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A LEVINASIAN OPENING ON THE AFFIRMATIVE ETHICS OF CARE

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Abstract: In the order of beingness, duty is a state much closer to Dasein than any form of rationality could be. The true duty and the true respect for the golden rule can only come from the authenticity of one's beingness. The same goes for what we call humility. This duty, as an existential state, is a movement of the spirit which seems to be overwhelmed by the care for the Other, towards the Other. Any duty which does not "move the being", and which results, for example, from reason, is unauthentic and, viewed from a phenomenological perspective, it means the alienation of the appreciative capacity of the beingness - understood as Dasein.

As such, appreciative ethics can only be placed at the crossroads between constructionism - as a theory on the agreed existence, and the phenomenology which enables the understanding of the subjective experience of the process of social construction of reality itself.

Key Words: Levinas, moral responsibility, affirmative ethics, appreciative ethics.

Introduction

Levinas designs an ethics of human dignity, generated by the value of responsibility. It is a form of *ethics encounter by, based on the awakening of the self towards Another*; the overcoming of the in-Oneself in its gratuitousness beyond-one's-own-self-for-another; the vocation of the action for the Other (who is the *defender of moral life*), which involves responsibility. The concept of responsibility is the expression of the humanity's consciousness, including the *entire seriousness of the love for the neighbour*.

Responsibility claims a previous reflection upon the consequences of our decisions and requires our actions to be in accordance with to what was predicted. As an attitude regarding consciousness and practice - what *has to be done* is assumed and respected, fulfilled on the basis of belief - responsibility is a measure of freedom. The two categories of value can function only through interaction.

The call into beingness as a subjective duty

Kant bases his ethics on practical reason and on the concept of duty as its result. The concept of duty, which derives directly from reason and joins autonomous will, foreshadows the process by which one's consciousness, called by the duty towards the Other, falls away from its own *Ego*. The true duty as an ideal form of respect for the golden law derives from the authenticity of the Ego's beingness and represents a movement of the spirit towards the Other as a form of responsibility¹. A duty which results from pure reason, and does not imply a movement of the being towards the Other, is inauthentic. By following Heidegger's suggestion, authenticity is rather seen as care, not as existential angst and, more precisely as a form of care that results from a form of responsibility which transcends one's own being and constitutes it ontologically². Duty, as an existential state, is the movement of the Ego, which lets itself to be filled with care for the Other. The expression of infinite responsibility is individualized under the form of caring, since being responsible even in an infinite manner can only conjure the Ego into beingness as pure potentiality. Responsibility potentiates the Ego, cleaving the transcendental subject from the Other. Singularizing the alterity under the form of face transforms responsibility into care. Calling the Other into beingness for one's self is done by caring. Thus, we separate the responsibility towards the Other, singularized as face, from the infinite responsibility towards Another, as absolute potentiality of any face.

The "Another" is a non-subject which makes the Ego responsible in the absolute sense. The "Another" is the non-Ego that descends the Ego into being by absolute denial, determining it as *The One that is responsible*.

The relationship with the Other as Another which is determined not only as differing from the Ego, but as standing in front of the Ego, is characterized as the relationship of *responsible knowledge* or *caring knowledge*. It is a form of knowledge that understands the being and is self-valorising. The understanding of the being is, at the same time, an “appreciation”, namely an apperception of the value of the Other as receiver of responsibility and object of caring.

We are using the term appreciation as it is used in the appreciative inquiry, as valuing something or someone, as sensing what (s)he does for something to be good, to give it life and energy. Thus, we have brought up the term appreciation in the metaphysical relationship between subject and object, as a positive form of singularizing the Levinasian infinite responsibility.

The infinite responsibility calls the Ego into being for the aim of caring. Responsibility is an intrinsic state of the Ego which turns towards the Other. Leaving the self for the relationship with the Other is what makes the Self exist, bringing it in relationship with the Other. This Levinasian form of bringing the Self in relationship with the Other resembles Descartes’ determination of the ontological centrality.

Responsibility appears as an existential tension – as an energy which creates the very existence. This energy of the responsibility is cleaved into *appreciation* – as a valuation of the Other and as an in-Oneself, and *caring* – as an action of the Self, aimed at achieving the Other’s potentiality as an act of beingness. Speaking about the appreciative capacity of the Being as that power to sense the Other as One other than the Self and to instantly generate a connection with This Other, which brings both the Ego and the Other into Being, releasing them from the captivity of infinite responsibility, we can mention two models of Alterity: one whose privileged relationship with the Alterity is represented by *equity*, and the other whose feature is *caring*. Both are expressions of infinite responsibility, objectified by leaving the self. Falling away from the Self in order to reach the Another can be achieved first by appreciating This One, then by a type of caring which rejects the Alterity as if it were a half-brother who needed to be killed and whose body – an existential sign – needed to be hidden from any eyes, or, more precisely, made to disappear as Face³. Levinas argues that the fact that there is also a responsibility towards the non-face represents the reason why we cannot get rid of the infinite Alterity by destroying the face of the Other. Care is the apprehension of the Self for Another. The central structure of the experience is the Self’s orientation towards the Self, or in other words, the Self’s falling away from the Self, for the Self.

