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Philosophical Identity and the Quest for Planetary Thinking

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PHILOSOPHICAL IDENTITY AND THE QUEST FOR PLANETARY THINKING

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> *The true struggles of our time, the only ones which are significant, are struggles between humanity which has already collapsed and humanity which still has roots but is struggling to keep them or find new ones.*
>
> Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*

> *What is needed is not the insistence that one see with his own eyes, rather it is that he not explain away under the pressure of prejudice what has been seen.*
>
> Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*

Europe — whatever goes by that name today[1] — has for the most part always had a sense of philosophical identity. Indeed, for Europe its *essential* identity cannot but be philosophical, though this may well be said to be merely a prejudice of the "European" philosopher. Presumably, however, there is more than mere prejudice here, as the work of both Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger would have it. Husserl and Heidegger both subscribed to this "prejudice" but justified it philosophically.

Husserl sought to realize that philosophical identity through his transcendental phenomenology. Heidegger sought not so much a continuation of that identity as a transformation of it, given his quest for "planetary thinking."[2]

For Husserl, Europe's appropriation of its genuine philosophical task is essential to the advancement of humanity. For Heidegger, the prospective participants in the practice of planetary thinking and planetary building are "by no means equal" to the "encounter," to the "possible conversation between them." For Husserl, the method of transcendental phenomenology enables a universal and infinite philosophical project which Europe inaugurates and which leads inevitably beyond the "limited cultural goals" of this and that civilization's *Weltanschauung*. For Heidegger, neither the European nor the East Asiatic languages is able, by itself, to open up and then establish the area of planetary thinking.

It would seem, thus, that we are today on that "stretch of the road"

in our history whereupon European and non-European alike are called to a reflection upon the matter of philosophical identity and the quest for planetary thinking. What follows is in the service of this reflection.

I. Husserl's "Discovery"

As is well known to students of recent European philosophy, Edmund Husserl was one of a number of 20th century philosophers concerned with assessing the "vital" status of European philosophy. This concern, as expressed in Husserl's *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, issues in the wake of the critical assessment of philosophy in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as well as the "countercurrents" to the mainstream of the Western tradition as articulated by Marx and Nietzsche. Kant's critical assessment of the dogmatic excesses of speculative metaphysics and the *epistemological* threat of radical skepticism left open the promise of philosophy as "rigorous science." The Marxist challenge to Hegel's idealist conception of history as well as to the earlier Enlightenment philosophy of optimism, followed by the Nietzschean demotion of Platonic idealism, Aristotelian teleology, and Christian eschatology, brought to the foreground the historical situation of "crisis" in which European philosophy still finds itself today.

A crisis is, of course, a moment of decision. For Husserl, we are faced with a philosophical question in this moment of decision: whether the *telos* which was inborn in European humanity at the birth of Greek philosophy — that of humanity which seeks to exist, and is only possible, through philosophical reason, moving endlessly from latent to manifest reason and forever seeking its own norms through this, its truth and genuine human nature — whether this *telos*, then, is merely a factual, historical delusion, the accidental acquisition of merely one among many other civilizations and histories, or whether Greek humanity was not rather the first breakthrough to what is essential to humanity as such, its *entelechy*.[3]

We are, as Husserl asserted, in the midst of a "struggle", a "spiritual struggle." It is a struggle "for the meaning of a genuine humanity."[4] Europe, by the fate of its essential history, stands at the center of this struggle.

The outcome of this struggle is linked inextricably to the movement of modern philosophy, i.e., to that early modern project conceived as "the form of a universal philosophy which grows through consistent apodictic insight and supplies its own norms through an apodictic

method."[5] This was, of course, the "foundationalist" intent of Descartes' philosophy as well as of the later 18th century rationalist enterprise. Husserl acknowledged that this rationalist project was "naïve," naive in its concepts, in its problems, in its method, and in its goals. This naivete was insisted upon consistently by the epistemological skeptic, of course, which skeptical assault itself served to motivate the rationalist quest to assure itself of theoretical results. Yet Husserl was not prepared to "sacrifice the *genuine* sense of rationalism":

> ...as philosophers of the present we have fallen into a painful existential contradiction. The faith in the possibility of philosophy as a task, that is, in the possibility of universal knowledge, is something we *cannot* let go. We know that we are *called* to this task as serious philosophers. And yet, how do we hold onto this belief, which has meaning only in relation to the single goal which is common to us all, that is, philosophy as such?[6]

Why could Husserl — indeed, all European philosophers — *not* let go of the quest for universal knowledge undertaken by philosophy conceived as rigorous science? They could not responsibly let go of this quest because philosophy, properly carried out, comprehends more than "merely private or otherwise limited cultural goals:"

In *our* philosophizing, then — how can we avoid it? — we are *functionaries of mankind*. The quite personal responsibility of our own true being as philosophers, our inner personal vocation, bears within itself at the same time the responsibility for the true being of mankind: the latter is, necessarily, being toward a *telos* and can come to realization, if *at all*, through philosophy —through *us*, *if we* are philosophers in all seriousness.[7]

This is the "fate" of one who lives a "philosophical existence," even as Husserl did — to be a functionary of mankind, to engage thereby in the task of "spiritual legislation" for humanity through a universal philosophy realizing its *telos*. Universal humanity, as well as European humanity, is a "philosophical-historical idea." Such an idea, teleological through-and-through, heralds a fateful task yet to be undertaken and fulfilled especially by those who are "European/Occidental/Western" philosophers. Governed by, indeed immersed in, a teleology, they must articulate "the true being of mankind," a "being" which transcends the merely private and the limited cultural goals of this or that factual "civilization."

Significantly, whatever is articulated, legislated, for mankind at

large emerges from what has hitherto been a "systematically self-enclosed cultural form," viz., philosophy. But, this "philosophy" has always been the expression of a "movement of an advancing reconstruction," beginning with the Greek nation then proceeding in a way such as to draw all humanity under its spell.[8]

As a movement of advancing reconstruction, European philosophy knows itself through both a quest for universal validity and a sense of infinite tasks. This quest for universal validity and this sense for infinite tasks which aims to incorporate the limited cultural goals of "civilizations" raise the question about the status of that "thinking" which is denominated "philosophy" but also given one or another "cultural" qualifier — "Indian," "Chinese," "African," "Latin American," etc. The question is at once factual and essential. That is, as even Husserl admitted, there is a plethora of works that are labeled "Indian philosophy", "Chinese philosophy," etc. For all of these we can certainly seek to identify and list common morphological features and so speak of "merely different historical forms under one and the same idea of culture." But, this "factual" approach misses something "essential," says Husserl: "...one must not allow the merely morphologically general features to hide the intentional depths so that one becomes blind to the most essential differences of principle." [9]

Indian, Chinese, African, Latin American etc., philosophies may surely be said to be engaged with the question of a "universal knowledge of the world." But, claims Husserl, *European* philosophy — i.e., that which, as ongoing *telos*, begins as Greek philosophy qua *arche* of an advancing movement of reconstruction — manifests its essential difference: "...only in the Greeks do we have a universal ("cosmological") life-interest in the essentially new form of a purely 'theoretical' attitude...The theoretical attitude has its historical origin in the Greeks." [10]

This theoretical attitude enables and inaugurates a critical task of universal scope, giving to European philosophy its unique "praxis," viz.,

> ...that of the universal critique of all life and all life-goals, all cultural products and systems that have already arisen out of the life of man; and thus it also becomes a critique of mankind itself and of the values which guide it explicitly or implicitly. Further, it is a praxis whose aim is to elevate mankind through universal scientific reason, according to the norms of truth of all forms, to transform it from the bottom up into a new humanity made capable of an absolute self-responsibility on the basis of absolute theoretical insights.[11]

Clearly, on this line of argument, it makes no sense to conceive of Indian, Chinese, African, Latin American, etc. "philosophies" as equivalent to European philosophy, despite their concern for knowledge about the world. To European philosophy and to it alone can we assign the theoretical attitude; to these other alleged "philosophies" we must assign a different attitude, viz., the "religious-mythical attitude." This distinction of attitude entails an evaluation of other civilizations thus:

> It is understandable that this mythical-practical world-view and world-knowledge can give rise to much knowledge of the factual world, the word as known through scientific experience, that can later be used scientifically. But within their own framework of meaning this world-view and world-knowledge are and remain mythical and practical, and it is a mistake, a falsification of their sense, for those raised in the scientific ways of thinking created in Greece and developed in the modem period to speak of Indian and Chinese philosophy and science (astronomy, mathematics), i.e., to interpret India, Babylonia, China, in a European way. [12]

Theoria, as Husserl conceives it, is an act of bracketing *(epoche)* of all practical interests, an act which furthermore devolves upon a sustained distinction of *doxa* (opinion) and *episteme* (knowledge). Theory, seeking what is beyond limited cultural goals, seeks a truth that is not "tradition-bound," i.e., "an identical truth which is valid for all who are no longer blinded by traditions, a truth-in-itself." Presumably, this is what Aristotle, for example, had in mind when he said "all knowledge is universal" (pasa episthmh twn kaqolou) and so, like Plato before Nan, assigned the ancestral custom of Greek religion to the domain of myth (muqoV) rather than to logic (lwgoV).

