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Interdependence and Ethical Responsibility

Interdépendance et responsabilité éthique

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In my text, I attempt to develop a concept of moral responsibility based on the premise that people are not self-sufficient. Rather, they depend for both their survival and flourishing on other people and the environment. Characterizing all living beings including humans is the relational and interdependent nature of their existence. No human being is self-sufficient or self-sustaining. We all depend inescapably on others. Our lives are relational, interrelated, and interdependent. This vital interdependence makes each of us accountable for each other's lives. The other person or living being calls us to responsibility through their material, spiritual or emotional needs. Since their lives depend on us, we are responsible not only for those with whom we share the world in the present, but also for those who will inhabit it in the future. Thus, when one responds to the call of others for assistance, this response does not derive from a moral rule, based on which one decides what is morally good or not and acts accordingly.

Keywords: *Interdependence, ethical responsibility, Judith Butler.*

Dans cet article nous tentons de développer un concept de responsabilité morale à partir de la prémisses que les êtres humains ne sont pas autosuffisants, mais dépendent à la fois pour leur survie et leur épanouissement des autres êtres humains, ainsi que de l'environnement. C'est ce qui marque l'ensemble des êtres vivants, y compris l'humain, c'est le caractère relatif et interdépendant de leur existence. Aucun être vivant n'est autarcique ni autosubsistant. On dépend tous, sans exception, des autres, tant pour notre survie que pour notre bien-être. Cette interdépendance vitale rend chacun de nous déjà-toujours responsable de la vie de l'autre. L'autre nous invite à la responsabilité à travers ses besoins matériels, spirituels ou sentimentaux. Puisque leur vie dépend de nous, nous sommes responsables, non seulement de ceux avec qui nous partageons le monde dans le présent, mais de ceux qui existeront dans le futur. Par conséquent, quand on répond à l'appel au secours venu des autres, une telle réaction n'est pas



tirée d'un code éthique; ce n'est pas une décision immédiate entre le bien et le mal procédant à l'action.

Mots-clés: *Interdépendance, responsabilité éthique, Judith Butler.*

An essential characteristic shared by all living things, including humans, is the relational and interdependent nature of their existence. No living thing is self-sufficient or self-sustaining. We all depend on others for both our survival and well-being. As Judith Butler points out, «We are interdependent beings whose pleasure and suffering depends from the start on a sustained social world, a sustaining environment»¹. For Plato, the existence of *polis* 'originates' in the fact that «the individual is not self-sufficient, but has many needs which he can't supply himself». The text continues, «And when we have got hold of enough people to satisfy our many varied needs, we have assembled quite a large number of partners and helpers together to live in one place; and we give the resultant settlement the name of a community or state [*polis*]»².

Our lives are relational, interconnected, and interdependent. Our being, according to Jean-Luc Nancy, is «being-in-common»³. Our dependent and relational way of being implies a statutory departure from the self, a primary «dispossession» of the self by the other. As Athena Athanasiou notes, «we are already 'outside ourselves', beyond ourselves, given over, bound to others, and bound by claims that emerge from outside or from deep inside ourselves»⁴. In this sense, we do not fully own ourselves⁵.

¹ Butler, J. & Athanasiou, A., *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*, Cambridge & Malden: Polity, 2013, p. 4.

² Plato, *The Republic*, Lee, D. (trans., & intr.), London: Penguin, 1987, 369b5-c5, p. 117, (2nd edition).

³ Nancy, J.-L., «Aspects of 'In-common': The Icy Waters of Europe, Biotechnology, Secular Christianity» [«Ὅψεις του απο-κοινού: Τα παγωμένα νερά της Ευρώπης, η βιοτεχνολογία, ο εγκόσμιος χριστιανισμός»] (discussion with Athena Athanassiou, Gerasimos Kakoliris & Apostolos Lampropoulos), *Synchrone Themata*, 128-129, January-July 2015, pp. 27-28.

⁴ Butler, J. & Athanasiou, A., 2013, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 159.



