

An essay on the background of Jewish ethics of alterity in Emmanuel Lévinas

Abstract

This literature review aims at presenting the influences of history of Jewish ethics in the work of Emmanuel Lévinas. At the origin of Judaism one finds the experience of intersubjectivity with emphasis on otherness, instead of subjectivity. It is the experience of a transcendence and “trans-ancestry” to which they can not escape and that one, on the other side, cannot deal with objectively. Levinasian ethics goes beyond phenomenology. The face is the phenomenality of the phenomenon itself: it is its very condition. The manifestation as face presents itself as unique, for it manifests itself without manifestation, in a way: it presents itself as an Enigma, an intrigue which by definition is an intervention that deranges the phenomenon: it dodges the binomial between being and non-being. Ethics is thus possible by the very epiphany of the face.

Key-words: Judaism; Intersubjectivity; Otherness; Face; Ethics.