In this sense of universality, then, it is meaningful to speak of the historical factuality of "cultural configurations" such as Europe, India, China, etc., each with its respective manner of "communalization." But the cultural configuration that is associated with the theoretical attitude is to be distinguished from those configurations associated with the religious-mythical attitude. The former is essentially characterized by "the peculiar universality of its critical stance," whereas the latter remains within the ambit of limited cultural goals. Those who undertake the theoretical attitude are committed to the task of "subject[ing] all empirical matters to ideal norms," the consequence of which is "a far-reaching transformation of the whole praxis of human existence."[13]

European philosophy, in contrast to Indian, Chinese, African, Latin

American, etc., "philosophy," is prepared to question and challenge the limited cultural goals of these products of the religious-mythical attitude and submit them to the *episteme* of a "universally transformed praxis." Thus, "What is traditionally valid is either completely discarded, or its content is taken over philosophically and thereby formed anew in the spirit of *philosophical* ideality."[14] Herein is the essential "supranationality" of European philosophy vis-a-vis other cultures and *civilizations*. Herein is *"the* spiritual shape" of a Europe which legislates for humanity far more essentially than is manifest in international "commerce and power struggles."

Husserl could not be more clear: "Within European civilization, philosophy has constantly to exercise its function as one which is archontic for the civilization as a whole." [15]

II. Husserl's Challenge

With Husserl, we too may allow for the idea of philosophy as a spiritual movement of infinite tasks. We may, therefore, along with Husserl, distinguish between philosophy as this idea of infinite tasks and philosophy as the historical actuality which at any given time approximates to some degree this infinity in some totality of "truths," to some of which we may even ascribe universal validity. Thereby we, too, may seek some movement beyond the point of existential crisis, beyond what may initially present itself as "an obscure fate, an impenetrable destiny." The question that comes to the fore, however, is whether the decision is properly to be taken with reference to "the *teleology of European history.*"

Today there are surely many answers circulating in response to the question, "What is Europe?" Husserl, seeking to overcome the naive rationalism of modem philosophy, yet pursue the quest of genuine rationalism, had given what he construed to be a "philosophically discovered" answer to that question: "In order to be able to comprehend the disarray of the present 'crisis,' we had to work out the *concept of Europe as the historical teleology of the infinite goals of reason...*"[16] This answer situates the European philosopher in an existential assessment represented by a choice between two possibilities, which Husserl articulated thus:

> There are only two escapes from the crisis of European existence: the downfall of Europe in its estrangement from its own rational sense of life, its fall into hostility toward the spirit and into barbarity; or the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy through a heroism of

reason that overcomes naturalism once and for all.[17]

The first possibility, while clearly an historical possibility for Europe, is of course inconsistent with the teleology of the European spirit. So long as genuine philosophy is extant, the second possibility remains and motivates all European philosophers who perceive and accept their task as functionaries of mankind. Husserl, having assessed the existential crisis of Europe, stands against "the generally reigning opinion" that the dream of philosophy as rigorous science is over. He believes himself "bound" to a goal, even as he would have all who claim to be philosophers to be bound to the same goal.

What can bind us to our goal? Is it only the foolhardiness of striving toward a goal which is beautiful but only vaguely possible, one which is not definitely impossible but still, in the end, imaginary, one which gradually, after the experience of millennia, finally begins to bear a very inductive probability of being unattainable? Or does what appears from the outside to be a failure, and on the whole actually is one, bring with it a certain evidence of practical possibility and necessity, as the evidence of an imperfect, one-sided, partial success, but still a success in this failure? [18]

To be sure, many will answer Husserl here by saying that European philosophy has indeed been a foolhardiness, our empirical evaluation of its historical course yielding the inductive conclusion that the goal is, after all, unattainable. One may find oneself thereby converted from being the rationalist in quest of apodicticity to the epistemological skeptic at best, given that the philosopher who yet practices is unwilling to commit her/himself to that disciplinary suicide represented by epistemological nihilism.

Yet, perhaps Husserl is right to turn the question sideways, asking as he does: "What autonomous thinker has ever been satisfied with this, his 'knowledge?' For what autonomous thinker, in his philosophizing life, has 'philosophy' ever ceased to be an enigma?"[19] With these questions before us, what stand do we today take on the question of philosophy's "goal"? Do we, we who claim to philosophize today, abdicate our philosophical enterprise, confess our naivete before the self-assured epistemological skeptic, or do we instead take this enigma to be the clarion call to an indispensable task for humanity?

Husserl's quest for rigorous science with a view to discovering universally valid truths in a process of inquiry having infinite tasks is meaningful according to a conception of '*universality.*' We should, of

course, consider what this conception may involve as we consider whether philosophers today indeed have an indispensable task such as Husserl conceived it. Consider the following observations from the German physicist and philosopher Carl Friedrich von Weizsacker:

> Universality and certainty are traditionally considered to be concomitant terms. Kant defines *a priori* knowledge as both necessary and universal; and necessity implies certainty. The concomitance of the two terms might seem to be trivial. Whatever counts as universal holds without exception and, in that sense, is certain; what is certain holds wherever it is applied; i.e., it holds universally.[20]

As yon Weizsacker himself notes, "this description of the *terms'* meanings is too vague; it admits of an interpretation in which their interrelation is no longer so obvious." If one considers the relation between the concept of universality and the concept of certainty one, of course, ought not to expound that relation in a way that begs the question. But, Weizsacker claims, this is precisely what happens.

To infer the certainty of a proposition from its universality is a case of begging the question, since the certainty of its universal validity must already be presupposed. Conversely, the universality of a proposition does not follow from its certainty, if by certainty we mean that the proposition is indubitably true, and by universality a logical form such as 'All A are B.' There are propositions that hold only for particular cases yet are certain, and propositions that are universal in form yet doubtful.[21]

Surely we can be agreed that von Weizsaicker provides us a needed clarification here, and one to which we can also readily assent. In Aristotelian logic all locutions are potentially translatable into categorical propositions either universal or particular. Universality can, thus, be affirmative or negative in quality. Presumably, then, any locution found in any given philosophical sub-specialty (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, etc.) can have categorical form and we can, thereby, have a collection of universal propositions. Thus we would recognize, as von Weizsaicker says, that "A proposition holds universally in each individual case and, in that sense, without exception."

Husserl, however, is clearly concerned not just with universality but with apodicticity, thus with having propositions that are both certain and necessary. But in this case Husserl would have us distinguish, as Kant did before him, between that knowledge which is "empirical" and that knowledge which is "pure" and thus consider what method of

analysis yields each of these. Can one have "empirical knowledge" which is universal and also both certain and necessary? Can one have "pure knowledge" which is universal and also both certain and necessary?

Concerning the first question, of course, empirical knowledge is usually said to be the result of inductive method, this method giving us some universal generalizations and, at best, nomological statements that have stronger validity than universal generalizations but perhaps cannot claim apodicticity. Anyone familiar *with* Husserl's critique of the historicist attitude will readily realize that we must be careful about evaluating the prospect of philosophy as rigorous science by the measure of "inductive probability." This measure is that of *empirical* knowledge, specifically that of historiography.

