



PHENOMENOLOGY OF HAPPINESS AND ETHICS: FROM ARISTOTLE TO DUNS SCOTUS AND E. LÉVINAS

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In this paper I focus on the most problematic aspects of Aristotelian notion of happiness and ethics. Aristotelian ethics and the Greek wisdom on the whole strove for being, completeness and totality. Such thinking and its total attempt to achieve being, especially rational being, that often became ideological violence, nowadays is receiving more and more incredulity and criticism. The schoolman of the 13th century Duns Scotus already stated such notions of happiness and ethics that required otherness with its radical transcendence. Also the phenomenologist of the 20th century Emmanuel Lévinas criticizes the Western view of humanity. The total(itarian) consciousness and any systematization in Lévinas' alternative thinking are ruptured by the ideas of infinity and the other that enable to think otherwise, and outside of being.

Keywords: Aristotle, Duns Scotus, happiness, Lévinas, transcendence.

Introduction

In Book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle opens the question of the nature of happiness (in Greek *εὐδαιμονία*) with the discussion of the notion of pleasure. Some people think that no pleasure is a good, since the good and pleasure are not the same; others think that some pleasures are good but most are bad. Again there is a third view that even if all pleasures are good, the pleasure cannot be the best thing in the world. According to Aristotle, pleasure is not the good in itself, because not all pleasures are desirable. Yet some pleasures are desirable in themselves. Neither pleasure is a movement, because a movement has an aim beyond itself. Pleasure like seeing is whole and complete. Every sense is active in relation to its object. A sense which is in good condition acts perfectly in relation to the most beautiful of its objects. Hence in the case of each sense the best activity is that of the best-conditioned organ in relation to the finest of its objects. And this activity will be the most complete and pleasant (ch. 3–4, 1174a–b).

Pleasure accompanies and completes activity. Everyone desires pleasure because of life instinct – states Aristotle. Life is *conatus essendi*, an activity accompanied by the effort to be and to survive. Each man is active about those things and with those faculties that he needs most. Now pleasure completes the activities and therefore life,

which everyone preserves. Hence, people seek pleasure, since for every one it completes life, which is desirable. Life and pleasure are bound up together and does not admit of separation, since without activity pleasure does not arise. Every activity is completed by the attendant pleasure (ch. 4, 1175a).

According to Aristotle, pleasures differ in kind. Pleasure accompanies the activities of perception and thought. As activities are different, then, so are the corresponding pleasures. For example, sight is superior to touch. But the *pleasure of thought* is superior to other pleasures. Whereas the good is universal, virtue and the good man as such are the measure of each thing. Therefore true pleasure is one which appears so to him, and those things pleasant which he enjoys. Moreover, pleasures that are thought to be good are the pleasures proper to man. The latter correspond and follow activity proper to man (ch. 5, 1176a).

In the sequel as the last thing Aristotle inquires the nature of happiness. He starts with the remark that happiness is not a disposition. Happiness is not desirable for the sake of something else. It is desirable in itself. For happiness does not lack anything, but is *self-sufficient*. Now those activities are desirable in themselves from which nothing is sought beyond the activity. Virtuous actions would be of this nature. To do noble and good deeds is a thing desirable for its own sake. Hence happy life must be virtuous (ch. 6).

Happiness is activity in accordance with the highest virtue. This will be the best thing in a human. The best activity, according to Aristotle, is *theoretical contemplation*. Reason is the best thing in life and objects of reason are the best of knowable objects. Moreover contemplative practice is the most continuous, since one can contemplate truth more continuously than he can do anything. In happiness is mingled pleasure. The practice of philosophic wisdom is admittedly the pleasantest of virtuous activities. Thus only philosophy offers pleasures marvelous for their purity and their enduringness. Aristotle supposes happy man to be *autarkic* and *self-sufficient*. Nothing is so self-sufficient as contemplation in blissful solitude (ch. 7). It seems that philosopher is happier than any other, because he exercises and cultivates his reason. This is the best state of mind. Aristotle says (ch. 8, 1179a: 25–30): “If the gods have any care for human affairs, as they are thought to have, it would be reasonable both that they should delight in that which was best and most akin to them (i.e. reason) and that they should reward those who love and honor this most, as caring for the things that are dear to them and acting both rightly and nobly. And that all these attributes belong most of all to the wise man is manifest. He, therefore, is the dearest to the gods. And he will be presumably also the happiest; so that in this way too the wise man will more than any other be happy” (Aristotle 2009: 198).