In order to get constituted itself within the content of the transcendental experience, the Ego needs to express Itself as intention. The experience is always an experience of something, and the conscience turns towards the objects that constitute its content as representation.

The conscience cannot be empty of content as an in-Oneself, but a conscience of Something. The content of the conscience and the conscience itself allow the division into subject and object, enabling the conscience to know itself as an object of self-consciousness. Becoming the object of self-consciousness and thereby a content of knowledge, consciousness becomes to any cleavage a *to be known* that constitutes the Alterity as a fundamental experience of the Self. Consciousness becomes self-consciousness only in relation to the Alterity. The phenomenology of responsibility presents responsibility as a transcendental existential. Phenomenology speaks of the significant Alterity, namely the Other as Dasein. Being experiential, responsibility constitutes itself into conscience as responsibility of the Self. As Levinas¹² affirms responsibility itself pre-exists even the constitution of the consciousness as Self. As such, responsibility pre-exists any division into subject and object, or more precisely, into self-consciousness and consciousness towards Another. The pre-existence has ontological, not temporal value. In order to be able to simultaneously call the Ego and the non-Ego into existence, responsibility needs to call forth an “appreciation” of the non-Ego as value. From this perspective, appreciation is knowledge charged with responsibility. The very process of cleaving the consciousness into Ego and non-Ego, which involves the non-existential tension that brings them both into being, resides in the action of charging knowledge with responsibility.

The priority of responsibility to existence

Levinas is the one who sees ethics as first ontology⁴, showing that ethics precedes existence⁵. The uniqueness of the Ego comes from its subjective responsibility⁶. The priority of the responsibility towards Another, to one’s own existence⁷, underlies the subjective nature of ethics.

The care for the Other substitutes the concern for the Self. It is this concern for the Other, and not the concern for the Self, that determines the subject-object duality. The creation of borders determines the distinction between what is own and alterity⁸. Alienation is seen as the nature of temporality, it is as if the individual became a stranger in a foreign land. The normative dimension appears as a part of the process of constructing the self, either under the form of assimilation, or as objectification of the possession⁹. In Levinas’ view¹⁰, the definition of ethics and the interrogative approaches regarding the possibility of ethics go beyond the construction of a morality or an ethical lifestyle. Levinasian ethics is mainly ontological, showing the possibility of any ethics, rather than the construction of an ethics¹¹. For Levinas, Alterity, and more specifically the relationship with the Alterity, is the one that constitutes the individual as self. The conscience of interiority is substituted by objectivity regarded as a phenomenon. Placing oneself in objectivity, in

exteriority, is regarded by Levinas¹² as a way of existence which is specific to the human condition.

For Levinas, pure transcendence is not intended to interrupt the totalization as an act of signifying the one who assumes the achievement of justice to the glory of God. Transcendence is the one that guides individuals towards the ordinary acts, without taking away the heroicness of their work in the name of the Lord. The human being's commitment to announce the infinite replaces revelation. What is finite is, therefore, crossed by heteronomy. The law indicates separation, thus opening up a perspective towards the others and the world, and cultivating, within the human being, an inner ability of interrogation and movement, through which it becomes law¹³.

Heteronomy is internalised as the expression of a separate God, being invoked to shape the world in virtue of an image of the separate God. Such a separation breaks the relationship between the Ego and the Alterity, awarding the Other a Face, a substitute for the Image that has never been seen.

Since ritual discipline makes it possible to keep the believer away from the magic, the action "compliant with the law" requires study¹⁴. For Levinas, prayer and study become the expressions of the attention to the excessive dimension of God, which is the guarantee of the existence of one single way, the salvation of the bettered world¹⁵. For Levinas, the Jewish tradition generates the consciousness towards the world, within ourselves and outside ourselves. The world is conceived as a totality which is separated from God, yet subsisting in front of God. Moreover, the world is also conceived as separate from the humankind, constituting its Alterity. Guy Petitdemange argues that Levinas' affiliation to the Jewish spiritual tradition can underlie his understanding of responsibility in an ontological sense. The author shows that Levinas comes from the Pharisaic and Talmudic Judaism of grandeur, forged in the spiritual horizon of mid-twentieth century Vilnius, a city called the Jerusalem of the North. The Talmudic tradition, which nurtured Levinas' formation, focuses on the transcendence of the divine, whose singular image is represented by the substitution of the image of Divinity through human commitment¹⁶. The believer's surrender in the excess of Self-abnegation for the Other can only be the true recognition of the highness of the Most High. God's non-contamination with the world is transcendent; thus, the human and mundane act of the work of justice is the only one able to proclaim the greatness of God. In the Jewish tradition developed in Lithuania, the ontological perspective is separated from the mystical one, placing the religious experience beyond any ontological structure, the occurrence of a miracle or the exhibition of the sacred. God's representation is reduced to the few letters of the name that has never been uttered.

