Philosophy and Judaic Pattern in the Thinking of Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas[1]

M. Buber and Levinas develop two Jewish philosophical systems, which are constituted by the meeting of the two traditions: the philosophical and the religious one. Beyond the evidently particular configuration, the relational principle theorized by the two thinkers has as the unity element the valuation of a Biblical archetype. Our analysis deals with the relational principle as Judaic pattern in Buber's and Levinas' thinking. We can observe that each of the two authors proposes us a system that relies on the dual structure of the human world. Its archetype is revelational in nature, similar to the one disclosed by the Mount Sinai theophany.

SANDU FRUNZA

www.geocities.com/s_c_i_r_i/sandu.htm

The moment when Martin Buber replaces the Biblical statement: "In the beginning is the Word" with the pattern "In the beginning is relation"[2], he is attempting to point out an explanatory model that is correlative with the relational nature of Judaism. The same shaping paradigm can also be encountered in a philosophy as that of Levinas, who removes from his relational system the verticality of transcendence. However, the profound texture of his system is nourished by the archetypical sources of the Sinaitic revelation.

My analysis deals with the relational principle as a Judaic pattern in the thinking of Buber and Levinas. From the very beginning we can observe that the two authors propose a system that relies on the dual structure of the human world. Its archetype is revelational in nature, similar to the one disclosed by the theophany of Mount Sinai. The Covenant between YHWH and Moses, as the Symbolic Face of the Israelite community, is a pledge that sets up a dialogical paradigm, the

entrance into a relation of a unique God and a people who has been chosen to be the theophanic subject. A personalized structure occurs which entails a relation between two subjects that commit to themselves and themselves grow aware of each other. The specific relation of the Covenant cannot be limited to the mere register of the Alliance. It establishes itself as a paradigm of authenticity which man is called upon to realize in all of his existential structures.

In Buber's perception of the situation, this specific relation is a paradigm of a relation that always finds its value in the sphere of "between" that encompasses the personalized entities which can at the same time be to Buber structures of the divine, of the being of the world.

Interpreting Buber's thinking by using a more outlined ontological language, Levinas shows that the relation does not occur within the subject but in the field of the being. Nevertheless, the meeting does not need to be interpreted as something that has been objectively, fairly understood by an I, because the ontological field is not a spatial universe but rather an appearance. Yet, the appearance creates an interval between I and Thou, and that "between" is the place where the being makes his mark as being. Such conclusions draw Levinas to ascertain that the person in Buber's thinking does not stand for a mere being among beings but for a category, in the Kantian meaning of the word. From this point of view, man does not only meet, he is the very meeting. In the world of relation, man takes his stand in the center of the being and the accomplishment of this situation automatically engenders a transcendence[3].

In Buber's vision, depending on the world of being or on the world of things that man sets value on, he lives either in a paradigm translated in language by "the fundamental word I-Thou" or in a paradigm translated by "the fundamental word I-It". According to Buber, there is a twofold outline of the human reality and it is only in the power of a being to assume one or the other of the two paradigms. Due to the twofold possibility of denotation of relations that have been shaped by man, are asserted, on the one hand, the Thou of the relation which has been set up by rendering topical the combination I-Thou, and on the other hand, the It of the relation which has been established by making topical I-It[4].

Depending on his own way of referring to the world, man can assert himself as individuality or as person. Commenting upon Buber, Eliezer Berkowits points out that individuality perceives only the world of It; man becomes person when he becomes conscious of a personal presence in the world, when he discovers the Thou of the reality, when he comes out of his I taken in itself as an individual ego and "meets a bearer" with whom he enters into relation. The distinction between the two poles, individuality and person, is obvious when one addresses the issue of person relating to fellow-person. He increases the value of the world of relation as long as he contains his desire to treat a fellow-person as It and enters into a living relation with it[5].

To Buber, there is no I in itself but only the I relationally configured: the I of the primary word I-

Thou or the I of the primary word I-It, the utterance, the relational meaning which the one or the other of the two outlines gives to it. Thus, when the author says: "When a primary word is spoken the speaker enters the word and takes his stand in it", Buber considers that the It sphere is favored by all the entities that perceive and are perceived as objects of desire. The sphere of Thou is the sphere of relation which cannot be bounded to the level of experiences which introduce to the man the world of It, this also implies an inner experience that establishes a dialogical relation.