If we conceive of philosophy as a "cultural formation," insofar as cultural formations are "historical life forms," it follows that philosophy is an historical life form that will "come and go in the stream of human development." But herein is a conceptual failure and, thus, an epistemological mistake. If indeed philosophy is possible only as a cultural formation, then philosophy will always be, in its methods and in its content, characterized by "contingent validity." As Husserl says, "There would be no unqualified validity, or validity-in-itself, which is what it is even if no one has achieved *it* and *though* no historical humanity will ever achieve it."[22] One very basic implication of this impossibility of unqualified validity is that "there would then be no validity to the principle of contradiction nor to any logic." From this consequence those engaged by the Western rationalist tradition inevitably recoil.

III. The "Transcendental" Assessment

This recoil should have the effect of returning us to our question and to seeing in that question a *problematic* measure applied to philosophy, i.e., the measure of inductive probability. Husserl responds: "the scientific decision regarding validity itself and regarding its ideal normative principles is in no way the affair of empirical science."[23] If the history of philosophy is undertaken as the historiography of this or that cultural formation, undertaken thus as an empirical investigation that yields only or merely inductive results, it cannot but give only contingently *valid conclusions*.

The *very possibility of philosophy would be* thus delimited by "historical science", historical science thereby having assumed a *de facto* "archontic" status vis-a-vis philosophy. Yet, to be *de facto* archontic is

not to be *de jure* archontic. Historical reasons, insofar as they are only contingently valid propositions, "can advance nothing relevant against the possibility of absolute validities in general." Hence, historical science "can advance nothing in particular against the possibility of an absolute (i.e., scientific) metaphysics or any other philosophy. It can as historical science in no way prove even the affirmation that up to the present there has been no scientific philosophy."[24] Husserl states the argument more fully thus:

> The unconditional affirmation that any scientific philosophy is a chimaera, based on the argument that the alleged efforts of millennia make possible the intrinsic impossibility of such a philosophy, is erroneous not merely because to draw a conclusion regarding an unlimited future from a few millennia of higher culture *would not* be a good *induction*, but erroneous as an absolute absurdity, like 2 x 2 = 5. And this is for the indicated reason: if there is something there whose objective validity philosophical criticism can refute, then there is also an area within which something can be grounded as objectively valid. If problems have demonstrably been posed "awry", then it must be possible to rectify this and pose straight problems. If criticism proves that philosophy in its historical growth has operated with confused concepts, has been guilty of mixed concepts and specious conclusions, then if one does not wish to fall into nonsense, that very fact makes it undeniable that, ideally speaking, the concepts are capable of being posited, clarified, distinguished, that in the given area correct conclusions can be drawn. Any correct, profoundly penetrating criticism itself provides means for advancing and ideally points to correct goals, thereby indicating an objectively valid science.[25]

Clearly, Husserl's argument does not permit the genuine philosopher's abdication before the empirical judgment of the historiographer even and especially when that historian is a philosopher. S/he who measures by way of inductive probability is governed by a concept of finitude, by a concept of philosophy having spatiotemporally limited validity. Husserl does not call *these* "philosophers" to the task of philosophy as rigorous science: "These men [and women] who set the goal in the finite, who want to have their system and want it soon enough to be able to live by it, are in no way called to this task."[26]

Those called to the task of philosophy as rigorous science pursue knowledge that is universally valid but also, and more importantly, apodictically certain. In "Meditation Two" of his *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl clarified his sense of apodicticity thus:

> Any evidence is a grasping of something in itself that is, or is thus, a grasping ... with full certainty of its being, a certainty that accordingly excludes every doubt. But it does not follow that full certainty excludes the conceivability that what is evident could subsequently become doubtful, or the conceivability that being could prove to be an illusion — indeed, sensuous experience furnishes us with cases where that happens. Moreover, this open possibility of becoming doubtful, or of non-being, *in spite of evidence*, can always be recognized in advance by critical reflection on what the evidence in question does. An *apodictic* evidence, however, is not merely certainty of the affairs or affair-complexes (states of affairs) evident in it; rather it discloses itself, to a critical reflection, as having the signal peculiarity of being *at the same time the absolute unimaginableness* (inconceivability) of their *non-being*, and thus excluding in advance every doubt as "objectless", empty. Furthermore, the evidence of that critical reflection likewise has the dignity of being apodictic, as does therefore the evidence of the unimaginableness of what is presented with [apodictically] evident certainty.[27]

Thus, in contrast to empirical knowledge with its contingent validity and, thus, inductive probability, apodictic knowledge is characterized by both indubitability in the moment of a truth-claim and absolute inconceivability of the non-being of that state of affairs represented by the truth-claim. With this clarification in hand, we can now consider the previously posed question: Can one have pure knowledge which is universal, but also both certain and necessary?

The answer to this question will be in the affirmative if one allows the validity of the phenomenological *epoche* in its effort to know the "ideal" in a way that transcends the limitations on knowing imposed by the naturalistic attitude with its emphasis on experience related to spatiotemporal being. Husserl's phenomenological project holds out to us the promise of "eidetic intuition" not limited by the methods and results of "natural cognition" which "begins with experience and remains within experience". It would go beyond the purpose of this essay to demonstrate the validity of Husserl's project; he has accomplished this himself quite adequately. His well-known work, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to Phenomenological Philosophy*, is the clear and authoritative extended argument of his project.[28] I take note here, briefly, of some relevant statements from this work of Husserl in passing to the question of philosophy as rigorous science as it relates to the quest for planetary thinking.

Given that natural cognition concerns "matters of fact" which yield

only contingently valid propositions, there is no "necessity" to be found by way of empirical knowing. Yet we have access to both an "eidetic universality" and an "eidetic necessity" if we grant (with Husserl) that *"it belongs to the sense of anything contingent to have an essence and therefore an Eidos which can be apprehended purely,' and this Eidos comes under eidetic truths belonging to different levels of universality."*[29] Philosophy itself may be engaged by way of experience and thus in the way the historiographer of philosophy does so and thereby ascribes to it and to its historical forms contingent validity and the inductive improbability of it achieving the status of a rigorous science.

But precisely so long as we can experience philosophy as a matter of fact we may also engage philosophy by way of its "essence," its "Eidos," in short, *come* to know philosophy "eidetically" and not merely empirically. That philosophy which we encounter as what is current (thus by way of "perception") or as something past (thus by way of "memory") is given not merely in such "experiential data" but also by way of a "pure essence" exemplified by these experiential data. Approaching the phenomenon "philosophy" *eidetically* allows us to arrive at eidetic, rather than merely empirical, results about this "matter of fact."

With this latter distinction we can speak of an *originary* presentation of philosophy and thereby of the task of "eidetic seeing" which we must undertake if we are to apprehend the possibility of philosophy as rigorous science. Here we engage philosophy itself not merely by way of *empirica*l experience but by way of *transcendental* experience.

Transcendental experience is that "experience" which "confines itself to the realm of pure possibility (pure imaginableness) and, instead of judging about actualities of transcendental being, judges about [its] *a priori* possibilities and thus at the same time prescribes rules *a priori* for *actualities*."[30]

*In short, a transcendenta*l assessment *of philosophy* (a) judges the *a priori* possibilities of philosophy and at the same time (b) prescribes roles *a priori* for philosophy in its "actuality" or "actualities." It does this by engaging philosophy proper as itself the eidetic evidence of the transcendental ego: "we are envisaging a science that is, so to speak, absolutely subjective, whose thematic object exists whether or not the world exists. But more than this. Apparently my (the philosopher's) transcendental ego is, and must be, not only its initial but its sole theme.[31] But, of course, as Husserl went on to show, this pure egology

or phenomenological egology leads, "in the consequential elaboration of this science," to a transcendental intersubjectivity and then to a universal transcendental philosophy.

In contrast to both naive rationalism and naturalism, transcendental reflection attains to an *"absolute freedom from prejudice"* — freedom from all uncritical assumptions in the Cartesian sense, of course, but more importantly, freedom from the prejudices of the natural attitude. "The universality of transcendental experience and description does this," says Husserl, "by inhibiting the universal 'prejudice' of world-experience, which hiddenly pervades all naturalness (the belief in the world, which pervades naturalness thoroughly and continuously), and then - within the sphere that remains unaffected, the absolute sphere of egological being, as the sphere of meanings reduced to an unalloyed freedom from *prejudice — striving* for a *universal* description. This description is then called on to be the foundation for a radical and universal criticism."[32]

Presumably, then, to the extent that Husserl makes his claims concerning "Europe," i.e., Europe as "the *historical teleology of* the infinite goals of reason," he does so via a transcendental reflection which sustains throughout that reflection a fidelity to an immanent seeing. If he is right in his *philosophically discovered* description of "Europe," this reflection is "free from all interpretations" that read into the phenomenon "more than is genuinely seen." His immanent seeing of *telos* is thus a seeing of not merely that which is actual *qua* European culture, European thinking and doing, etc. It is a seeing that engages "an intentional *horizon of reference*" which includes that which is *anticipated*. Thus, this horizon is already an opening for further disclosure. This anticipatory analysis "uncovers" *potentialities* even as it engages factuality. Philosophy taken itself as a phenomenon of intentional analysis always presents itself in a horizon of disclosure and so points or "intends" beyond itself in its given factuality.