Duns Scotus vs. Aristotle: redeemed happiness

Now I would like to focus on the most problematic aspects of Aristotelian notion of happiness and ethics in general. Aristotelian ethics and the Greek wisdom on the whole strove for being, completeness and totality. Such thinking and its total attempt to achieve being, especially rational being, that often became ideological violence, nowadays is receiving more and more incredulity and criticism.

In Book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (ch. 6, 1097b, 22–1098a: 20) Aristotle states that happiness is an activity (in Greek *ἐνέργεια*) when one fits to its own job or function (in Greek *ἔργον*). It would be possible to find out what is human happiness if one found the specific human job or function (in Greek *το ἔργον του ανθρώπου*) (ch. 6, 1097b, 22–1098a, 24–25). But what is such an essence of being human? What fits human and no other living being? According to Aristotle, it is a practice of a being, which thinks and speaks rationally (in Greek *πρακτική τις του λόγον ἔχοντος*). Human is happy when he thinks rationally and to what extent he thinks. Hence, authentic human is a philosopher. Happiness and wisdom are the same or anyway correlate closely. But why this is so good and pleasurable? Because, answers Aristotle, “the self-sufficiency (*αὐτάρκεια*) that is spoken of must belong most to the contemplative activity” (ch. 7, 1177a, 27sq). So it seems that human happiness strives for independence, autonomy or even autarky. And there is nothing more independent than a speculative self-motion of complete self-consciousness. The history of Greek philosophy from the Aristotelian notion of “the divine thinking of thinking” till Hegelian absolute spirit, i.e. total consciousness, testifies such a mental, cultural and political attempt. It seems that for Aristotle a just man cannot be completely happy. A just man still needs another man to whom he could and actually should practice justice. Therefore a just man is not autonomous. While a wise man, who retreats into blissful speculation, is self-sufficient and completely sovereign (in Greek *αὐταρκέστατος*). So according to Aristotle, precisely here is found authentic humanity and happiness (ch. 7, 1177a, 27sq: 30–34).

Nonetheless in *Metaphysics* (Book 6, ch. 1, 1026a: 10–23) Aristotle speaks about theology as a supreme science, the object of which is a deity, i.e. the most prominent, eternal, motionless substance separated from the empirical world. In mentioned Book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (ch. 7, 1177a, 15) he notices that intellect can acknowledge deity and such a theoretical knowledge constitutes the essential human function and happiness. Here an Aristotelian of the 13th century Duns Scotus detects Aristotle’s incoherence or at least some vagueness of his thought (*Ordinatio, Prologus*, p. 1, q. unica). After all in Book 3 of the *De Anima* Aristotle clearly says that all that can be acknowledged in a natural way, one knows via empirical experience. Having excluded the material element by abstraction one gets mental images, which serve for intellect in the same way as sensual objects serve to senses (ch. 8, 432a: 1–15). How then can such a natural cognition know a deity as non-empirical substance? And how then can one become happy naturally and by himself? Perhaps then for happiness it suffices a self-sufficient contemplation? But again at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as if having some doubts, Aristotle says: “Now if there is any gift of the gods to men, it is reasonable that happiness should be god-given” (ch. 9, 1099b, 11sq). It follows that naturally and by itself soul cannot neither acknowledge, nor actually fit to its essential function and be happy because it is god-given.

By the way, existential experience also testifies that nothing in nature can calm the desire for infinite happiness. Then one should ask: is intelligence destined to close down in this poky nature? No, because, according to Duns Scotus, “the passive

potency is not frustrated in nature“ (*op. cit.*, *Prologus*, p. 1, q. unica, n. 74)¹. Hence, the passive potency, i.e. the possible intellect, cannot be moved to happiness by natural agent, but it can be moved by supernatural agent, which is reachable only by *obedient* and not self-sufficient intellect (*op. cit.*, *Prologus*, p. 1, q. unica, n. 94)². This supernatural agent is the God of theology that is practical science. Such a God for Duns Scotus is not only Supreme Being (as it was for most of the schoolmen), but first of all an absolutely free Infinity (infinite being) that exceeds the (onto)logical necessity. By the way, (at least my) experience shows that the fact of happiness is more contingent than necessarily causal. One can be a righteous one, acting according to the laws, but still not achieve the complete being or happiness. If happiness is a gift (and Aristotle himself considered this possibility), then it can be a gift given only by a free, infinite being that transcends the natural causality. It means at least that happiness is impossible without *otherness* that transcends my immanence.