Levinas bears in mind the same aspects when he reaches the conclusion that with Buber the self exists only as an I shaped in the relation which establishes reference to the sphere of Thou or It. On such an understanding is based the estimation of the utility sphere as being the most superficial type of relation, which usually targets the objective knowledge of things through direct experience, by making contact with things as things due to the mediation of the mental acts which directs towards the world of things. This is the sphere of relation which requires a modality of addressing in the third person. One can speak of this as the sphere of It conceived as a neutral space in which the individual cannot enter into a unifying relation which will allow him the distinct manifestation of his own I by having reference to another fellow-man, act by which he can encounter himself as different from the others. Levinas believes that the passage through an intentional relation can be possible in Buber's thinking as long as the I-Thou relation results in a wholly distinct relation from the I-It one. The I-Thou relation is the one allowing us the recognition and the manifestation of the alterity. Still, Levinas draws us the attention that we do not need to confound alterity with the idea of alterity. The important thing is not to think of something in terms of alterity but rather to be able to enter into relation with the other and to address him as a Thou. It is not the perception but the utterance of Thou that makes a relation become real, replies Levinas. His addressing a Thou makes it possible for him to establish alterity. Analyzing the I-Thou relation, Levinas discovers that relation is the very essence of the I so that the I-It experience or the I-Thou experience does not deal only with the terms of the meeting just as an absent-minded reader of Buber might suppose, but the very nature of relation[6].

Buber discloses three spheres of relation: life with nature, life with human beings, and life with spiritual beings. The last sphere is the one that emphasizes the presence of a median space of the religious experience "that is always wrapped by clouds, yet revealing itself without saying a word is a language forger". The apparent ambiguity of this experience is due to shyness experienced when facing the reality that "in every sphere in its own way, through each process of becoming that is present to us, we look out towards the fringe of the eternal Thou; in each we are aware of a breath from the eternal Thou; in each Thou we address the eternal Thou"[7].

As it explicitly appears with Buber, man can become bound up in relation with nature, thus experienc-

ing a reciprocity. He can sit face to face with another man, being aware that the latter "is not a thing among things and does not consist of things," and perceiving the human being as a thou that fills the whole horizon and makes it possible for all other things to live in his light. However, at the same time, "every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou; by means of every particular Thou, the primary word addresses the eternal Thou"[8].

Maurice Friedman underlines the fact that Martin Buber considers the dialogue with God as the center and the most profound significance of the Jewish religion. Opposed to the traditional vision which considers the principle of Monotheism as the most important constitution of Judaism within religions, in Buber's vision, the very meaning of Monotheism is that of bringing every aspect of life to the fullness of the dialogue. This significance conveys the model of the dialogue between man and God[9].

In a more full manner, these aspects draw the attention of E. Berkowits who notices that, according to Buber, the most intense form of relation is pure relation. It comes into place as meeting with the Absolute as person. All meetings with a Thou are nothing but pathways to achieving the pure relation and the meeting with the Eternal Person: all these meetings are the personal manifestation of that wholly Thou that every I is looking for in his relations with human beings who represents as much directed steps towards the meeting with the Absolute Thou. This is the meaning of the religious relation to Berkowits. Without pure relation the sphere of It may become overwhelming and man could be extraneous to himself, losing his ability of meeting and sharing. Consequently, pure relation becomes the center of the whole field of relations, a field in which all relations meet and from which all relations diffuse. The unique individualized and unrepeatable meetings of the personal relation between the finite beings start to result in a universal reality of joining and sharing[10].

The Eternal Thou, the omnipresent Presence cannot be the object of a description, the Eternal Thou is known through meeting, through relation. The unknowable God makes It's presence known by addressing Itself to man. The form of this addressing is revelation. Berkowits points out that with Martin Buber this addressing is not a supernatural event. Everything happens within the fabric of daily life. God may be encountered in the infinit manifestation of things and events. By everything man creates he must hear the addressing of the Absolute Presence that summons him to responsibility and meeting.

Under these circumstances, action in the actual conditions of daily life helps man to uncover himself as a person. Moreover, meeting with the unique Voice of God sets the relation as a dialogical situation. Human action translates the whole history and existence of man into a dialogue between God and Man. Within this dialogue, God remains Unknowable. He makes himself known as voice, as addressing. Thus, revelation and relation become identical terms. Asserting that revelation is nothing else but the relation between addressing and replying, between giving and receiving, M. Buber tact-

fully tells us that revelation does not deal with the issues of the divine mystery but with the actual life of man[11].