Keeping the foregoing in mind, we can then consider that Husserl's references to "European humanity" are part and parcel of "humanity" conceived as a *constituted* intermonadic community. "World" is, as Husserl says in the "Fifth Meditation" of his *Cartesian Meditations*, "given to me and to everyone only as a cultural world and as having the sense: accessible to everyone." This would be true of the European, the Chinese, the African, the Indian, the Latin American, etc. Thus, "Each man understands first of all, in respect of a core and as having its unre-

vealed horizon, *his* concrete surrounding world or *his* culture; and he does so precisely as a man who belongs to the community fashioning it historically."[33] The possessive pronouns in this locution are not to go unnoticed. A cultural world indeed has the sense "accessible to everyone;" but, "this accessibility," says Husserl, "is not unconditional:"

> Everyone, as a matter of a priori necessity, lives in the same Nature, a Nature moreover that, with the necessary communalization of his life and the lives of others, he has fashioned into a *cultural world* in his individual and communalized living and doing — a world having human significances, even if it belongs to an extremely low cultural level. But this, after all, does not exclude, either *a priori* or *de facto*, the truth that men belonging to one and the same world live in a loose cultural community — or even none at all — and accordingly constitute different surrounding worlds of culture, as concrete life-worlds in which the relatively or absolutely separate communities live their passive and active lives. Each understands first of all, in respect of a core and as having its unrevealed horizon, *his* concrete surrounding world or *his* culture; and he does so precisely as a man who belongs to the community fashioning it historically. A deeper understanding, one that opens up the horizon of the past (which is co-determinant for an understanding of the present itself), is essentially possible to all members of that community, with a certain originality possible to them alone and barred to anyone from another community who enters into relation with theirs.[34]

Clearly, then, insofar as a cultural world has "a core" which intends at the same time an "unrevealed horizon," Europe, China, India, Africa, Latin America, etc., would, *prima facie* at least, have a cultural world so constituted. The "deep understanding" of that cultural world is *restricted* to the members of that world — each member has access to an *originality* from which the other of another culture is barred. Thus, the Chinese, Indian, African, Latin American, etc., lacks access to that originality which inspires the constitution of "European humanity", even as the European is barred from that which originally constitutes Chinese humanity, Indian humanity, African humanity, Latin American humanity, etc. It follows from this intentional analysis of world constitution that only Europeans can truly apprehend Europe as the historical teleology of the infinite goals of reason — if, indeed, this expression captures the "core" of European culture.

IV. Universalists, Culturalists, Criticalists

The crisis of European sciences (and, thus, the crisis of European humanity) has its consequences for "philosophical identity" in the post-colonial world of Africa and Latin America in particular. Contemporary world order discourse thus finds itself having to engage issues of "culture and ideology in the modem world" by attending to both the "historical and philosophical problematic."[35] As R.B.J. Walker has observed, "The long-entrenched claims to universality made by Western sociopolitical theory and philosophy appear to be increasingly vulnerable both on their own terms and on those of other civilizational traditions that are able to assert themselves in the modem world."[36]

The "hegemony of Western reason" with its claims to universal truth is faced with a discourse of dissent, this dissent seeking to remedy the global socioeconomic stratification that this hegemony has both produced and sustained. This dissent occurs not only by way of explicit sociopolitical engagement, but also by way of asserting some sense of philosophical identity.

In both cases of "Hispanic American philosophy" and "African philosophy" we find an on-going debate among their proponents as they wrestle with the task of identifying what some would like to characterize as a philosophy "independent" of, yet "equivalent" to, European philosophy. Some of these thinkers advance the cause of philosophy in its *universalist* content and method, thus linking themselves to the Western philosophical enterprise. Others, concerned to articulate a philosophy of liberation, advance the cause of *culturalism*, seeking to give voice to a philosophy rooted in the concrete circumstances of their particular cultural world. Still a third group, the *criticalists*, seeks a middle way between the universalists and culturalists, recognizing the legitimate claims and aspirations of *each of the* other two groups. According to the universalist view, as Jorge J.E. Gracia remarks:

> Philosophy, like mathematics and other disciplines of human knowledge, consists of a series of troths and methods of inquiry that have no spatiotemporal characteristics. Its application and validity are universal and therefore independent of the historical conditions in which they are discovered...Consequently, the answer to the question of whether there is a Latin American philosophy is, from this perspective, negative. Furthermore, this view not only denies that there is a Latin American philosophy, but it also rejects that there could be one, for it sees an intrinsic incompatibility between the nature of philosophy as a *universal* discipline of learning and such particular products

of culture.[37]

In contrast to the universalist argument, the culturalist position as advanced by the Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea holds that the practice of philosophy is "a function of culture."[38] If there is something that we call "Latin American culture," then there may be a specifically "Latin American philosophy." Zea thus engages the question of the status of Latin American culture relative to European culture, and notes that the latter "has been shaken (or is in crisis) today." This is problematic for the Latin American who for a time has "lived comfortably under the shadow of European culture." Indeed, says Zea, the crisis of European culture is experienced by the Latin American as his own crisis.

Zea writes:

> The Latin American man who had lived so comfortably found that the culture that supported him fails him, that he has no future, and that the ideas in which he believed have become useless artifacts, without sense, lacking value even for their own authors. The man who had lived with so much confidence under a tree he had not planted now finds himself in the open when the planter cuts down the tree and throws it into the fire as useless. The man now has to plant his own cultural tree, create his own ideas. But a culture does not emerge miraculously; *the* seed of that culture must be taken from somewhere, it must belong to someone. Now — and this is the issue that concerns the Latin American man — where is he going to find that seed? That is, what ideas is he going to develop? To what ideas is he going to give his faith? Will he continue to believe and develop the ideas inherited from Europe? Or is there a group of ideas and issues to be developed that are proper to the Latin American circumstance? Or rather, will he have to invent those ideas?[39]

For Zea, the possibility of a genuinely Latin American philosophy is tied to the question of whether the Latin American can "realize his own personality," but do so "without having to deny the culture of which we are children." The metaphor Zea employs here is significant. The Latin American, having been raised in the shadow of Europe, has felt himself "inferior," "illegitimate," a "bastard" child of the colonial parents. But, in the midst of Europe's crisis, the Latin American "has 'come of age," and, having attained to his maturity "knows himself to be the heir of Western culture and now demands a place in it."

The place that he demands is that of collaborator. As a son of that

culture he no longer wants to live off it but to work for it. Alfonso Reyes, speaking on behalf of a Latin America that feels responsible, demanded from Europe "the right of universal citizenship that we have already conquered," because already "we have come of age." Latin America is at a point in its history when it must realize its cultural mission.[40]

The Peruvian-born philosopher Augusto Salazar Bondy, in contrast to Zea, takes a *criticalist* view, acknowledging that what goes for Hispanic philosophy in Latin America is nothing original and simply imitative of European philosophy.[41] For Bondy, Latin American philosophy would be a creation of Hispanic America only on the condition that it "reflects the conscience of a community finding in it profound resonance especially through its ethical and political derivations."

Influenced by the phenomenology of Heidegger, Bondy thus distinguishes between an "authentic" and "unauthentic" philosophy, and seeks that which is "original" Hispanic philosophical writing rather than that which is merely "plagiarist" of European concepts and categories. As he says, "A defective and illusory philosophic conscience causes one to suspect the existence of a defective and unauthentic social being, the lack of a culture in the strong and proper sense of the term...This is the case in Hispanic America."[42] Latin America, in short, suffers from a problem of inauthenticity, and this due to it yet seeking its way beyond the dependency associated with cultural domination.