Here Duns Scotus again appeals to existential experience. Human will, whose object is the Good, cannot be satisfied by any limited goodness. It has to be acknowledged that a natural need, having achieved its natural goal, disappears. However human possesses a desire that cannot be fulfilled by nature and cannot be fulfilled at all, because it is a desire for the Good, and the Good is infinite. “Seems that we experience the free will at most when we love the infinite good, – says Duns Scotus, – and it even seems that the will not quiet down in something other” (*op. cit.*, *Prologus* p. 1, q. unica, I, d. 2, p. 1, q. 1–2, n. 130)³.

Aristotle, as I already said, considers happiness as an *active* practice of the specific human function. This activity, or energy, consists in pure theory, which is contemplation of truth, contemplation of the first principles and reasons of ontological totality. Because only here the complete *autarky*, i.e. independence and autonomy of man, is achieved. Happiness avoids everything that takes away its “autistic” pleasure of sovereignty. Therefore it cannot coincide with justice, because justice requires the other person, and the happy one is and strives to remain self-sufficient. But it seems that such a happiness in the conditions of totalitarianism unavoidably degrades to inhumanity and bestiality. Even if one agrees that happiness in essence is not a just relation to the other person or at least spontaneously precedes it or maybe even is indif-

¹ “Dico quod potentia passiva non est frustra in natura, quia etsi per agens naturale non possit principaliter reduci ad actum, tamen potest per tale agens dispositio ad ipsum induci, et potest per aliquod agens in natura – id est in tota coordinatione essendi vel entium – puta per agens primum vel supernaturale complete reduci ad actum” (Duns Scotus 1950–2005a: 45).

² “Dico quod veritati complexae alicui firmiter tenendae intellectus possibilis est improportionatus, id est, non est proportionale mobile talium agentium quae ex phantasmatis et ex lumine naturali intellectus agentis non possunt cognosci. Quando arguis ‘ergo fit proportionalis per aliud’ concedo – et ‘per aliud’ in ratione moventis, quia per movens supernaturale revelans assentit illi veritati. <...> Cum infers ‘ergo intellectus est improportionatus ad illud, et per aliud proportionatur’, dico quod ex se est in potentia oboedientiali ad agens, et ita sufficienter proportionatur illi ad hoc ut ab ipso moveatur” (Duns Scotus 1950–2005a: 58).

³ “Voluntas nostra omni finito aliquid aliud maius potest appetere et amare, sicut intellectus intelligere; et videtur quod plus inclinatio est naturalis ad summe amandum bonum infinitum, nam inde arguitur inclinatio naturalis ad aliquid in voluntate, quia ex se, sine habitu, prompte et delectabiliter vult illud voluntas libera; ita videtur quod experimur actu amandi bonum infinitum, immo non videtur voluntas in alio perfecte quietari” (Duns Scotus 1950–2005b: 205).

ferent to it, then one still has a question if humanity, or the specific human task (in Greek *το ἔργον του ανθρώπου*), can avoid justice as its essence. Aristotelian notion of happiness, although is not hedonistic (for here the happy one enjoys theoretical contemplation of the whole and not satisfaction of his particular need), remains restricted in egoistic self-motion and indifference. The alternative to such a conception of humanity could be standpoint that either does not see in happiness the completeness of human being or radically reinterprets the notion of happiness.

Duns Scotus' and Judeo-Christian world-view on the whole replace happiness as Greek *εὐδαιμονία* with biblical *redemption of debtor*, which requires otherness with its radical transcendence. Precisely here humanity is fulfilled by or with help of the *transcendence* and not by itself. In this view humanity comes into being with a *responsible act of obedience, i.e. faith and justice*. One should admit that he was not taught this by Aristotle or the Greeks on the whole. It is another pattern of thought and life that one can find in the biblical tradition.