Let's summarize the essential data of this concrete existence. Buber believes that man renders himself topical into reality only by being continually born as presence, meeting and relation. Living in the world of It, he lives in the past and only discovering himself again and again in the world of "between I and Thou", taking over and over again an immediate stand into a relation he lives in the present. Yet, Buber does not overlook an important fact: "without It man cannot live. But he who lives with It alone is not a man[12]." Therefore, man cultivates his personal humanity only to the extent which he is capable of balancing the bounds of his being with It and of establishing an immediate relation with all things. "He who takes his stand in relation – says M. Buber – shares in a reality, that is, in a being that neither merely belongs to him nor merely lies outside him…The I is real in virtue of its sharing in reality. The more full its sharing the more real it becomes"[13]. This subtlety was also noticed by the author of the Romanian translation of Buber's work: he points out that the word Es rendered by It always entails an object placed at a certain distance from its subject[14].

A further shade of meaning concerning the configurations that the I brings into existence can be pointed out by understanding the distinction between desire and love. In Buber's dual system, the world of desire is the world of It. Desire and love will not be indistinct, although both are linked together by the register of feelings. In the case of love, feelings accompany "the metaphysical and meta-psychical fact of love", yet they do not exhaust it, as happens in the case of desire in the world of things. Surpassing any psychologizing attempt at understanding love, Buber leads us to a register in which "feelings are 'entertained': love comes to pass". In other words, feelings dwell in man while "man dwells in his love"[15]. One can come to know love only to the extent in which one understands that love does not cling to the I only for its content, but "love is between I and Thou". The fact that man is an active dweller of his love means that love is no longer regarded as a mere cosmogonical action, but also as relation of absolute equality of all those for whom love means responsibility, and it is this love that makes them "believe in the simple magic of life, in service in the universe, and the meaning of that waiting, that alertness, that 'craning of the neck' in creatures will draw upon you"[16].

If in Buber's case the archetypal Judaic element is quite evident, in Levinas' it is rather implicit, especially in his major works in which the sphere of relation appears as fundamental.

The manner in which Levinas understands love can be taken as a starting point for underlining the dual structure of person in his thinking. He proves that a "community establishes between two beings, between I and Thou. We are between ourselves. It leaves out a third person. By definition, a third person troubles this intimacy"[17]. Levinas agrees that the feeling which is at the foundation of a society is love". To be in love

means to exist as if the one who loves and the loved one were a sole world"[18]. Still, the inter-subjective connection of love can only be realized as a dual community which is reluctant to universality. To Levinas, love stands for the love of a couple. And this is the very root of the contemporary crisis of religion according to his thinking. One cannot cut oneself from the world in a couple relation with God, that is, an exclusive dual relation concerning the others. God can be perceived only as exteriority conceived not outside the relation but as a fixed exterior point of the law source. To make it functional, Levinas horizontalizes Transcendence, placing it at the discourse level: "an existence lacking violence is the discourse exteriority. The Absolute that advocates for justice is the absolute of the interlocutor of the dialogue. His way of being and of acting consists of turning his face towards me, of sitting before my face. That is why the absolute is embodied by a person. Isolating a person among the others, living in seclusion yourself and that person in the mysterious ambiguity of "between us" does not ensure the complete exteriority of the Absolute. It is only the irrefutable and severe token which inserts "between us", which discloses through its word our personal clandestineness, a token which embodies a demanding mediator between man and man, represents face, represents Thou. It is a thesis which has nothing to do with theology, yet God could not be God without having been, first and foremost, this interlocutor"[19].

Levinas' valuating of the language has to be seen in the light of the significance which Torah holds as the word of God, as a space of addressing of the Divine by uttering revelation and one of man's reply by assuming the Torah. Language becomes pre-eminently the space of dialogue only because in the beginning it was the language of Torah which implies God as interlocutor.

The type of statements in the following quotation, along with others of this sort, shows us that Levinas originates the dialogical harmony in the innermost structure of Monotheism. "Monotheism, the word of the One God, is the very word one cannot fail to hear or respond to. It is the word which makes you enter into discourse"[20]. Despite the popular idea that the economic game is the one that generates the solidarity and the unity of interests of races, states, and nations, Levinas believes that the whole economy of solidarity lies at the basis of Monotheist force. It is this force which makes his fellow man bearable to man, which makes the other respond. Monotheism "makes the other to enter into the discourse which will unite him with me", writes Levinas[21].