Levinas¹⁷ shows iconoclastic radicalism against God's denaturation into sacred, which, to his view, is nothing more than the projection of the

Self and, hence, a descent into immanence. The language of reason is transformed along with the occurrence of the revelation, both discourses enabling the philosopher's positioning in the world. The fact that he has studied Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenology underlies the philosopher's idea of the relationship between Spirit and Inside-outside, starting from the fundamental frameworks of the phenomenology, especially from the idea of intentionality. The spirit finds itself in relation with this Inside-outside, for the Ego can reach the Self only through a constant substitution with this Inside-outside. Therefore, this Inside-outside needs to be defined. Instead of defining itself through an intimacy with the Self, philosophy has to become the display or the science of a worldview of the falling-away-from-the-self.

Due to the attention which becomes an internal tension of reason itself, the knowledge of revelation has been promised to Reason. Levinas discovers the existence of an awakening produced by reason's relation to something deeper than the Self. Thus, in view of the proximity of the Neighbour, the ethics of the relationship with the Other derives from a certain vigilance, which is seen as a substitution of the identity with the Neighbour.

The seriousness which serves the language, offering the incomparable feeling of new, is the abandonment of the human being's responsibility, the immediate given of revelation. Yet, the self-sufficient immanence, which can be reached by the means of philosophy, does not represent the final boundary of reason. However, reason is able to discover the desolation and fatigue caused by existence, making all the wonders of the spirit disappear. The act of escaping places the being in the perspective of the exterior, which is utopian in the process of abandoning the being.

One can, therefore, clearly see that Levinas has been influenced by Heidegger¹⁸ and his perspective upon the being that is constantly relating itself to the imminence of near death. Levinas reflects upon Heidegger's work, especially on the idea of death as possibility of the impossibility, as it appears from the perspective of finitude, which is the only acceptable perspective from the phenomenological point of view. Death is not seen as transition, metamorphosis or delay, but as a point where all the representations collapse; through one's own death, everything goes into the abyss¹⁹. The conception of death and finitude turns Levinas towards the inner being, the only ontological space where something other than the being may exist. This shift appears as a movement of transcendence, for it is a way of defying death, as well as another way of dying²⁰.

The experience of inner, finite transcendence determines the need for representing the unrepresented. The Levinasian answer resides in the concept of the Face. His theory regarding the concept of the Face excludes any psychologism. The relationship with the Face is emotional; it is neither constructed, nor deducted, but imposed by the inner movement of transcendence. Since the Face is not a representation, but the very

presentification of the Other as Face, the relationship with the Face is not imposed by any obligation, for what is given does not always enjoy an undeniable positivity. For Levinas, the Face of the Other, or more precisely understanding the Other as Face, ceases the reiteration of the Same, thus making place for the Other.

The Face makes the Other be present, not as absolute identity, which is itself unrepresentable, but as the Face that bears and represents Him in relation with the Other, the Same and the Self. The concept of Person, which comes from the Orthodox theology, and can be found especially in the version presented by Father Stăniloae²¹ is constructed in a somewhat similar manner to the concept of Face. The concept of *Person* is the one which connects the divine hypostases and the human being as the image and likeness of God. Therefore, the idea of Image underlies the definition of the individual as Person that is able to stand before God, and thus believe in the possibility of salvation. For Levinas it is obvious that the being is vaster than we may know, the Face representing the crossroads where the undeniable power of the being comes out as the sensitive enigma of the Alterity, containing all the contradictions imposed by the confrontation with the force, energy and essence of the being.

For Levinas²², the actual experience of the Alterity is not seen radically, such as, for example, under the form of meeting God, understood as an enlarged Ego, but rather as the simple experience of meeting the Other. Meeting the Other is not a pursuit of the Other. Responsibility, as the ontological act, of being together with the Other, regardless of His response, is preferred to the pursuit as leaving the self. Therefore, responsibility cannot be bilateral; it is always the responsibility of the Self towards the Other.

However, responsibility is a response of the Self to the call of the Other, regarded as Face, and this subtle movement within transcendence places ethics before ontology. Kindness appears before the conscience of kindness and the willingness to be good. The relationship of responsibility involves a relationship of love for the Other; however, according to Levinas, love does not involve social reality.