Taking up Heideggerian concepts, Bondy believes it possible for Hispanic American philosophy to find its authentic voicing. This entails a meditation about Hispanic America's "anthropological status," and thus, "the discovery and expression of...[its] own anthropological essence." In this sense, Bondy's call for an authentic Hispanic American philosophy that discovers and expresses a Latin American "anthropological essence" resonates with the phenomenological views of Husserl.

This concern for discovery of an anthropological essence is not limited to Latin American thinkers. Neither is the dialectical engagement of universalists and culturalists, as we can see in contemporary African scholarship. Paulin Hountondji is a representative of the former group, Kwasi Wiredu representative of the other.

Here, too, we find concern for the question of "African identity," the question being whether this can be done without being already steeped in certain presuppositions as to method and concepts that are alien to African culture. Hountondji reminds us that colonization had its

imperial designs, motivated by an agenda to "civilize" a "primitive mentality," and thus sanctioned cultural asymmetry and socioeconomic dependency. Modern European philosophy in one way or another presented itself such that either the European mind was (a) conceived to be "radically disparate" from that of the African or (b) there was an "evolutionary connection" between the two, but with the European mind at the summit of the human scale.

These philosophical positions called forth various African apologies in the form of theories of negritude (e.g., that of Leopold Sedar Senghor) as part of a movement which Hountondji calls "ethnophilosophy," i.e., "ethnological work with philosophical pretensions."[43] Says Hountondji, "Until now African philosophy has been little more than an ethnophilosophy, the imaginary search for an immutable, collective philosophy, common to all Africans, although in an unconscious form." By denominating such African writing "ethnophilosophy," Hountondji makes it clear that there are no genuine philosophical "sources," only oral literature —"proverbs, tales, dynastic poems," etc. — with the consequence that ethnophilosophy is "the prisoner of an ideological myth."

Hountondji counters the validity of ethnophilosophy by arguing that "philosophy...is a specific theoretical discipline with its own exigencies and methodological rules."[44] If there is to be a genuine African philosophy, it is something future, not something past. For Hountondji "What is in question...is the universality of the word 'philosophy' throughout its possible geographical applications." He says:

> My own view is that this universality must be preserved — not because philosophy must necessarily develop the same themes or even the same questions from one country or continent to another, but because these differences of *content* are meaningful precisely and only as differences of *content*, which, as such, refer back to the essential unity of a single discipline, of a single style of inquiry.[45]

Taking up a parallel to the Kantian project relative to both dogmatism and skepticism, Hountondji would put African philosophy on the sure path of a theoretical discipline, in short, a science. Noting that "Philosophical revolutions are functions of scientific revolutions", Hountondji argues:

> [I]f the development of philosophy is in some way a function of the development of the sciences, then African philosophy cannot be separated from African science and we shall never have, in Africa, a philosophy in the strict sense, a philosophy articulated as an endless

> search, until we have produced, in Africa, a history of science, a history of the sciences. Philosophical practice, that peculiar form of theoretical practice that is called philosophy, is inseparable from that other form of theoretical practice called science.[46]

By conceiving philosophical practice in its essential connection to science, Hountondji would have African philosophy essentially connected to European philosophy and science. Genuine liberation will not occur by pitting African culture against the European. Rather, it must take up European science and technology and so put to work "the European concept of philosophy that goes hand in hand with this science and technology and by developing free and critical thinking on the subject of...[African] present realities."[47] Thus, here too Husserl's post-Kantian quest for scientific philosophy resonates.

Kwasi Wiredu, conscious of the "conceptual soul-searching" obligatory for African philosophers trained in the Western tradition, is concerned about what be calls a "colonial mentality", i.e., a "mind-set" that is "a by-product of an educational situation deriving historically from the accident of colonization."[48] For Wiredu it is incumbent upon African philosophers to liberate themselves from this mentality, to "decolonize" their thinking by "test[ing] philosophical formulations in a metropolitan language" in the vernacular "to see if they will survive independent analysis." Where such testing is successful, a "spurious universal" will be unmasked. The point, however, is not to surrender or abandon the claimed validity of the universal. As Wiredu says, "A philosophical concept or problem, failing of universality through transcultural dissipation, need not be spurious on that account. It may be a matter of genuine philosophical interest in its own linguistic home."[49]

Wiredu's call for "conceptual decolonization" entails two complementary tasks:

> On the negative side, I mean avoiding or reversing through a critical conceptual self-awareness the unexamined assimilation in our thought (that is, in the thought of contemporary African philosophers) of the conceptual frameworks embedded in the foreign philosophical traditions that have had an impact on African life and thought. And, on the positive side, I mean exploiting as much as is judicious the resources of our own indigenous conceptual schemes in our philosophical meditations on even the most technical problem of contemporary philosophy.[50]

In this way, Wiredu hopes to engender substantive contributions on

the question of "African identity." Contemporary African philosophy has to speak *to the African* by way of the continent's "multifarious vernaculars." To the extent that this is accomplished, the contemporary African avoids both cultural traditionalism and ethnic submission to Western values, as the Nigerian philosopher Olusegun Oladipo put it.[51] More important, as the South African philosopher W.L. van der Merwe remarks, the task is not to decide between universalism and particularism. Rather, "the quest for a distinctive African philosophy is surpassed by the multicultural contexts of present-day societies in Africa," the implication being that African philosophy "exemplifies in a paradigmatic way the historical and cultural contingency, the contextual particularity, of philosophy."[52]

V. Philosophy's *Caesura*

The debate among universalists, culturalists, and criticalists illustrates the problematic of philosophical identity in the "North-South" dialogue. Europe itself, however, is not without its own ambiguous place in this debate, which fact is made clear by contemporary Jewish philosophy. Emil Fackenheim, a contemporary Jewish philosopher, is correct in claiming that there is a *medieval* Jewish philosophy *(Philosophia Yehudit)* represented by such as Moses Maimonides and a *modern* Jewish philosophy represented by such as Moses Mendelsohn and such more recent figures as Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber.

Notable, however, is Fackenheim's claim that the Holocaust, the Nazi genocide of European Jews, is a *fundamental rupture* not only for Jewish philosophy but for the whole of Western philosophy itself.[53] This rupture brings to the fore two quarrels: (1) on the one hand, that between the ancients and the moderns, wherein the disputation places before us a choice between classical rationalism and modem subjectivism, and (2) on the other hand, that between Athens and Jerusalem, wherein the disputation places before us a choice between an ostensibly universalist reason and an ostensibly particularist faith, both of which are rendered suspect by the Holocaust.

Husserl, himself a Jew, writing during the rise of the Third Reich but prior to the horror of "Auschwitz", advanced the cause of universalist reason, championed the phenomenological method and the place of transcendental experience, and sought a way beyond the crisis of Europe by taking up the responsibility assigned to him by the *telos/entelechy* of European philosophy. Leo Strauss, also a Jew, sided with the ancients in the quarrel with the modems, faulted the modem philosoph-

ical project of Machiavelli and Hobbes, and sought to restore the place of Plato and Aristotle in clarifying the relation between the modem "city" and "man."[54]

For Husserl, the crisis of European science yet allows for the prospect of philosophy as rigorous science. For Strauss, the events of world war and Nazi genocide yet allow for a recovery of the *philosophia perennis*. For Heidegger, who agreed with Husserl on the essential status of European philosophy, the completion of Western metaphysics signals the disclosure of a new beginning, not as a continuation of *philosophia* but as an originary thinking *(anfangliche Denken)*.

In each case, "crisis" is a point in the history of the Occident in which decision *(Entscheidung)* is yet possible. In each case, however, "crisis" is not the equivalent of fundamental rupture or caesura such as Fackenheim conceives it. To appropriate the concept of rupture is to concede — at least tentatively — a fundamental failure of the *philosophia perennis* as well as an impotence of a Husserlian transcendental phenomenology and a Heideggerian originary thinking.

It is at this point of concession that I must pose a question that essentially *(wesentliche)* counters and displaces the Husserlian "discovery" of Europe's *telos/entelechy. Is Western reason fundamentally a history of an error, such that European humanity, far from being the telos/entelechy of humanity, is the arche of a deformation of essence?*[55]

With this question, I, following Derida, conceive the image of Europe as a *Janus head*, one face brilliant with the *lumen naturale* of the *animal rationale*; the other face monstrous with the madness of reason's own interior deformity. Having said this, I recall (as does Fackenheim) that Socrates alluded to the same possibility when he decidedly took up the problems of philosophical anthropology rather than cosmology: He had to determine whether he was a monster, and thereby he uttered the primordial and ultimate question of Western philosophical identity (see Plato, *Phaedrus*, 230A) that remains with us through today.

