

Click on the link below to download a PDF copy of my translation of “From the Ontology of the Thing to the Ethic of the Other”, or “Dall’ontologia della cosa all’etica dell’altro” by [Carlo Lottieri](#), an Italian philosopher of law and political science. He graciously approved my request to translate his essay, and he has edited and approved the translation. I reviewed and revised the translation in December 2012.

### [From the Ontology of the Thing to the Ethic of the Other](#)

I translated this paper because it presents a philosophical view which strongly evokes the second greatest commandment within the Judeo-Christian tradition, to love one’s neighbor as oneself. Philosophical ideas pervade the culture in countless unconscious ways, and the effects of non-realist, idealist and nihilist philosophies have eroded the status of the person for centuries, with profound consequences in society. Lottieri’s essay provokes thought on how law and justice have been perverted as a result.

The central tenet of the essay is that the increasing loss of a realist worldview in modernity has led to a corresponding decline in how we view and treat others, not only individually but in society. The essay is in three brief sections.

In the first section he traces the influence of scepticism in modernity and the subsequent trends toward ethical relativism, which in turn give rise to political and legal systems such as legal realism, or law as social game, and juridical positivism, in which human rights are simply those granted by civil authority or social agreement.

In the second section he discusses the resultant hegemony of consciousness, of the I, with humanity eventually displacing the Creator himself. The result is a rise in political tyranny and the oligarchic domination of the many by the few, whether in society, politics or economics.

In the final section, in contrast to Heidegger’s ontologically centered philosophy, Lottieri finds a radical alternative in the ethical philosophy of Emanuel Lévinas. For Lévinas ethics is first philosophy, a privileged form of encountering the world by first encountering the Other. It is in this radical view of the Other that Lottieri finds a foundation on which we may hope to build a just, lawful and charitable society.