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“ OTHER ”

**in Light of Phenomenological-Hermeneutics
Reflection**

**Edited by
Marcin Rebes**

“I” AND “OTHER”

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IN LIGHT OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL-
HERMENEUTICS REFLECTION

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Marcin Rebes



Kraków

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of interpersonal relations is an important social problem. In fact, the conflicts that arise between individuals, as well as between communities and nations, have at their root the problem of the symmetry of relations. It is only on the basis of the question “Do I see an adversary in the other?” that the content gets revealed. In his critique of Kant, Max Scheler observes that what precedes all cognition is not only the experience of utilitarian values but also ethical ones. Before I know, I experience myself in the realization of values together with others. Being empathetic precedes my awareness. Martin Buber’s philosophy introduces the I-Thou relationship into philosophical thought. Only in this relationship do we find ourselves, which in fact means being for the other.

In this collection, the *alter ego* is presented not only as a second, but also as a third other. The other can be myself, but also another who makes me credible in my being a witness for the other. It is easier for me to enter into dialogue with another person, whom I can address as “you.” And what happens when this person is another unlike me? What is my relationship with them? This book is an attempt to answer this question with a method that is really only a reflection in which otherness with its radicalism is revealed to me. This otherness is by no means an object to which I have a distance, which can be judged from the perspective of something that is far away from me, but it is that which attracts and fascinates me, which takes shape within me. Before I can put the encounter in the category of consciousness, the relationship with the other is already part of me, and it is only this that makes it possible to enter into a strong relationship. Before I know the outside world, I already somehow understand and embrace it. This volume deals with the subject of the other precisely on the basis

of the description of the phenomenon of otherness and an attempt to understand it on the basis of various literary descriptions, philosophies and also social phenomena. The analyses are made in view of the migration crisis of contemporary Europe and the archetype of the pilgrim man, the man on the road. This problem is depicted from many different perspectives such as philosophy, education, and sociology.

The monograph consists of six chapters. In the first chapter, entitled *Senses and Meaning of Hospitality* Marie-Anne Lescourret, author of biographies of Emmanuel Levinas and Paul Claudel, focuses on the problem of hospitality, referring, among others, to Caravaggio's painting *The Seven Works of Misericordia*, as well as comparing the meaning of hospitality with other concepts such as charity, compassion, for example. She also finds the meaning of these synonyms in the passages of St. Matthew's Gospel, in which the source relationship between me and the other is revealed. The author sees an analogy between contemporary problems, the migratory crisis, which has the face of a human being, of a neighbor, and the words of St. Matthew, who not only calls us to stay beside the other, to accompany them, but also to act. The author presents the problem of hospitality through the prism of the relationship between word and reality. As she notes, apart from all forms of feelings and actions, the aforementioned painting lacks vision and language, that is, looking and seeing. The author interestingly tries to show the importance of listening and speaking for hospitality; they are an essential element of hospitality.

The second chapter, entitled *The Equal and the Same*, by Hans Sepp, author of *Phänomenologie und Oikologie*, among other books which deal with phenomenology, is a continuation of the first chapter and is devoted to the issue of reciprocity. The author addresses the problem of equality, starting out by presenting it through the prism of the relationship between Cain and Abel, as well as between them and God. The problem of God's acceptance of Abel's sacrifice lies at the root of Cain's jealousy of his brother. The author presents the contradiction in the attitude of Cain, who demands equality but does not practice it himself. The demand for equality and equal treatment does not contradict the fact that the Self and the Other are absolutely different from each other. Each is indispensable to the other, unlike the performance of different social functions.