The question I pose, therefore, unavoidably calls the Latin American and the African philosophers to account for the manner in which they both relate to and/or appropriate the European philosophical project. This question that I pose also calls the Jewish philosophers to account, calls Fackenheim in particular to account precisely because he, quite seriously, would yet have European political philosophy con-

tribute to a resolution of the status of the modem State of Israel.[56] This turn to European political philosophy is suspect given that political philosophy is a *metaphusica specialis* either derivative of or structurally dependent on European philosophy qua "first philosophy" *(prote philosophia)*. If there is a rupture in first philosophy, so is there at the same time a rupture of political philosophy.

To pose the question as I pose it above and to fathom it is to suspend oneself above the abyss of philosophy's rupture. Thus suspended, surveying this *Abgrund*, as it were, one may reach out not to Athens but rather to Jerusalem as the other point of origin that laid claim to us out of antiquity. This origin claims us not by the symbol of a Delphic oracle with its admonition *Gnothi sauton* ("know thyself"), though this symbol yet speaks to the German and *the* non-German alike in the context of a contemporary discourse on tragedy.[57] No, this origin speaks to us by way of *song* — that is, by way of *psalm* — rather than by way of the proposition *per se*. I say "song" in the sense that "to become a song would indicate a text's being learned by heart, its ever increasing familiarity, and yet the possibility of its being gone over daily without the boredom of repetition."[58] Thus did King David write (Ps. 119:54), "Thy precepts are to me as songs."

The contemporary Jewish philosopher *Emmanuel Levinas* observes that "The essence of great texts is not to arise outside history but to have a meaning beyond the situation which has evoked them."[59] This surely would be said of the *philosophia perennis* which bespeaks the universalist quest of Western reason. But could it be said — indeed *must* it not be said — of that which heralds from the origin that is Jerusalem, from its "great texts," from its *Torah* and its *Talmud*? If the period 1933-1945 constitutes a time of rupture for the *philosophia perennis*, then perhaps that breach is to be healed by that which the other origin yet bequeaths to us if only we would be receptive to it.

Fackenheim reminds us that "What speaks through the past texts may be the word of man. But it may also be a reality-higher-than-human; and, in that case, it must a *fortiori* be possible that the texts in question are inexhaustible. For Heidegger, through great works of Western philosophy speaks nothing less than Being itself. One cannot be open to this possibility on behalf of Athens without also being open to a higher-than-human speech coming from Jerusalem..."[60] What word speaks from Jerusalem? It is the word that speaks of a world in need of *tikkun*, of healing the breach, of mending the world – *tikkun haolam*.

After the Holocaust, both Jew and Gentile must face the old question of the Western *philosophia perennis – why is there anything at all rather than nothing?* But the question is now no longer metaphysical in the classical sense of that term. It is, perhaps, an acutely historical question given the ruptures of this past century, and thus it elicits our reflection upon the possibility of a "higher-than-human speech." It is this reflection that enables and insists upon our contemporary interrogative stance.

The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber would have us ask not whether belief in God is still possible after the Holocaust but whether we can still speak to him. In asking this question – why is there anything at all rather than nothing? – we may yet speak to God and await that response which is the evidence of a higher-than-human speech from Jerusalem.

To pose this question is to ask, as Holocaust survivor Jean Amery has asked, whether we can yet again have trust in the world. That is, whether we can yet have trust in the other who presents him/herself as human, but also whether we can yet have trust in that God who is said to be compassionate and merciful and, so, salvific of human souls. To have trust in the world is to have "certainty that by reason of written or unwritten social contracts the other person will spare me – more precisely stated, that he will respect my physical, and with it also my metaphysical, being."[61]

As important as is Amery's question about our trust in the other, the question is better turned towards each one of us. And here, Jerusalem speaks even as Levinas understands in taking up a Talmudic tractate and sharing his reading of it with us. Citing the *Mishna* and *Gemara* passages from the tractate, Baba Metsia (83a-83b), Levinas points a way – so I submit – to regaining trust in the world and in God. In this Talmudic text, it is written that the son of a rabbi hires workers for his father. The operative principle initially seems to be that "everything goes according to the custom of the place." The son, we are told, "included food among the condition" of the hire. The father's response is central to my point. Let us consider the relevant passage from the *Mishna* as Levinas cites it:

> One day, Rabbi Johanan ben Mathia said to his son: Go hire some workers. The son included food among the conditions. When he came back, the father said: My son, even if you prepared a meal for them equal to the one King Solomon served, you would not have fulfilled

> your obligation toward them, for they are the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[62]

What is important here, as Levinas tells us, is that "from the start...the *Mishna* affirms the rights of the other person, even if this person finds himself in the inferior position, which is dangerous to his freedom, of a worker for hire." One could say that the rights of the other person are established by custom, and so the worker is hired "according to the custom of the place." In this way we acknowledge the *prima facie*, albeit limited, validity of custom wherever and whenever it is encountered by us. But there is more here that is essential not just to economic exchange but also to an essential moral comportment that ought to obtain between humans. Levinas points for us: "Let us underline one more detail of the context in which the *Mishna* places itself, which is typical of Jewish humanism: the man whose rights must be defended is in the first place the other man; it is not initially myself."[63]

In this comportment towards the other we find reason to view him/her according to a status that transcends custom and reminds us of the other's inalienable relation to us owing to an ancestral heritage in which he or she shares. This ancestral heritage Levinas denominates "an infinite right," but the emphasis is not on "right" but rather on "infinite," since Talmudic jurisprudence emphasizes "duty."[64] As the father said to his son, the obligation to the hired workers would not be fulfilled even if the son were to prepare a meal equal to the one King Solomon prepared. Why not? The obligation derives from the fact that these hired workers are descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But, let us be cautious in our reading here. Levinas rightly shifts our focus from ethnic descent as such to "the general principle in the idea enunciated in the Talmudic passage":

> ...Israel means a people who has received the Law and, as a result, a human nature which has reached the fullness of its responsibilities and its self-consciousness. The descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are human beings who are no longer childlike. Before a self-conscious humanity, no longer in need of being educated, our duties are limitless.[65]

To encounter a descendent of Abraham is simultaneously to encounter our limitless duty in the presence of the other. And, lest we forget, precisely now that we must remember: "the heirs of Abraham are of all nations: *any man truly man is no doubt of the line of Abraham.*"[66] Accordingly, in keeping with the principle articulated in Kidushin (71a),

to the other we concede the benefit of any doubt we may have concerning his/her legitimate status as an heir of Abraham.

It is with this proposition — that any man truly man is no doubt of the line of Abraham — that today we may begin a genuinely planetary thinking and acknowledge in "the other" his/her truly human identity. In this proposition, I submit, we have an *imperative of humanity* which ever transcends "the limited cultural goals" of a people such as Husserl conceived them relative to this or that civilization's *Weltanschauung*. Like Abraham before us, we too must be prepared to leave the land and ways of our father's house and seek a new life and new understanding.[67] In making this journey towards the other, we make a movement beyond the limited cultural goals of our own place and time in the direction of the universal. But, as Levinas clarifies, here the conception is otherwise. For Levinas, Israel is "a formation and expression of the universal; but of the universal insofar as it unites persons without reducing them to an abstraction in which their singularity of unique beings is sacrificed to the genus; universality in which uniqueness has already been approached in love."[68]

It is with reference to this *limitless duty* to the other, then, to the truly human being who stands before us even at the far corners of the Earth, that we can appropriate our task of *tikkun haolam*, mending the world ruptured in this century. Jerusalem, too, offers us an appeal that claims universal validity. It may be that if there is a *telos/entelechy* for humanity, it is to be found not in the origin which is Athens, but in the other origin that is Jerusalem. In this origin we find not the *philosophia perennis*, not philosophy as rigorous science, not the originary thinking attuned to Being's unconcealment, but the simple word of a *psalm*, the simple word of a *prayer*, and the simple word of a *proverb*. Herein is to be found not the *sophia* of the Greeks but something akin to it, called *chokmah*, "wisdom" if you will. This wisdom teaches a universal duty that lays claim to an infinite right and so admonishes us against transgression of the other. As Levinas says in yet another Talmudic reading, this time in reference to a biblical text (2 Sam. 21): "In Israel, princes die a horrible death because strangers were injured by the sovereign."[69] King David does not refuse the Gibeonites their "cruel justice". But the lesson, the Talmudic wisdom, by which we should be instructed even today, is this: "The Talmud teaches that one cannot force men who demand retaliatory justice to grant forgiveness. It teaches us that Israel does not deny this imprescriptable right to others. But it teaches us

above all that if Israel recognizes this right, it does not ask it for itself and that to be Israel is to not claim it."[70]