The exteriority of the being and its moral nature

The exteriority of the being, discussed by Levinas²³, has a moral nature, and intersubjective relationships get the sense of a horizon of the ethical interaction. The relationship with the Alterity is constitutive to any moral form, since being good or bad only makes sense within the framework of a relationship between a moral agent and a moral patient. For, unlike thinkers such as Aristotle or Kant, who awarded virtue, vice or duty with universal valences, the current, rather postmodern, ethics relates the moral values to a human referential, among which the most

important one remains Alterity, both in its immediate form – the Neighbour understood in its Biblical sense – as well as in its generally human form. The relationship with the Alterity is the one that determines the individual's responsibility towards the Other. From the phenomenological perspective, Levinas regards responsibility as preceding existence. Responsibility is essential to the human condition in a privileged manner. Levinas²⁴ opens the way for a possible and presumed phenomenology of the existence, towards which we are already responsible. In terms of the current ethics, we are used to debate, for instance, the responsibility towards the future generations, towards the subsequent actions or the living conditions of a person who is to be born. For example, pollution makes us responsible for an inadequate environment for the lives of our descendants, even if they have only a future possible existence. In terms of the ethics of public policies, for example, starting from Levinas we state that the responsibility of the public manager is constitutive for the existence of the position and justifies the necessity of its occurrence²⁵.

Responsibility as a form of call into being

Levinas²⁶ ethics is based on the model of responsibility towards a passive subject. Emanuel Levinas speaks about responsibility in terms of the ontology of the human, whereas it calls the human being “into being”, constituting its essence. The Levinasian perspective is vetero-testamentary, encompassing the modern rabbinic thought in a phenomenological perspective. In Levinas' work, responsibility goes beyond the idea of practical responsibility towards a given Alterity; it is constituted both towards the absolute (divine) Alterity and towards the Other, represented by the human Alterity, namely the Neighbour.

The idea of a responsibility towards a determined Alterity, towards a practical Other, is religious, namely Judeo-Christian; Levinas is the one who transposes it into the phenomenological perspective, the perspective of the consciousness which assumes responsibility as its own form of existence. The fact that Descartes relates the existence to reason and places under doubt the certainty of one's own beingness is well-known. Therefore, we would like to emphasize a possible parallelism between the way in which, in his work, Descartes choses to confer thought an ontological centrality and the way in which, in his own work, Levinas confers responsibility such a pivotal role²⁷.

The model of responsibility towards the Neighbour influences both the philosophical as well as the legal thinking in what regards the Other. If the Levinasian perspective and the Judeo-Christian one in general propose responsibility as an existential tension i.e., an energy which creates the very existence, the modern thinking proposes confrontation as a model of

responsible relationship with the Alterity. To be more explicit, there are two models of alterity, one which derives from the modern type of conceiving equity and responsibility towards the Other's freedom of fulfilling their right as cores of human interaction, and the second one deriving from the spiritual and phenomenological thinking which views responsibility as care.

We believe that the modern paradigm which conceives justice as the fulfilment of one's right is based on the value of responsibility, understood in a Kantian key, as duty. The modern meanings of responsibility represent a semantic derivation of the concept of *duty* directed towards a complementary rather than an opposite alterity. The model based on the repugnance against the traditional justice places the individual in an opponent relationship with his/her own Alterity, both of them thus becoming subject to the procedural control of a third party invested with symbolic and coercive power. The model of deliberative justice, which is used, for example, in the practice of mediation, is based on the communicative action²⁸, which generates consensus, as opposed to the traditional judgment, which generates obligations.

The passive subject of the individual's responsibility is a certain person that is close to the moral, responsible actor, and with whom (s)he interacts. The criminal model of responsibility ponders the individual against his/her own victim, as well as against a subject of law, symbolically called state. The criminal offence is not vindicated directly by the victim or his/her caregivers, being rather transferred to the state. The legitimacy of the punishment is justified "through a social contract"²⁹ by which the citizens voluntarily give up their own right to revenge in favour of the State, in return for the guarantee of sociability. Criminal liability is a form of the individual's responsibility towards a generic person - the state - represented by magistrates. In this model of responsibility towards generic persons, we see the origin of the idea of responsibility towards non-presence, namely towards generic persons that are presumed to hold certain rights. The fiction called legal person is an attempt of reifying a non-present holder of rights and obligations. The reification of the non-presence and "its personalisation" enables the transition from the responsibility towards the Other to collective (and institutional) responsibility towards the non-presence as the holder of certain presumed subjective rights. Consequently, we can talk about responsibility towards the future generations, towards the environment, towards public welfare etc. *Common law* systems provide the community with the quality of passive actor of the legal liability and the responsibility for the individual's own conduct in general. A crime disturbs the social equilibrium of the community, for not only the victim is affected, but also the community as such. Therefore, the community is invited to impose sanctions through its representatives, the jurors³⁰.