The book also explores the problem of the role of the Self as a third party in the relationship between two persons. It is discussed by Thomas Keller, author of *Verkörperungen des Dritten im Deutsch-Französischen Verhältnis*, in the third chapter entitled *Ich-Andere-Dritte. Vom Personalen zum Medialen*. Thomas Keller focuses on the role of the Self as a third person who is not only a witness for others, but also needs a witness for his role as mediator, confidant of others. The self as third party in the relationship of two subjects transfers the content of one into the domain of the other,

performs transculturalism. The third, however, also needs a confidant, a witness to his experience. The witness who accompanies the first and second persons also needs someone who confirms his experience, who makes him credible. Like the interpreter, the third needs an outside witness whose relationship with him will not be reciprocal, but is necessary for my validation. The author presents various scenarios in which the transition from egology to tertiariness takes place. The philosophy of dialogue focuses on the I-Thou relationship, while, as in Simmel, the third, the stranger, plays an important role. In this sense, the ambivalence between familiarity and betrayal, familiarity and strangeness in the cultural sense is revealed. The one who translates is the one who opens the door to those who are the addressees of the message, the mission.

In the fourth chapter, *Learning from the Other: A Study in Philosophy of Education*, Rafał Godoń, the author of numerous works on the philosophy of education, presents relations with others through the prism of the process of upbringing. He shows the way of experience, in which man learns from the other. He wonders under what conditions it is possible to support students in their own learning from others. He poses the question of a pedagogical culture at school in which students' participation in a truly valuable education will be promoted. The author focuses on the experience in which students learn from others. He presents it from a theoretical and practical, empirical perspective. He argues that the school should provide space for student activity in a pragmatic dimension as well as conceptual thinking. Work and dialogue belong to educational experiences.

In the fifth chapter, *Migrants in Contemporary Europe as Significant Others: Some Thoughts Concerning Persistent Appeal of Civilisational Boundary Drawing*, Grzegorz Pożarlik, a sociologist exploring the questions of identity and integration of Europe, shows the problem of the other from the perspective of the migration crisis in Central Europe. He presents the phenomenon in which immigrants become a symbol of civilizational otherness. In view of the Arab Spring, as well as the crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border as seen in the public debate on it, the message emphasizing the civilizational borders between Europe and "Not-Europe" is reinforced. This type of identity narrative has a history. European civic identity grew out of a confrontation with otherness, but was also regarded from the positive side as an aspirational goal.

In the sixth chapter, *Solidarity with/for Other and Responsibility for Other in Light of Reciprocal Relation between Man and Man: Philosophy of Other*, Marcin Rebes takes up the problem of responsibility for another and solidarity with him in view of these notions. The key to them is the philosophical turn towards dialogue, towards dialogicality, which replaces the hitherto understanding of the world through the prism of subject-object relations. The relationship between man and man eludes such an approach and is based on openness, which does not allow for the objectification of man, but

for the creation of a space “between,” for which solidarity with and responsibility for others means a relationship between two subjects who are able to relate to each other despite their separateness, dissimilarity. The notion of responsibility and solidarity, crucial in a social sense today, is rooted in the source experience of the other.

The book discusses the important problem of the other considered from different perspectives and in different relations. The fundamental problem is not so much the I-Thou relationship, as this relationship from the perspective of being a third, of witnessing someone to someone else (a third), and the context of the encounter, building a relationship, a society that also needs a mediation dialogue. The problem of the other is a very important issue from the perspective of cultural and social processes and the question of identity. They are based on the relation I-Other.



Caravaggio, *The Seven Works of Mercy*, 1607. Source: public domain

The book addresses one of the fundamental questions posed in both the social sciences and the humanities, namely the question of identity and the role played by the “Other” in its construction. The issues analysed in the book are also very topical. Nowadays, when as a result of a number of processes it is more and more difficult to answer the question of identity, both in the individual and collective aspect, such questions become especially actual, and answers to them are provided by particular authors in their erudite articles, referring to canonical texts for Western culture. What makes this publication particularly relevant is the fact that the discussion concerns the figure of the “Other” and its role in identity formation. Admittedly, such analyses have a long academic tradition, the issue seems particularly topical today. The contemporary world is characterised by high mobility, as a consequence of which contacts with the “Other” are now more common and everyday than ever before.

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