As we consider the problem of philosophical identity today in its relation to the quest for planetary thinking, we have every reason to appropriate the legacy of Jerusalem.[71] Contemporary Jewish philosophy offers itself in the service of *tikkun haolam*. Levinas is, from one perspective, the apt "Jewish philosopher" of today. Fully versed in the phenomenology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, yet also competent in the Jewish tradition of Talmudic scholarship, Levinas contributes a "phenomenology of the other" and thus provides us with one means of bridging the fundamental rupture of Western philosophy.[72] Both through his Talmudic readings and his phenomenology of *the* other, *Levinas offers us an instruction* that, were we to appropriate it, may yet help to heal the breach. As John Wild remarked in his "Introduction" to Levinas's *Totality and Infinity*, "Responsible communication [between the other and myself] depends on an initial act of generosity, a giving of my world to him with all its dubious assumptions and arbitrary features. They are then exposed to the questions of the other, and an escape from egotism becomes possible."[73] One must take care here, however, to bear in mind that this escape from egotism is never a totalizing comprehension of the other. As Levinas himself says, the other most truly presents him/herself *kath auto*: "Manifestation *kath auto* consists in a being telling itself to us independently of every position we would have taken in its regard, *expressing itself*."[74]

If we learn from Levinas, then, a genuinely planetary thinking, in which traditions of thought encounter each other, we will emerge with a productive efficacy when we acknowledge at the outset of the encounter that, "The other is not an object that must be interpreted and illumined by my alien thought. He shines forth with his own light, and speaks for himself."[75] It is important, therefore, that we always be open to the challenge that the encounter with the other poses for our egotism. Justice in this encounter "involves obligations with regard to an existent that refuses to give itself, the Other..."[76]

Properly to engage the other is to endure this refusal by avoiding those *reductive* maneuvers which then conceive the other as a "generality" and so do violence to the other in his/her refusal. Generality that then presents itself as an *anonymous universality* is, as Levinas says, in that maneuver already an "inhumanity" to the other. If we would be "moral" in relation to the other, we need bear in mind always that

"Morality begins when freedom, instead of being justified by itself, feels itself to be arbitrary and violent."[77] And, if we would invoke "reason" in our encounter of the other, then let us understand further that "The essence of reason consists not in securing for man a foundation and powers, but in calling him in question and in inviting him to justice."[78]

Accordingly, the European philosopher must consider first and foremost that even as his/her language is already a *polemos*, even more so is there violence in Husserl's "discovery" of "the teleology of European history." Derrida, I think correctly, observed that herein is an unwitting *metaphysical* racism.[79] Precisely here, where the essence of Western reason is advanced as a covert metaphysical racism, must we call ourselves into question and invite ourselves to justice. To call ourselves into question is to heed the call to peace as "a call more urgent than that of truth," as Levinas says.[80] In this peace "it is not a matter of peace as pure rest that confirms one's identity but of always placing in question this very identity."

To accept this invitation in the "epiphany" of the other is to concede forthwith that already, in that very epiphany, is attested "the presence of...the whole of humanity, in the eyes that look at me."[81] Challenging the philosophical basis of the modem state, Levinas therefore properly asks whether its founding and preserving "proceeds from a war of all against all — or from the irreducible responsibility of the one for the other. It is not without importance to know this so that war does not become the institution of a war with a good conscience in the name of historical necessities."[82] The sages representing the wisdom of Jerusalem understood the full claim of the other's epiphany when they taught, in the Talmudic tractate *Sanhedrin*, that

> ...any man who has saved a Jewish soul, it is as if he had saved a whole world. But here, too, let us apprehend the principle that goes beyond the literal reference to ethnicity. To save a soul is to act according to the requirements of justice. But it is a justice of the laws that are always subject to the review of love, in which the uniqueness of none can be forgotten. A difficult universality...,[83]

Let us, too, then, be among those who act now and henceforth to receive all the children of Abraham and thereby perform our *tikkun*. In this act, we enable our genuinely planetary dwelling.

VI. Concluding Reflection

I conclude with a return to my opening remark that we are today on that stretch of the road in our history whereupon European and non-European alike are called to a reflection upon the matter of philosophical identity and the quest for planetary thinking. From the foregoing survey it is clear that the non-European pursues a philosophical identity consistent with a particularized conception of "anthropological essence." This is true for Asian, African, Latin American, and even that diasporic phenomenon known as Israel that becomes assimilated to the European in the modem "Jewish" state. We have here, in all these cases, nothing other than *signs* of what Husserl and Heidegger both anticipated would likely occur in the transition beyond crisis. Husserl called it the "Europeanization" of the non-European, even as the non-European inevitably retains a "spiritual autonomy" expressed in a given *Weltanschauung* philosophy. Heidegger called it the "broadening" of *Western* history into *world* history by way of a diffusion of scientific-technological rationality. Thus, in the encounter of civilizations, the dynamic is less a "clash" (in the sense recently heralded by Samuel Huntington) than it is a gradual movement of *subsumption*. *The* movement is one of hegemony, both epistemological and political.

This is hardly a trivial matter for the comparative study of civilizations, given that this field of study envisions epistemological and political possibilities of intercultural understanding, along the lines of what I (following Hans-Georg Gadamer) take to be a "fusion of horizons." A movement of subsumption, however, proceeds under the tutelage of a *vertical* comportment that presupposes *hierarchy* in contrast to the reciprocity implicit in horizonal fusion.

Husserl and Heidegger understood that the technological rationality of the modem European philosophical project would carry with it an institutionalized violence, consistent with European humanity's self-assertion of its "archontic" status. European *concepts*, European *categories*, European *institutions—all* would be diffused to the non-European for an appropriation that tacitly *expropriates* and insidiously *decommissions* the local autonomy expressed as their ownmost *Weltanschauung* philosophy *(ethno-philosophy)*.

Thus, the debates between "ethnophilosophy" and "scientific" or "theoretical" philosophy are already signs of Europe's hegemonic presence that is "quiescent" despite the empirical fact of postcoloniality in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Commitments to "anthropological

essence" are signs of epistemological subsumption. Assertions of "nationalism" and "liberation" *qua* "statism" in the developing world are already signs of political subsumption according to the dictate of modem subjectivism expressed collectively (the later Heidegger asserted as much). Even the discourse on "human rights" with its debate between universalists and particularists discloses the hegemony of the European legal order. In all these situations of intellectual engagement, those who champion a "local identity" do not for the most part discern their cooptation, thus a tacit constraint upon their *authentic (eigentlich)* "emancipation."

In all the foregoing, the central fact is that all—Asian, African, Latin American, Jew claim a right to philosophy and, thus, a right to philosophical identity. Derrida observed recently that states that adhere to the charters of international institutions (such as UNESCO) "commit themselves, in principle, *philosophically*, to recognize and put into operation in an effective way something like philosophy and a certain philosophy of rights and law, the rights of man, universal history, etc."[84] But, here is a sign, a *signatured* commitment from the participants:

> The signature of these charters is a philosophical act that makes a commitment to philosophy in a way that is philosophical. From that moment on, whether they say so or not, know it or not, or conduct themselves accordingly or not, these states and peoples, by reason of their joining *(par leur adhesion)* these charters or participating in these institutions, contract a philosophical commitment—therefore, at the very least, a commitment to provide the philosophical culture or education that is required for understanding and putting into operation these commitments made to the international institutions, which are, I repeat, philosophical in essence.[85]

Derrida's remarks here are relevant to the dynamic of civilizational encounter that visibly succumbs to European hegemony; for he holds out the possibility that presents itself beyond this or that expression of anthropological essence to which Asian, African, Latin American, and post-Holocaust Jew are at present committed. As he says, "There are other ways for philosophy than those of appropriation as expropriation (to lose one's memory by assimilating the memory of the other, the one being opposed to the other, as if an *expropriation* were not possible, indeed the only possible chance)."[86]

Derrida points to the fact that *there is no single origin of philosophy,* notwithstanding the dominance of the governing "semantic

regime" that Europeanizes the other. My point is that the tension between the origin that is "Athens" and the origin that is "Jerusalem" keeps open the possibility of *displacement* of that "act of memory" essential to any recursive discourse that deconstructs the Western tradition. To displace the act of memory that recurs to "Athens" is to invite the act of memory that recurs to Jerusalem and so to enable a movement in thought within another semantic regime. This possibility of displacement "beyond appropriation and expropriation" is precisely the possibility the non-European "philosopher" must engage as a necessary interrogation of an ostensibly determined philosophical identity that is actually, on the contrary, always to be kept in question.