From this point of view, the word is "the prophetic word". The bearer of this word is the Jew: "The Jew is open to the word and believes in the efficiency of truth", declares Levinas[22]. He considers that one of the many possible definitions for the Jew is the following: "The Jew… is the man whom the momentary worries and struggles leave him in any moment available for an elevated dialogue, that is, for the word from man to man. The Jew is particularly the one for whom an elevated dialogue has at least the same paramount importance as the momentary worries and struggles have"[23].

Exalting Monotheism, Levinas considered it unconceivable that this open attitude to dialogue could not have found echo among those who have erected the impressive structures of Christianity or Islam, assuming as foundation the original message.

We have already mentioned that in Levinas' vision a dual relation, a couple relation with God, is not possible. Therefore, in the place of a God related on the vertical, he chooses an inner Divinity lived as intimacy. This image of Divinity is the outcome of living the extreme historical experience of God's withdrawal from the world, of experiencing suffering and desertion hich engender a new manner of understanding God's presence in Judaism. The veiling of God's face, his absolute desertion changes radically the relation between man and Divinity. According to Levinas, the relation can only take the form of a relation between the spiritual entities that hold as median structure the Torah's teachings. In the same way in which the dual relation can no longer find its accomplishment in the form of communion in the environment of the love of the impersonated God, the mediation cannot be achieved by the word of the impersonated God, but only by a living word that "ensures a living God among us"[24]. This represents the very word uttered by the divine voice that establishes the Torah's teachings.

Levinas believes that the living God does not make its presence felt through the mediation of a sensitive substance, but through absence. Experiencing the presence as absence becomes possible due to the fact that God becomes extremely tangible through the Law. In Levinas' vision, the profoundness and the beauty of the Law are assured by its intrinsically dialogical structure. It reveals to us that God has created man as a dialogical being who can continue to love him despite all the hardships through which God would discourage his love. This optimistic view coincides in Levinas perspective with an entirely valuation of man as a personal being. And it is in this regard that Levinas' words must be understood: "To love Torah even more than to love God is the very path to come to know a personal God against whom one can surge, that is, one can die for"[25].

God's presence in the Judaic Law, that is through Torah, grants the ethical dimension of Judaism. This dimension will be reiterated in a non-theological way of great philosophical significance by Levinas in his relational ethics.

Bearing in mind this ethical exigency, Levinas thinks it necessary to surpass the tendencies of understanding the language as subordinated to the fact of becoming aware of the other person's presence, or as his vicinity, or as the communion with him. Language must be understood as a condition of thepossibility of this "becoming aware"[26].

It is in this view that Levinas considers that in Martin Buber's or Gabriel Marcel's analyses, the relation with the Other loses its unwanted character. In Buber's case, Levinas questions whether the reciprocity suggested by the pattern in which Thou appears as partner is an original one or not. Levinas believes that due to a "contemptuous spiritualism" from which Buber's vision is suffering, the relation I-Thou does not engender

any concrete structure, having a formal nature and being unable of acknowledging aspects which are different from that of friendship, such as the following: economy, the pursuit of happiness, and the relation of representation with things[27].

Derrida establishes that three aspects actually form the essence of the reproaches which Levinas ascribes to the relation I-Thou in the way in which Buber represents it: first, there is its structure based on the symmetry and reciprocity principle; second, its formality, without distinguishing between the specific contents of the relation with human beings and the relation with things; and third, there is the fact that it supposes a sort of couple clandestineness in which the couple becomes self-sufficient, leaving in oblivion the whole universe. For good reason, Derrida considers that all these elements in Buber are surpassed towards the fulfillment desired by the Levinasian critique[28].

Levinas' critique is based on the conclusion that with Martin Buber, relation is nothing else but accomplishment of the meeting. Relation is just a fulguration of distinct meetings conceived as unique events which cannot be connected to other instances in order to provide a history or a biography.

Moreover, the Thou does not have the qualities such as the I would like to have or to come to know, leading Levinas to the conclusion that with Buber, relation, as well as the elements of the relation, is suffering from too much spiritualism and too much abstraction[29]. With Levinas, the intersubjective elements bear a face, show a countenance. In order to understand the profound structure of the countenance, Derrida's words are relevant: "The countenance is neither God's face nor man's image: it is the resemblance between them"[30]. The presence of the countenance makes possible the ethical relation. Derrida points out that ethical relation must be understood as in the light of face-to-face moment, as presence of alterity which can only be set up by beginning with oneself.

