3. What are some of the distinguishing features of Levinas's phenomenology of the face? How is it related to what he calls "ethics" — and why are "ethics" and "morality" not the same thing for him?

### READING LIST

#### Levinas

Levinas, Emmanuel. "Enigma and Phenomenon." In *Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Adriaan T. Pepperezak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

—"Is Ontology Fundamental?" In *Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Adriaan T. Pepperezak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. 2-10. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

- “Meaning and Sense.” In *Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Adriaan T. Pepperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. 34-64. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- “The Ego and the Totality.” In *Emmanuel Levinas: Collected Philosophical Papers*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. 25-45. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004.
- Totality and Infinity*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969.
- “Transcendence and Intelligibility.” In *Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Adriaan T. Pepperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. 150- 159. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- “Transcendence and Height.” In *Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Adriaan T. Pepperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. 11-31. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- “Peace and Proximity.” In *Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Adriaan T. Pepperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi. 162-169. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- “Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity” In *Emmanuel Levinas: Collected Philosophical Papers*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. 47-59. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004.

### **Heidegger and Husserl**

- Heidegger, Martin. “Being-in-the-world as being-with” (Part I, Section VI). In *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York and London: Harper and Row, 1962.
- Husserl, Edmund. “Fifth Meditation.” In *Cartesian Meditations*. Translated by Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960.