Lévinas: transcendence vs. self-sufficiency

The French phenomenological thinker of Jewish descent Lévinas is one who also questions the Greek framework of thought as continuous attempt at an universal self-sufficient synthesis in a whole history of philosophy. The Greek thinking always attempted to reduce any experience, everything, that has significance, into an immanent completeness, and without leaving anything outside itself to become an absolute self-sufficient, even totalitarian consciousness. In his probably most important work *Totality and Infinity* (1979) Lévinas criticizes the tendency to totality of Western philosophy that reached its highest point in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's absolute spirit. Lévinas here also criticises the Greek mindset as *λόγος*, from which spring war and violence. The striving for totality here is contrasted with the infinite desire for the other, with fecundity, and with generosity as deeper and "dark" unintentional ethical conditions of any intentionality.

Therefore Lévinas looks for an alternative. The total(itarian) consciousness and any systematization in his alternative thinking are ruptured by the ideas of *infinity* and the *other* that enable to think otherwise, and outside of being. The *other* (in French *l'Autre*) is first of all the *Other* (in French *Autrui*)⁴. And the relation to the

⁴ An abstract French pronoun *autre* (*other, another*) means the separation of alterity as such from the *same* and its identity. Lévinas often "substantiates" *autre*, by putting it in the capital (*l'Autre*) and radically distancing it from the substantiated *same* (*le Même*). At the same time the pronoun *autrui* (from Latin *alteri-huic – for another this*), which in French can mean both the singular and the plural of the *other*, is reserved in Lévinas' writings exclusively for another concrete human person beyond an identic *I*, i.e. the term in the wake of which emerges a radical sociality. By the way, *Autrui* is used by Lévinas as a singular noun in such a way distinguishing it from the plural form *les autres* of the pronoun *autre* that is used to refer to the "third" and society. According to Jacques Derrida, "despite all appearances, there is no concept of the Other. We would have to reflect upon this word "Other" [*Autrui*] in an artisan-like way <...> circumscribed in silence by the capital letter which ever increases the neutrality of the *other*, and which we use so familiarly, even though it is the very disorder of our conceptuality. Is it only a common noun without concept? But, first of all, is it a noun? It is not an adjective, or a pronoun; therefore it is a substantive <...> but a substantive which is not, as usual, a species of noun: neither common noun, for it cannot take, as in the category of the other in general, the *heteron*, the definite article. Nor the plural" (1978: 130).

Other, or being-for-the-Other, is not a relation between commensurate terms. Neither it is an understanding by which the *I* intentionally comprehends the *Other*. It is simply the Good, my goodness, generosity. Radical ethics begins when, before looking at the world from the perspective of my being, I question the being itself by starting from the *other* and otherwise than being. Otherwise than being is the Good. Thus the Good is prior to being and gives significance to it and not vice versa. The essence of morality consists in the fact that, by existing for the other person, I exist otherwise than existing for myself. Transcendence is never struck by intentional consciousness but by moral *conscience*. The radical exteriority of the *other* can be revealed only to conscience (Lévinas 1979: 261).

Furthermore, transcendence emerges from parent's relation to his own child. The *I* through absolute transcendence – trans-substantial transcendence to itself – is the *other* in the infant. Without doubt, paternity flourishes in self-identification, but at the same time in a distinction that lies in such identification. It is the structure, which the formal logic is incapable to describe. Such a relation to the future, irreducible to the management of possibilities, Lévinas calls *fecundity* (1979: 267–269). In fecundity the identity appears to be twofold. Here the future beyond the implementation of possibilities is not the future of the identical subject anymore – the repetition, the return to the same light. In fecundity the *I* transcends the world of light and goes further than light in order to go *elsewhere*. The relation to one's own child as to the *other*, is not power and possession, but fecundity that takes to the absolute future, i.e. to the infinity of time. The alterity of the infant in fecundity presupposes the alterity of the beloved (woman) and the darkness of the ambiguous erotic relationship. Thus in such a way “being is produced as multiple and as split into same and other; this is its ultimate structure. It is society, and hence it is time. We thus leave the philosophy of Parmenidian being” (Lévinas 1979: 269), – says the author of *Totality and Infinity*. The analysis of these non-theoretical, non-intentional states of consciousness took the *I* to such a relation, which as transcendence, as a being-for-the-Other makes up the goodness of the Good. The fecundity that gives birth to fecundity fulfils the Good not as a sacrifice, in which the good is obligatory, but as a gift that presents the power to make a gift – the conception of a child. In such a way Lévinas opens a possibility in a new way (but still with reason) and possibly even more profoundly to understand Plato's metaphor of sun and the Good (*The Republic*, Book 6, 507b–509c) – *ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας* – not as a light, but as *fecundity* and *generosity*, for the relation between the father and the son does not fit in the categories of logic and ontology, which inevitably return the radical alterity unto the *same*. “Did not the Platonic sun already enlighten the visible sun, and did not excedence play upon the metaphor of these two suns?” – asks Lévinas' interpreter Derrida. – “Was not the Good the necessarily nocturnal source of all light? The light of light beyond light. The heart of light is black, as has often been noticed” (Derrida 1978: 106).