Responsibility towards the non-presence

Jonas³¹ demonstrates that the model of the individual's responsibility towards those from the immediate spatial and temporal vicinity is today no longer sufficient, for the ability of the individuals, especially those regrouped in organizations, to harm large publics has become unprecedented. Collective actions are potentially harmful to persons and groups which are thousands of kilometres away and even to human beings who could exist in the future. Pollution, for example, harms the future generations, depriving them of certain elements of the quality of life determined by clean air, unpolluted food etc. Political or administrative decisions also carry the responsibility towards non-present persons and even towards potential persons. The decision regarding shale gas exploitation made by a number of politicians may affect the right to a clean environment – both the right of citizens from the exploited areas and the right of future generations who would, eventually, live in those areas. Jonas³² and Apel³³ understand the meaning of the concept of social responsibility as collective responsibility towards the potentially harmful collective actions. Such an example of collective responsibility is the social responsibility of corporations. Responsible corporations admit that the added value they have produced is the result of a process of exploitation which implies the human and material resources of the communities in the midst of which they operate. Corporate social responsibility requires that the companies return a part of their added value to these very communities, thus trying to rebalance the potential damage and to generate sustainable development. Unfortunately, many of the corporate social responsibility programmes are too often used as tools for promoting the organization and improving its public relations. Social responsibility is used as a legitimate instrument. In the context of the deconstruction of the major legitimating instances, such as the appeal to transcendent or political utopias etc., responsibility towards the generic Alterity takes over the legitimating function, enabling the development of power discourses.

The image as concealment and revelation

Levinasian ethics starts from the image of the Other, which refers to the Self. Otherwise than it would be, or beyond essence, Levinas³⁴ shows that the image is more naked than nudity itself. It is poverty, wrinkled skin, and the wrinkled skin is the footprint of the Self. Thus, the Ego is Self insufficiency and it is designed to seek completion in the relationship with the Other³⁵. To constitute the identity of the Ego as the withdrawal of the essence over itself³⁶ leads to its spatialisation as primordial relation to the

Self. The issue of responsibility is, therefore, the very act of locating the Self within its process of moving towards the Other. One can regard the Levinasian responsibility as a shortening of the distance between subject and object³⁷.

The responsibility towards the Other is related with the inability to put aside the God who replaces the Ego under the form of the absolute passivity from inside the Self³⁸. This silent witness, represented by God, is also an Other from inside the Self that makes the Self move. The ontological adherence of the Self to the Self is called by Levinas "hypostasis" and it is an event that enables the existent to contract the existence³⁹. The idea of *hypostasis* is characteristic for Eastern Orthodoxy, which focuses on the divine beingness as hypostasis. The divine trait of beingness as hypostasis allows the movement of the divine hypostases within Godhead, towards one another and towards the human being, constituting what Tudor Ghiddeanu called "the theandric sense of love"⁴⁰. Western theology has established the concept of person as term for hypostasis; yet, the notion of *person*, which also bears the sense of *mask* that conceals the true Face. For, Levinas is interested precisely in the idea of the Face of the Other, we are entitled to believe that the analogy with the idea of *hypostasis* is fully justified, due to its characteristic of expressing, at the same time, the movement in potency and the being of the movement itself, that is, in Levinasian terms, a contraction of the existence towards the Existent. The presence of the Other within the Self also refers to the idea of hypostasis and the way the Eastern Christian philosophers⁴¹ understood the unity of hypostases in *Godhead* and their separation in their nature of hypostasis.

Temporality as responsibility regards the Ego in its relation to the Self and the construction of the totality for the Self. Levinas rethinks the Alterity as proximity, not just as limit⁴². The Alterity remains uncharacterized by Another, as it lacks any attribute except that of closeness, of social proximity that implies means of its simple Alterity.

The Ego is constituted through the rupture between Same and Other⁴³. This rupture establishes a living connection between the Ego and Non-Ego as love of life, pleasure to live etc. This connection is made by externalizing the Ego projected into the Non-Ego and internalising the Non-Ego as part of the Self. Any activity of the Ego is achieved in the Non-Ego of one's own corporality and thus embedded in the externalized Ego⁴⁴. The Ego assimilates Another in its identity, being winded by Another. This winding with the Other is the "burst of the Self from pleasure"⁴⁵.

Constituting sensitivity as a relationship with the world of form and of the Non-Ego turns responsibility into *responsibility towards something*, thus overpassing the *responsibility towards totality*. The separation and discovering of the limit, as absolute singularization of the Other as Non-Ego, are paradoxically described by Levinas through the term *ethics*⁴⁶. This concept of *limit* also involves the idea of the horizon as intersection bet-

ween the Ego and the Alterity. The horizon is the meeting point between the Ego and the Alterity, where the Ego is Another and Another is the Ego, being neither completely Ego nor completely Another, neither completely Separated nor completely Unified. In our view, precisely this horizon is the key to understanding the idea of infinite, unconvertible and non-reciprocal responsibility that underlies Levinas' ontological ethics.