Thus, given the reflection as I have carried it out heretofore, I cannot but leave the European philosopher, the African philosopher, the Latin American philosopher, and the post-Holocaust Jewish philosopher with an admonition. This admonition is decidedly proleptic and oblique in its formulation, given that our time is transitional between points of origin and the tension between semantic regimes. To assert as much, I realize, is at the same time to inaugurate and to sustain a disputation with those engaged in the comparative study of civilizations, and thus to encourage and await multiple displacements. And so, now to admonish, I submit: *To give utterance to a philosophical identity today is to do violence to the advent of planetary thinking*. It is the violence that issues from a presumed warrant to defend the rights that are one's own—European, Asian, African, Latin American, post-Holocaust Jew—while being forgetful of *the primacy of the rights of the other*, which are properly always the first to be defended. It is this *epistemological/ontological/ethical/political/legal* component that invites all to that stature of humanity that is "self-conscious," i.e., aware of and committed to performing limitless duties. Such is the promise of planetary thinking beyond philosophical identity, a thinking that is itself a limitless duty in the service of planetary dwelling.[87]

NOTES

1 See Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992)

2 Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, trans, w. Kluback and J.T. Wilde (New Haven: College and University Press, 1958), p. 107

3 Ibid., p. 1
4 Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences, trans. D. Carr* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 15
5 Ibid., p. 16
6 Ibid., p. 17
7 Ibid., p. 17
8 Ibid., p. 277
9 Ibid., pp. 279-280
10 Ibid., p. 280
11 Ibid., p. 283
12 Ibid., pp. 284-285
13 Ibid, p. 287
14 Ibid., p. 288
15 Ibid., p. 289
16 Ibid., p. 299
17 Ibid., p. 299
18 Ibid., p. 391
19 Ibid., p. 394
20 Carl Friedrich von Weizsacker, "Universality and Certainty", in his *The Unity of the Sciences* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980), pp.72-83, at, p. 72
21 Ibid., p. 72
22 Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy, trans.* Q. Lauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 125
23 Ibid., p. 126
24 Ibid., pp. 126&127
25 Ibid., pp. 127-128
26 Ibid., p. 143
27 Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. D. CaLms (Doredrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 16
28 See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983)
29 Ibid., p. 7
30 Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, op. cit., "Second Meditation", p. 28
31 Ibid., p. 30

32 Ibid., pp. 35-36
33 Ibid., p. 133
34 Ibid., p. 133
35. See R.B.J. Walker, ed., *Culture, Ideology, and World Order* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984)
36 Ibid., p. 7
37 Jorge J.E. Gracia, ed., *Latin American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1986), p. 210
38 Ibid., "The Actual Function of Philosophy in Latin America", p. 220; taken from Zea's *Ensayos sobre filosofia en la historia* (Mexico: Stylo, 1948).
39 Ibid., pp. 220-221
40 Ibid., p. 225
41 Ibid., pp. 233; taken from Bondy's The *Meaning and Problem of Hispanic American Thought*, ed., J.P. Augelli (Lawrence: Center of Latin American Studies of the University of Kansas Press, 1969).
42 Ibid., p. 239
43 Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth & Reality*, 2nd edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 34. For current discussions on various aspects of African philosophy, see the journal, *African Philosophy*, especially Vol. 12, No. 1, March 1999.
44 Ibid., p. 47
45 Ibid.., p. 56
46 Ibid., p. 98
47 Ibid., p. 172
48 Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 4
49 Ibid., p. 5
50 Ibid., p. 136
51 Olusegun Oladipo, "Reason, Identity, and the African Quest: The Problems of Self-Definition in African Philosophy", *Africa Today*, 1995, Vol. 42, No. 3, pp. 26-39
52 W.L. van der Merwe, "African Philosophy and Multiculturalism", *South African Journal of Philosophy*, August 1997, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 73-80.
53 Emil Fackenheim, *Jewish Philosophers and Jewish*

Philosophy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996

54 Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964). Strauss's opening statement in the "Introduction" to this work is: "It is not self-forgetting and pain-loving antiquarianism nor self-forgetting and intoxicating romanticism which induces us to … with passionate interest, with unqualified willingness to learn, toward the political thought of antiquity. We are impelled to do so by the crisis of our time, the crisis of the West." See also Strauss's essay, "Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections", *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 147-173.

55 See Norman K. Swazo, "A Preface to Silence: On the Duty of Vigilant Critique," *Janus Head;' Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature. Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology, and the Arts,* Vol. II, No. 2, Fall 1999, pp. 189-215

56 See his essay, "A Political Philosophy for the State of Israel: Fragments" in Fackenheim (1996), op. cit., pp. 195-208.

57 See Norman K. Swazo, *"Gnothi sauton*: Heidegger's Problem Ours," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology,* 25:3, October 1994, pp. 262-286

58 Emmanuel Levinas, "Contempt for the Torah as Idolatry", *In the Time of the Nations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 67

59 Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. A. Aronowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.108

60 Emil Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of a Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 259

61 Jean Amery, "Torture," in J.K. Roth & M. Berenbaum, eds., *Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Perspectives* (St. Paul: Paragon House, 1989), p. 177 See also Jean Amery, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).

62 See Levinas, op. cit., "Judaism and Revolution", pp. 94-119.

63 Ibid., p. 98 See Samuel N. Hoenig, *The Essence of Talmudic Law and Thought* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1993)

65 Ibid., p. 98

66 Ibid., p. 99; italics mine

67 I adopt here the words of L.E. Goodman, *God of Abraham* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

68 Emmanuel Levinas, "From Ethics to Exegesis", *In the Time of the Nations,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 109

69 Ibid., p. 27. The reference here is to King David's act of justice in which seven male descendents of King Saul are surrendered over to death at the hands of the Gibeonites in recompense for Saul's own transgression against them.

70 Ibid., pp. 28-29

71 In saying this I would nonetheless have us be mindful of the following remark from Levinas: "But it's the fundamental contradiction of our situation (and perhaps of our condition)...that both the hierarchy taught by Athens and the *abstract* and slightly *anarchical* ethical individualism taught by Jerusalem are simultaneously necessary in order to suppress violence. Each of these principles, left to itself, only furthers the contrary of what it wants to secure." See Levinas's "Transcendence and Height", *in Basic Philosophical Writings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 11-31.

72 Levinas is, of course, critical of both Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and Heidigger's thought of Being while nevertheless appropriating the phenomenological method as essential to his own philosophical discourse. To read Levinas's work in relation to the projects of Husserl and Heidegger, however, one cannot ignore the wholly pertinent interrogation of this relation as carried out by Derrida in his "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 79-153.

73 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 14

74 Ibid., p. 65

75 Ibid., p. 14

76 Ibid., p. 45

77 Ibid., p. 84
78 Ibid., p. 88
79 Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. G. Bennington & R. Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
80 Levinas, "Peace and Proximity," in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, pp. 161-169, at p. 165
81 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 213
82 Levinas, *Peace and Proximity*, p. 169
83 Levinas, "From Ethics to Exegesis," op. cit., pp. 112-113
84 Jacques Derrida, "The Right to Philosophy from the Cosmopolitan Point of View," in Jacques Derida, *Ethics, Institutions, and the Right to Philosophy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002)
85 Ibid., pp. 3-4
86 Ibid., p. 10
87 This is not the place to contribute to the substance of what I intend by the words "planetary thinking." For a preliminary indication, however, the reader is referred to my Crisis Theory and World Order: *Heideggerian Reflections* (Albany: SUNY Press, Series in Global Politics, 2002).