Whereas Aristotle says: “And the self-sufficiency that is spoken of must belong most to the contemplative activity. For while a philosopher, as well as a just man or one possessing any other virtue, needs the necessities of life, when they are sufficiently equipped with things of that sort the just man needs people towards whom and with

whom he shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others is in the same case, but the philosopher, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow-workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient” (ch. 7, 1177a) (Aristotle 2009: 194). Such a philosophical, happy, although “righteous” life does not extract the subject from onto- and ego-centric immanence. Aristotle remains faithful to the Parmenidic tradition that does not recognize the primordial relation to the infinite otherness. Solipsism is the thought’s closure in the solitude of totality. The lucent contemplation rigorously embraces all being into its own immanence and neither respects the *other*, nor pays attention to it staying in its particular *raison d’être*. According to Derrida, intellectual illumination makes up the foundation of any philosophy of *violence*. Beyond collaboration of the ancient theoretical objectivity and the technical-political tyranny hides even more ancient contract of light and violent power. However, if one could grasp, acknowledge, and possess the *other* by contemplation, it would not be absolutely the *other*. To seize, to grasp, to acknowledge, to be aware of something already means an exercise of power, entrenchment, overcoming and dominion. “To see and to know, to have and to will, unfold only within the oppressive and luminous identity of the same; and they remain, for Lévinas, fundamental categories of phenomenology and ontology. Everything given to me within light appears as given to myself by myself [par moi-même]” (Derrida 1978: 113–114) – writes the author of *Violence and Metaphysics*.

Radical ethics

From a phenomenological point of view original structure of intentionality is the potency to give meaning to things. Intentional consciousness is an activity that constitutes reality. Reality exists for the consciousness and vice versa. To give a meaning always means to practice thinking that never ceases until it does not reach evidence. Here a personal relation to the neighbour, social life, God are still placed in the field of collective or religious intentional experiences. According to Aristotle and all Greek metaphysics, theory as representative contemplation makes up the foundation of consciousness and happiness. All other levels of life belong to and depend on intentionality. Experience is situated and proceeds in the sphere of cognition and representation. In that case life coincides with the Cartesian *cogito* in the broadest sense, and this *I think* in the first person is an absolute indication toward a Hegelian absolute spirit whose knowledge is self-sufficient and total.

Greek thinking as a process of cognition always positions itself in relation to what is thought. Closely related to outer being it is outside itself, but at the same time miraculously remains within itself or at least constantly returns to itself. Hegel sums it up in these words: “It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the *unity*, which constitutes the nature of the *Notion* is recognized as the *original synthetic* unity of *apperception*, as unity of the *I think*, or of self-consciousness” (Hegel 1969: 584). Exteriority, alterity are always destined to be reclaimed by the immanence as if they would belong to and depend on the latter. That what mind comprehends by experience is both the *other* and the *same* for it.

It is comprehended in such a way as if it had been already known before and now only enters thought as re-membrance and re-presentation. The latter two guarantee for the temporal experience a synchrony and an orderly unity of that, which by nature is contingent or does not exist as a future that is only to come. Mainstream phenomenology pays a particularly privileged attention to presence, present and re-presentation. Here the diachrony of time almost always is conceived as a defect of synchrony to be omitted or repaired. The accidental and contingent character of future – an *accident* – conceived as a pro-tency⁵ deprives the future of its futurity. For the otherness of future is what comes by itself – *happens and is gifted* – and not necessarily what is attracted and maintained⁶ by the unified autocratic intentional representation, which seeks to move into one more same present (Lévinas 1991: 143–144).