An appreciative perspective on ethics

We believe that a phenomenological understanding of responsibility as a subjective experience of the process of the social construction of reality is possible. The construction, as a result of negotiating the interpretations regarding reality in an interpretive community, is internalized, consequently becoming a content of the consciousness. Thus, it can be apperceived transcendently, even if its significance was negotiated with the significant Alterity of one's own interpretative group. From this point of view, responsibility is negotiated, and its meanings can be the following: liability, care, social responsibility, etc., depending on how the interpretative focus is laid. However, experiencing responsibility is apperceived as moving towards Another. Changing the perspective on Alterity and determining the Another as being significant changes the intrinsic significance of responsibility. A phenomenology of social responsibility can be thought only in the horizon of constituting the feeling of Us as Alterity. The identity constituted towards Another manages the responsibility as an existential Given in Levinas' approach. When the consciousness gives way to a Third, which is ontologically superior to Oneself, responsibility constitutes itself towards transcendence. The existentialized transcendence takes the shape of pure possibility and, thus, responsibility addresses the possibility of existence, or rather the virtual and virtualizing existence⁴⁷.

Appreciation is, in our opinion, the existential tension, as a field of Self-consciousness – Another. The relationship with the Other as responsibility represents the way the consciousness places itself in a transcendental relationship with any form of existence which can be constituted by it, through the act of appreciation, as Alterity. Thus, we can easily talk about responsibility towards a non presence, towards what does not yet exist, but could come into existence. In order to be able to constitute the experience of non presence within the consciousness, the Ego must achieve an act of its appreciation, establishing it as reality. The meeting with the Other as Non-present Alterity is achieved in a Heideggerian manner, in the horizon of death and temporality. Temporal evolution allows the Non-presence to be updated as a potential Another, towards which an infinite responsibility pre-exists. Since the responsibility manifests itself towards the Non-presence, and the Non-presence includes

all the entities that could exist – meaning that they have at least a few chances of coming into being – it means that responsibility should manifest itself both towards the totality and towards the infinite variations under which it comes into existence.

The central structure of the experience is the *betterment*, or, in other words, the act of *falling away from the Self*, or *for the Self*. In order to be constituted within the transcendental experience, the Ego must express itself as intention. However, the experience is never an in-Oneself experience; it is always an experience of something. The experience is directed towards objects, which constitute its content under the form of representation. Therefore, the content of the conscience cannot be an in-Oneself, but rather a conscience of something. The conscience cannot be empty of content. The content of the conscience and the conscience itself allow the division into subject and object, and then the conscience knows Itself as an object of the Self-consciousness. Having become an object of the Self-consciousness, hence a content of knowledge, it becomes a *to be known* which constitutes the Alterity as a fundamental experience of the self. Conscience becomes Self in the relation with the Alterity. The relationship between Self and Alterity is one of in-beingness of the Self within the relationship with the Alterity and for the Alterity⁴⁸.

Meeting the Other in the horizon of death and time can be the way of understanding the responsibility towards the non-present beings of the nonhuman or transhuman Alterity and, in general, towards objects of the consciousness endowed with moral value, yet not with conscience, for, responsibility is always towards the Other and it is insensitive to reciprocity. The object of responsibility and care may itself be transcendental⁴⁹.

From the ontological point of view, communication can only constitute responsibility by either postulating it as a transcendental form of the possibility of communication, or by giving up the claim of any existing subjective ontology and placing the essence into the idea of social construction, which will generate the antirealist character of communication ethics. The transcendental character of responsibility, which pre-exists in the nature of human consciousness itself, is difficult to be argued as long as one seeks to establish a communicative consensus⁵⁰. Moreover, the knowledge society expands the consensus regarding responsibility to the global community, which is required to become a communicative actor. Once the consensus is established, it becomes a constructive metanarration of a communication framework⁵¹. Moreover, that consensus is placed as a transcendental framework for the social action deriving from that communicative action. In order to understand the meaning of responsibility as transcendental existential, we are expanding our research to the phenomenology⁵² of responsibility as a transcendental possibility of any relationship with the Alterity.

The future generations, the human species and nature itself, as significant Another in front of our self-consciousness, become transcendent. This competes with the status of transcendence that we claim by virtue of the subjective experience of totality. Therefore, in Levinasian language⁵³, the relationship between us and the rest can be translated as the relationship between totality and infinity; thus, collective responsibility, understood as either social responsibility or the responsibility of the entire humanity, can be seen as a responsibility of the totality towards the infinity, which engages the conscience in its movement, allowing it to express itself as its own responsibility towards the Alterity. In our opinion, the claim to Alterity of both Us and the Rest, towards which we are collectively responsible, pushes collective responsibility into apory. To our view, a collective experience can only be established by bringing it to conscience and expressing it as conscience of the Self.