However, Errin C. Gilson emphatically points out that we must be careful in how we understand the term «interdependence». We are not just separated and isolatable persons who depend on each other⁶. In a liberal atomistic view, individuals often need others to cope with a situation unfavorable to them, such as a state of poverty or natural disaster. However, these relationships of mutual assistance are established between independent and autonomous subjects. Indicative of this is the well-known example of Immanuel Kant on the duty of mutual aid in the *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals* regarding the first formulation of the categorical imperative. For Kant, the refusal of a person to contribute to the well-being of others and support their needs cannot become a «universal law of nature», because in this case, «he would have robbed himself, by such a law of nature springing from his own will, of all hope of the aid he desires»⁷.

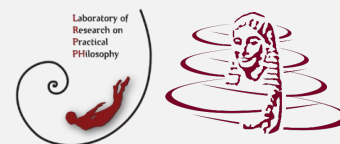
In contrast, the idea here is that our interconnection with others runs through the whole of our lives and is prior to our establishment as individuals who, as noted from an individualistic viewpoint, depend on each other. Through our relationships and by virtue of our interdependence, we become such individuals. Others do not simply constantly violate the boundary that contains us through their ability to influence our lives in many ways. They also play an important role in enabling the possibility of being a «person» with defined boundaries. We may be rational thinking beings, but this trait presupposes the existence of others to develop this possibility. Regarding this issue, Alasdair MacIntyre notes in *Dependent Rational Animals*, «We become independent practical reasoners through participation in a set of relationships with certain particular others who are able to give us what we need»⁸. Our dependence on others emerges with life itself and is prior to the formation of the «I». Even prior to individualization and due to our physical needs, we are abandoned to a whole of primary others⁹. This primary

⁶ Gilson, E., C., *The Ethics of Vulnerability: A Feminist Analysis of Social Life and Practice*, London & New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 14-15.

⁷ Kant, I., «Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals», in: Beck, L., W., *Kant Selections*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988, pp. 269-270.

⁸ MacIntyre, A., *Dependent Rational Animals. Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, Chicago & La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1999, p. 99.

⁹ Butler, J., *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, London and New York: Verso, 2004, p. 31.



experience of being abandoned to others from the beginning gives rise to the «I». The self of this «I» emerges through its relationships with others; it is constituted through its social bonds. The self depends on social environments and others who motivate the life of the self. The subject is constituted in or as its relationships with others. Thus, while the self refers to a certain interiority, it becomes possible or is constantly influenced and shaped by that which is external to it. Therefore, the subject is always outside of itself, other than itself, since its relationship with others is essential to what it is itself.

The chances of a life's survival and prosperity are related to the bonds and relationships it maintains with other lives and the environment. If my existence depends on a relation to others without whom I cannot exist, then as Judith Butler emphasizes, «My existence is not mine alone, but is to be found outside myself, in this set of relations that precede and exceed the boundaries of who I am»¹⁰. Corine Pelluchon also maintains, «Our existence cannot be separated from that on which we depend»¹¹. Therefore, interdependence and community is not just a matter of solidarity based on interests, but of a common history of bonds of co-formation, mutual support, and interaction of our lives.

Life cannot be sustained on its own. Life 'requires' the satisfaction of various social and economic conditions to be sustained as life. In some way, everyone's life is always in the hands of others. Each individual life presupposes its dependence on other people, most of whom remain anonymous. In *Frames of War*, Judith Butler underlines that «[t]here is no life without the conditions of life that variably sustain life» (*F.W.*, 19). These living conditions are «pervasively social». It is impossible for a person, not only during the initial period of their life, to secure for themselves everything they need for their survival, let alone for their prosperity (food, medical care, housing, emotional support, etc.). Every life must be supported by what is outside it, meaning that life cannot be sustained without at least some conditions that make it livable (*F.W.*, 21). No form of

¹⁰ Butler, J., *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, London & New York: Verso, 2009, p. 44 (from now on in parenthesis inside the text: *F.W.*)

¹¹ Pelluchon, C., *Nourishment: A Philosophy of the Political Body*, trans. by Smith, J. E. H. & revised by Cambien, F. & Pelluchon, C., London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2019, p. 8.



human life is possible without «reproducible and sustaining social relations, and relations to the environment and to non-human forms of life», which in general, have the ability to keep it alive (*F.W.*, 19). Simply put, life needs support and favorable conditions to be sustainable and livable (*F.W.*, 21).