John Wild notes that to Levinas, the world which the I experiences is not a logical relation which would gather all elements in a neutral system. There is a fundamental tendency of the human being to exercise dominion over things in order to make use of them in a personal advantage or in the advantage of the group to which the individual belongs. This is a self-centred tendency based on the hedonist principle. Within this tendency, there is the possibility that the other individuals would be perceived by an I either as an extension of his own or as objects which can be manipulated in an individual or social purpose. This attitude is an act of injustice which can be amendable only by the other's experience face to face, as a living being with whom an I coexists. To Levinas, the ideal solution of vicinity is fulfilled through language. Alterity originates in language through a paradigm engendered by the question-answer structure in which the I feels ready to put into words his own world and to give it to the other[31].

As the word is "the prophetic word", responsibility has also a prophetic dimension with Levinas. He believes that prophetism is a fundamental reality of the human nature. In this circumstance, prophecy is valuated both under its concrete aspects which the prophetic writings generate and also as a moment of re-

sponsibility in which the human being assumes its own condition related to the other. To Levinas, "assuming the responsibility towards the other signifies for each man a way of testifying about the glory of the Infinity and of being inspired"[32].

"Responsibility of a mortal for another mortal" represents to Levinas the essence of the relation with Infinity. The prototype of responsibility is rediscovered by Levinas in the biblical excerpt from Genesis 18:23-33, where Abraham begs God to spare the inhabitants of Sodom from destruction. This archetypal function of Abraham's attitude consists in the fact that although he is aware that everything is "ashes to ashes" (Genesis 18, 27), when facing the impending death of others he assumes the responsibility of interceding with God in their favor[33]. The responsible communication is engendered by a primordial act of generosity in which the I steps out of his selfishness, giving himself to the other. This kind of addressing neither pledges him to the other nor limits him. They find themselves continually in a spontaneous and ever new relation because each of them is an active expression and speaks for himself. In this way, the entities become social beings due to a first option for generosity and communication in a process of addressing in which each pays attention to the other and takes into consideration the other and the world in which he dwells and in which the other continually communicates to him. This relation is not one that requires a reciprocity of a dependence; each may step out of the relation and may take his stand in other relations without harming in any way his personal integrity[34].

To the personal relation of reciprocity between I and Thou, Levinas opposes the asymmetric dimension and the ascendancy of the Other[35]. This Other cannot be expressed by the process of any cognition. What is important here is not cognition but the face to face meeting. Meeting is distinguished from cognition by the fact that "Man is the sole being that I cannot meet without expressing this very meeting"[36].

Stating: "I describe ethics which represents man as a human being"[37], Levinas points out the difference between a theology concerned by the inter-subjective communication and the ethics of alterity which he proposes to us through his system. Without calling the role of a support which will engender any theology or any mystic, the author is interested in underlining the formal structure of meeting.

To explain this structure, Levinas equally valuates both the philosophical thinking and the prophetic one. In his discourse, he ceaselessly establishes a balance between the philosophical purpose and the Biblical prerequisites of the inter-subjective relation. By putting at work both the tradition that vindicates itself from Greek thinking, and the wisdom of the Jewish tradition, Levinas believes that the prime urgency of contemporary philosophy is the removal of the human being from oblivion, always reminding men of "the mystery which hides in their relation with other human beings"[38].

A similar theoretical attitude is promoted by M. Buber. Trying to explaining the relational being from the point of view of a dialogical ontology, M. Buber

speaks about the sphere of cognition which can be identified with the field of philosophy. At the same time, he theorizes a sphere of Thou which stands for the sphere of reciprocity and which bears all the connotation of relation and knowledge of religious type. The two spheres meet in a philosophy of "between" which may describe the relations "between man and man", "between man and world", "between man and God" as the three spheres of the world of relation. We might well go on and state that in a discursive field, the philosophy of "between" develops as meeting between philosophy and theology, between the philosophical and prophetic tradition.

Although, our aim was that of underlining the Judaic pattern which sits at the basis of the thinking of the two thinkers, it is obvious that both in M. Buber's case as well as in Levinas', we find ourselves in front of two Jewish philosophical systems which are constituted by the meeting of the two traditions: the philosophical and the religious. Beyond the evidently particular configuration, the relational principle theorized by the two thinkers has as the unifying element that which is represented by the valuation of a Biblical archetype: the Sinaitic relation, valuation rendered through the means in which the philosophical tradition integrates into our thinking the proper way for a person to be in the world.