Language itself says that thought, which grasps or even seizes something, at the same time seeks for capture and appropriation. Of course it points to natural ontological drive (Spinoza's *conatus essendi*), inclination for being. Maybe not accidentally in Latin language *to be* (in Latin *esse*) sounds like *to eat* (in Latin *esse*), and that means to satiate, to satisfy oneself, and enjoy. Thought, which thinks all according to its own measure, is (like) a need that can and has to be fulfilled. The phenomenon of the world is the complete perceptual adequacy of the thinker and the thinkable. It is the coincidence of the appearance and the given, the cognition and the satisfaction. Is not this in Edmund Husserl's mind, when he states a principal and one correlation of the world and the thought? The theoretical cognition described by him in its theorizing and objectifying character matches and fulfils the scope of an empty intentionality to be filled with experience. "Hegel's work, into which all the tributaries of the Western spirit flow, and in which all its levels are manifested, is a philosophy of both absolute knowledge and the satisfied man. The psyche of theoretical knowledge constitutes a thought that thinks in its own terms, and in its adequacy to the thinkable, is equal to itself, and will be consciousness of self. It is the Same that rediscovers itself in the Other" (Lévinas 1991: 144). The notional synthesis is stronger than contingency and incompatibility of that, which appears as something else, as before and after. The unity of the subject strongly relies on the transcendental apperception of *ego cogito* and is the final shape of the spirit as knowledge, in which everything falls into ordered system. Here Lévinas proposes a series of rhetorical (o maybe not) questions to such a tradition of philosophy: "Is intentionality always based on a representation – as Husserl and Brentano affirm?", or: "Is intentionality the only mode of the "gift of meaning"? Is the meaningful always correlative to a thematization and a representation? Does it always result from the assembling of a multiplicity and a temporal dispersion? Is thought devoted from the start to adequation and truth? Is it only a grasping of the given in its ideal identity? Is thought essentially a relation to what is equal to it, that is to say, essentially atheistic?" (Lévinas 1991: 145).

⁵ *In-tention, re-tention, pro-tention* – all these phenomenological terms are derived from the Latin verb *tenere*, which originally means to *have in hand*.

⁶ The French adverb *maintenant* (in English *now*) originally means *to have* (in French *tenant*) *in hand* (in French *la main*).

Lévinasian radical ethics is constituted by the relation to the absolute *other*. By the way, Aristotle talks about other man as a potential friend who is another me. Love for him starts from self-love and fulfills self-love, which is righteous if belongs to righteous man (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 9, ch. 4, 1166a–b; ch. 8, 1168b–1169a). According to Lévinas, the other person welcomes me not as a phenomenon and not as a subject that is equal to me, but as a *face*. Lévinas acknowledges that he cannot examine the face and to describe it in traditional phenomenological categories, because the epiphany of the face exceeds the possibility of contemplation and cannot be appropriated by it and made into a representation of consciousness. Such a phenomenological excess makes the *Other* incomprehensible and indiscernible in principle. The face of the *Other* is not an image with a distinct form or a mask. Face is not an intentional object. According to Lévinas: “You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of his eyes! When we observe the color of the eyes, our relation with the Other is not social. The relation with the face can surely be dominated by perception, but what is specifically the face is what cannot be reduced to that” (1985: 85). The face is an ethical metaphor.

Aristotelian ethics is the ethics of symmetry and proportion. Friendship needs reciprocity (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8, ch. 3–4, 1156b). Lévinas, trying to avoid the oppression of totality, rethinks the social relation beyond the reciprocity, mutuality, repayment for good with good and of course beyond revenge. A radical social relation being ethical relation exceeds any structure of consciousness that is based on reversibility, economy, autonomy. The attitude in front of the *Other* is not some obligation enforced by some virtue, socio-economic contract or law. It is neither the deontological duty that assumes the autonomous *I*. Here the *I* loses the right of primacy in relation to imperative. This imperative is not discovered within the immanence of practical reason. The law accesses the *I* from the absolute transcendence, from the face of the other person. “I am inclined to think, – says Lévinas, – the alterity of the other man to the *I* is first – and I dare say, is “positively” – the face of the other obligating the *I*, which, from the first – without deliberation – is responsive to the other. *From the first*: that is, the self answers “gratuitously”, without worrying about reciprocity. This is the gratuitousness of the *for-the-other*, the response of responsibility” (1991: 185). This primordial for-the-other with its obedience is born in consciousness earlier than the perception or knowledge of something. Such *asymmetry* of the relation points to the fact that I am responsible for the other person without expectation that he will repay me with the same, even if it will cost my life. Mutuality is his business. Subjectivity of the ethical subject says that I am primordially subjected to the other person. According to Fabio Ciaramelli, “in the subjection of a single, in the exposition of the *I* and in the deposition of its status emerges the philosophically primordial seedbed of the primary *ethos*, of the *ethics without institutions*, ethics, which is my absolute, asymmetrical responsibility imprescriptible by any law” (1985: 126).