The fact that we collectively assume a duty towards the human species involves arising this duty to conscience; however, arising to conscience is not temporalized, as it precedes the awareness regarding responsibility. The responsibility which can be configured by conscience as transcendental does not differ, in its essence, when it appears as a responsibility towards the destiny of the human species. Responsibility is noumenal; we can see responsibility as an experience of the consciousness. The consciousness experiences responsibility as leaving the Self. Moreover, Levinas shows that another must be present as face; however, the philosopher chooses to express responsibility in terms of the relationship between Cain and Abel when it is invoked by God. The fratricidal act indicates the responsibility towards non-presence, being able to represent the prototype of any eco-ethics or bioethics, which is supposed to be based on the responsibility towards future generations.

From the phenomenological perspective, we can say that the ethics of responsibility⁵⁴ towards non-presence is built in an archetypal manner based on the responsibility towards *my brother*. In Levinas' view, God demanded from Cain exactly this type of responsibility⁵⁵. This cannot be different from the ontological responsibility as it is invoked in the Levinasian work. From the phenomenological point of view, one cannot develop a model of responsibility and, in general, an existential model that appears *ex nihilo* in the conscience, in order to describe the experiences of the consciousness in a given cultural era.

The future generations, the human species and nature itself become transcendent as the significant Another in front of our self-consciousness. This competes with the status of transcendence claimed by us in virtue of the subjective experience of totality. Therefore, in Levinasian language, the relationship between us and the rest can be translated as the relationship between totality and infinity.

Conclusions

The consciousness experiences responsibility as leaving *for self*. Moreover, Levinas shows that the Another must be present as Face. However, the philosopher chooses to express responsibility in the same terms in which God invokes the relationship between Cain and Abel.

In conclusion, we can argue that an ethics of responsibility towards non-presence can be developed starting from the responsibility for my brother, which is, as it has been reflected in the Levinasian work - ontological responsibility.

The appreciative context mainly regards the restatement of the idea of *care* by excluding it from the deficiency paradigm and including it into a paradigm of affirming the Other, as an *in Self* and *for Self* value. As act of appreciation, care is a responsible effort of affirming the inherent positivity of the Other. Caring is not the consequence of the feeling of pity, but the consequence of moral solidarity. The voice of appreciation takes on a feminine nature, meaning that it is mostly receptive to the other voices, without minding their weakness, yet by minding their intrinsic value. In Levinasian terms, this intrinsic value is the very face of Alterity. Responsibility transcends the existence, calling the Ego and the Alterity, both as Face(s), into being. The idea of appreciation enables the empowering, turning it into caring.

Notes

¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalitate și infinit. Eseu despre exterioritate (Totality and infinity. An essay on exteriority)* (Iasi: Polirom Publishing House, 1999).

² Levinas, *Totalitate și infinit*.

³ Levinas, *Totalitate și infinit*.

⁴ Jill Robbins, Ed., *Is it Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

⁵ Chris Hromas, "On the Relationship of Ethics to Moral Law: The Possibility of Nonviolence in Levinas's Ethics," *The California Undergraduate Philosophy Review* 1 (2003): 125-135.

⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, "The Trace of the Other," in *Deconstruction in Context*, ed. M. C. Taylor, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 345-359.

⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy," in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand, (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishing Company, 2001), 75-87.

⁸ Ecaterina Croitor, "*Etica responsabilitatii în societatea bazată pe cunoaștere*" (*Ethics of responsibility in the knowledge society*) (PhD thesis (unpublished) "Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, Faculty of History and Geography, 2015).

⁹ Hromas, "On the Relationship of Ethics", 125-135.

¹⁰ Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy", 75-87.

¹¹ Chloe Taylor, "Levinasian Ethics and Feminist Ethics of Care," *Symposium* 9 (2), (2005): 217-239, accessed January 11, 2016, doi: 10.5840/symposium20059220.

¹² Levinas, *Totalitate și infinit*.

¹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Trăirea lui Dumnezeu în Ortodoxie, Antologie, studiu introductiv și note de Sandu Frunză (Experiencing God in Orthodoxy, Anthology, introductory study and notes by Sandu Frunza)* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia Publishing House, 1993).

¹⁴ Guy Petitmange, *Filosofi și filosofii ale secolului al XX-lea (Philosophers and philosophies of the twentieth century)*, trans. Vistor Durnea (Chisinau: Cartier Publishing House, 2003).

¹⁵ Croitor, "Etica responsabilității".

¹⁶ Petitmange, *Filosofi și filosofii*.