Notes

1 Translated by Ana Elena Ilinca

2 Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, (second edition), The Scribner Library, 1958, p. 18.

3 Emmanuel Levinas, *Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge*, in Paul Arthur Schlipp and Maurice Friedman (eds.) *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*,Cambridge University Pess, London, p. 140.

4 Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, quoted ed., p. 4.

5 Eliezer Berkovits, *Studies in Torah Judaism. A Jewish Critique of the Philosophy of Martin Buber*, Jeshiva University, New York, 1962, p. 7.

6 Emmanuel Levinas, *Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge* in Paul Arthur Schlipp and Maurice Friedman (eds.) *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, quoted. ed., p. 138.

7 Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, quoted ed., p. 7.

8 *Ibidem*, p. 75.

9 Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber* in Simon Noveck (ed.) – *Great Jewish Thinkers of Twentieth Century*, Binai B'rith Department of Adult Jewish Education, Washington, 1963, p. 195.

10 Eliezer Berkowits, *Studies in Torah Judaism. A Jewish Critique of the Philosophy of Martin Buber* quoted ed., p. 12.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 15.

12 M. Buber, *I and Thou*, quoted ed., p. 34.

13 *Ibidem*, p. 63.

14 St. Aug. Doinas, *Note* in M. Buber, *I and Thou* (Eu si Tu), Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1992, p. 26.

15 M. Buber, *I and Thou*, (second edition), The Scribner Library, 1958, p. 14.

16 *Ibidem*, p. 15.

17 Emmanuel Levinas, *Between Us. Trying to Think the Other (Intre noi. Incercare de a-l gindi pe celalalt)*, ALL Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 26.

18 *Ibidem*, p. 28.

19 *Ibidem*, p. 29-30.

20 Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Liberty. Essays on Judaism (Dificila libertate. Eseu despre iudaism)*, Hasefer Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, p. 221.

21 *Ibidem*, p. 220.

22 *Ibidem*, p. 222.

23 *Ibidem*, p. 221.

24 *Ibidem*, p. 184.

25 *Ibidem*, p. 198.

26 Emmanuel Levinas, *Between us*…, quoted ed., p. 15.

27 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity. Essay on Exteriority (Totalitate si infinit, Eseu asupra exterioritatii*), Polirom Publishing House, Iasi, 1999, p. 51.

28 J. Derrida, *The Writing and the Difference (Scriitura si diferenta*), Univers Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 154.

29 Emmanuel Levinas, *Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge*, in Paul Arthur Schlipp and Maurice Friedman (ed.), *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, quoted ed., p. 140.

30 J. Derrida, *The Writing and the Difference*, quoted ed., 1998, p. 159. In the notes concerning Derrida's comment on Levinas thinking, Bogdan Ghiu draws us the attention that in Romanian, the usage of the word "neighbour" in order to define alterity has a stronger moral character. Therefore the usage of "fellow" instead of "neighbour" is preferable so as to emphasize that the resemblance replaces the vicinity. Thus, one can bring into discussion "the infinite transcendence of the 'neighbour' and also the ambiguity of distance generated by the resemblance principle, quoted ed., p. 152.

31 John Wild, *Introduction* in E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority,* Kluwer Academic Publisher, Bodrech, Boston, London, 1991, p. 11-20.

32 Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity. Dialogues with Philippe Nemo (Ethique et infini. Dialogues avec Philippe Nemo)*, Libraire Artheme Fayard, Paris, 1990, p. 111.

33 Emmanuel Levinas, *Death and Time (Moartea si timpul)*, Apostrof Publishing House, Cluj, 1996, p. 166.

34 John Wild, *Introduction*, quoted ed., p. 11-20.

35 Vasile Tonoiu, *The Dialogical Man. A Turning Point Concept (Omul dialogal. Un concept raspintie)*, Romanian Cultural Foundation Publisher, Bucharest, 1995, p. 311.

36 Emmanuel Levinas, *Between us*… , quoted ed., p. 15.

37 *Ibidem*, p. 114.

38 C. Chalier & M. Abensour, quoted by A. Maniutiu in Levinas' *Death and Time*, quoted ed., p. 8.