In rational subject the centralized knowledge always was the thinking of the *equal*. The truth here is the comprehended being. The goal of the Greek thought (Aristotle

is not an exception) is to absorb the *other* into the *same*. Lévinas refuses to engage in such mindset. He invites to give thought to *unequal*, to the *other*. So the *Other* remains free from the forced becoming the content of the egocentric consciousness and the victim of manipulation via notion, idea, signification, virtue. The absolute transcendence of the *Other* is the condition of the social relation that cannot be replaced by virtue or immanent imperative. The *Other*, absorbed by immanence, already is the *same*, and the direct relation here is stopped by the mediate representation or notion. The face of the other person makes me the interrogated one, who responds not with the information it possesses, but by the responsibility for and to the one who is asking. Ethical asymmetry and thinking start from the inability to evade that question. “Indispensable response, responsibility, when the Other approaches, stands in place of prehension or comprehension of relation. It is a relation between those who cannot be synthesized, synchronized, from the same to the other. Ethical thinking is the birth of love, of human brotherhood” (Lévinas 1981: 142).

Conclusions

Human happiness strives for independence and autonomy. The history of Western philosophy from the Aristotelian notion of “the divine thinking of thinking” till Hegelian absolute spirit testifies a mental attempt to autonomous speculative self-motion and total self-consciousness.

Duns Scotus deepens the Greek notion of happiness down to Judeo-Christian *redemption of debtor*, which requires otherness with its radical transcendence. Happiness of a human is fulfilled by or with help of the *transcendence* and not by himself. Hence, humanity comes into being with a responsible act of obedience and faith.

Lévinas detects that the Good is prior to being and gives significance to it. The essence of morality consists in the fact that, by existing for the other person, a subject exists otherwise than existing for itself. Transcendence is never struck by intentional consciousness but by moral *conscience*.

A radical social relation being ethical exceeds any structure of intentional consciousness that is based on reversibility, economy and autonomy. The outbreak of humanity is responsibility that precedes happiness.

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LAIMĖS IR ETIKOS FENOMENOLOGIJA: NUO ARISTOTELIO IKI DUNSO ŠKOTO IR E. LÉVINO

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Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje, atsispiriant nuo Aristotelio laimės sąvokos, siekiama kritiškai apmąstyti klasikinę graikiškąją etikos sampratą. Aristotelio etika, o ir graikiškojoje ontologijoje įsišaknijusi (iš)mintis visada siekė apimti, išbaigti ir imanentiškai suvokti būties visumą. Toks vyraujančia tradicija tapęs mąstymas, pagrįstas *conatus essendi* ir dažnai neišvengiantis tapti ideologine prievarta, šiandien sulaukia vis daugiau nepasitikėjimo ir kritikos. Ir ne tik šiandien. Jau XIII a. scholastas Dunsas Škotas mąstė apie minėtos laimės ir etikos sampratos alternatyvą, kuri reikalauja kitybės idėjos, nurodančios į tai, kas absoliučiai transcendoja mąstantįjį subjektą. Taip pat ir XX a. fenomenologas Emmanuelis Lévinas savo kritiką nukreipia į vakarietiškąją ontocentrinę pasaulėvoką ir iš jos išplaukiančią žmogiškumo sampratą. Totalią, sisteminančią ir neišvengiamai totalitarinę sąmonę Lévinas alternatyviojoje fenomenologijoje „praplėšia“ begalybės ir kitybės idėjos, padedančios mąstyti kitaip ir anapus buvimo.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Aristotelis, Dunsas Škotas, laimė, Lévinas, transcendencija.

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