¹⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Altfel decât a fi sau dincolo de esență (Otherwise than being or beyond essence)* (București, Romania: Humanitas Publishing House, 2006).

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Ființă și timp, (Being and time)*, trans. Gabriel Liiceanu and Cătălin Cioabă (București, Romania: Humanitas Publishing House, 2003).

¹⁹ Croitor, "Etica responsabilității", 42.

²⁰ Levinas, *Altfel decât a fi*.

²¹ Stăniloae, *Trăirea lui Dumnezeu*.

²² Levinas, *Altfel decât a fi*.

²³ Levinas, *Altfel decât a fi*.

²⁴ Levinas, *Altfel decât a fi*.

²⁵ Max Weber, *Etica protestantă și spiritul capitalismului (The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism)* (București, Romania: Humanitas Publishing House, 2004); Antonio Sandu, *Etica și practica socială (Social ethics and practice)* (Iasi, Romania, Lumen Publishing House, 2015).

²⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Cohen, R. A. (Pittsburgh, SUA, Duquesne University Press, 1985).

²⁷ Sandu, *Etica și practica socială*, 66.

²⁸ Jurgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2* (Boston, SUA, Beacon Press, 1987).

²⁹ Sandu, *Etică și practică socială*, 67.

³⁰ Antonio Sandu and Elena Unguru, *Ațiune comunicativă, justiție deliberativă și restaurativă. Medierea, probațiunea și etica juridică (Communicative action, deliberative and restorative justice. Mediation, probation and legal ethics)* (București, Romania: Tritonic Publishing House, 2014).

³¹ Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

³² Jonas, *The Imperative*.

³³ Karl-Otto Apel, "The Ecological Crisis as a Problem for Discourse Ethics," in *Ecology and Ethics*, ed. A. Ofsti (Trondheim: Nordland Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1992), 219-260; Karl-Otto Apel, "How to Ground a Universalistic Ethics of Co-Responsibility for the Effects of Collective Actions and Activities?," *Philosophica* 52 (1993): 9-29; Karl-Otto Apel, *The Response of Discourse Ethics to the Moral Challenge of the Human Situation as Such and Especially Today* (Mercier Lectures: Louvain-la-Neuve, 1999), 77-90.

³⁴ Levinas, *Altfel decât a fi*.

³⁵ Viorel Rotilă, *Tragicul în filosofia existențialistă franceză (The tragic in French existentialist philosophy)* (Iasi, Romania, Lumen Publishing House, 2009).

³⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Altfel decât a fi... (Otherwise than being...)*.

³⁷ Croitor, "Etica responsabilității", 67.

³⁸ Levinas, *Altfel decât a fi*.

³⁹ Levinas, *Altfel decât a fi*.

- ⁴⁰ Tudor Ghideanu, *Sensul teandric al iubirii (The theandric sense of love)* (Iasi, Romania: Lumen Publishing House, 2011).
- ⁴¹ Dionisie Pseudo-Areopagitul (Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite), *Despre numele divine. Teologia mistică (On the divine names. Mystical theology)* (Iasi, Romania: The European Institute Publishing House, 1993); Maxim Mărturisitorul (Maximus the Confessor), *Ambigua* (București, Romania: Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1983).
- ⁴² Levinas, *Altfel decât a fi*.
- ⁴³ Rotilă, *Tragicul în filosofie*, 85.
- ⁴⁴ Levinas, *Altfel decât a fi*.
- ⁴⁵ Levinas, *Totalitate și infinit*.
- ⁴⁶ Levinas, *Totalitate și infinit*.
- ⁴⁷ Sandu, *Etică și practică socială*, 197.
- ⁴⁸ Sandu, *Etică și practică socială*, 198.
- ⁴⁹ Sandu, *Etică și practică socială*, 203.
- ⁵⁰ Sandu Frunză, "Does Communication construct reality? A new perspective on the crisis of religion and the dialectic of the sacred," *Revista de Cercetare și Intervenție Socială*, 35 (2011): 180-193; Sandu Frunză, *Comunicare simbolică și seducție* (București, România: Editura Tritonic, 2014).
- ⁵¹ Florentin Smarandache and Ștefan Vlăduțescu, "Towards a Practical Communication Intervention," *Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială* 46 (2014): 243-254.
- ⁵² Sandu, *Etică și practică socială*, 211.
- ⁵³ Sorin-Tudor Maxim, *Peripatetice* (Iași, România: Editura Pim, 2010).
- ⁵⁴ Mihaela Frunză, "Advertising, gender stereotypes and religion. A perspective from the philosophy of communication," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 14 (40), (2015): 72-91.
- ⁵⁵ Caras (Frunza), A. (2014). Perspectives for Reconstruction of Ethical Expertise. *Postmodern Openings*, Volume 5, Issue 2, June, Year 2014, 81-96, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/po/2014.0502.06>.

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