

The “I” as a Symbol and a Philosophical Reflection on the Rejection

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The paper aims at providing a new reading of the contemporary ontology as a re-interpretation of the existential condition of the I.

According to Levinas in front of the I there is the Face. The relationship is not symmetric but asymmetric, it is the responsibility of the I to take care of the Other. The Face to Face is where the philosophical discourse starts. In other words, if I am a being I am one of the other persons, but I am in the first instance the I, who lives in This world. The Face in front of me reminds me of an ethical imperative and a discourse on justice, namely to take care of the Other, the Other insofar as Other, as a being and not as the other person. For this reason, the Other is not simply a means, but it is part of the reality, which becomes intelligible through this dual relationship.

It is no more the philosophical question on the ontology of the being insofar as a being, but it is the encounter of the Other that forms the ontology for the questioning of the I. In other words, the Face reminds me of my ethical and moral obligation to not ignore the Other. To help him. To sustain him. To not let him alone. It is not the categorical imperative of Kant as a distinction of subject and object, and it is not the reunion of both of them into the Absolute or Idea of Hegel the starting point of the contemporary philosophy. The Face and the relationship between me, the I and the Face shapes the dialogic argumentation of the contemporary ontology. Nonetheless, the dual relationship between the I and the Face of the Other is so powerful that also a Negation of the Other is still a recognition of its existence. Nonetheless, this particular encounter can be interrupted by experiencing the destruction of the Other, of this particular being through his Rejection. Indeed, the paper is showing as the Rejection of the Other is not merely a Negation, but represents the new condition to start a philosophical discourse.

In this light, the destruction of the Other by its Rejection shifts the discourse on the same disappearance of the I. Since that Rejection This world is no more intelligible. There is no more a Face in front of the I, it has been rejected and the philosophical discourse has been shifted to a superior stage or feeling as sympathy or compassion (from ancient Greek *συμπάθεια* – to share the feeling with..., or Latin *cum patior* – I suffer with). Nonetheless, these words are not used with the same meaning of Schopenhauer where the compassion is the love as a justification of the observance of a moral rule, as opposed to the Kantian categorical imperative of the moral law, which is inside each being (the starry sky above and the moral law within). Therefore, at a first stage the compassion or the sympathy is the only possible status that the I can perceive in front of the disappearance of the Other by virtue of its destruction or Rejection. It is the only perceivable feeling of the intangible disappearance of the Other due to its Rejection.

Only in this way the I, that particular I can start to reflect and to share the pathos of the Other. Indeed, the sharing of the pathos is more than an ethical imperative or recognition/negation of the Face. The same Rejection can be identified in many other circumstances of the reality today such as the possible Rejection of Muslims in America, the Rejection of Syrian refugees, the Rejection

of asylum seekers in UK, the Rejection of applicants in job interviews due to the current financial crisis and crisis of employment, the Rejection of the legality of same sex unions etc.

In other words, it is possible to speak about the Other today only through a re-thinking of the ontology of the I because of this universal Rejection. When the Other has been destructed because of its Rejection, this status can take many forms such as the humiliation, the abandon or even its murdering, then the I starts to discover himself as a symbol (from ancient Greek the prefix σὺμ – together, with the ancient Greek verb βάλλω – to put, literally it means to join together, to fasten together). It can be argued, therefore, that the Rejection of the Other is currently the new condition for an ontological re-configuration of the I as a being in terms of a Symbol. In this light, the perceivable feeling of the intangible produced by the sympathy or compassion can allow the I to become a Symbol and to restore justice and morality.

References

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