We depend on others throughout our lives. The difference is that in some cases, like the case of an infant or someone suffering from a severe disability, this dependence is more evident. If someone or some people stop taking direct care of them, this may result in their death. However, if in some way, the network of others that sustains our lives were withdrawn, then our own lives would also be immediately put at risk, because no one can live through their own strengths alone.

Since the possibility of a livable life for some people presupposes others' active intervention, those others are ethically obligated to intervene to secure the conditions that would allow such a thing. If they do not, then they will have contributed via their indifference to leading somebody's life to precarity or not enabling them to escape it. The social ties in which we are involved and which are necessary for our existence, force us to secure the conditions for livable lives on an egalitarian basis (*F.W.*, 21).

Therefore, according to Butler, «[t]o sustain life as sustainable requires putting those conditions in place and militating for their renewal and strengthening». The existence and preservation of these conditions or prerequisites constitute «both our political responsibility and the matter of our most vexed ethical decisions» (*F.W.*, 23). Consequently, responsibility does not focus «just on the value of this or that life, or on the question of survivability in the abstract, but on the sustaining social conditions of life—especially when they fail» (*F.W.*, 35). Hence, «[w]here a life stands no chance of flourishing», there we «must» focus to improve negative living conditions (*F.W.*, 23).

Nonetheless, Butler posits that it would be wrong to address responsibility starting from an isolated, self-existent «I» who should or should not be responsible for others. Conversely, if the «I» is responsible for others, it is because it is tied to them in necessary, inevitable ways. The «I» cannot think of itself without this world of others. If I am as «I» always responsible for other people, it is because I am, at least partly, a «we» (*F.W.*, 35).



We are all dependent on each other, vulnerable, that is, exposed to destruction caused by others. As such, we need protection through multilateral and international agreements based on the recognition of our common precariousness. Whether this interdependence is recognized (or not) and institutionalized (or not) has implications regarding who survives, prospers, barely survives, and who is exterminated or left to die (*F.W.*, 43). In Butler's view, the reason I am not free to be indifferent to or destroy the other is that «the subject that I am is bound to the subject I am not, that we each have the power to destroy and to be destroyed, and that we are bound to one another in this power and this precariousness. In this sense, we are all precarious lives» (*F.W.*, 43).

This dependence on each other means there is no form of relationship in which one does not exert some influence on the other, that is, where one is not affected by the other. Even the way we look at the other or how we talk to them cannot escape the consequences. One of our words can make others happy or unhappy. Any relationship we have with the other, even the most insignificant, affects them. For example, no one feels good when addressing someone—even for simple matters such as asking for the name of a street—who ignores us or responds in an indifferent, abrupt, or rude way. This constant, uninterrupted dependence of each one of us on others, as manifests in all our relationships, transforms our relationships into those of responsibility. I am responsible for the way I interact with the other, because the attitude I adopt toward them cannot escape the consequences thereof. I am tied to the other in an inescapable way without having decided on it. In Emmanuel Levinas' words, I am hostage to the other¹².

In relation to the other and the demands of their dependent life on me, I can only respond in a certain way (even indifference is a way of responding). I can become their savior or murderer. There is no escape. I cannot say, 'I do not care about their life, I am not responsible for them'. In a world where my existence and well-being depend on others' existence and well-being, I cannot say such a thing. Furthermore, the other's life concerns me, whether or not I like it, since the attitude I adopt toward them—including

¹² Levinas, E., *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by Lingis, A., Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994, p. 112.



that ‘their life is none of my concern’—has direct consequences for their life. Therefore, the request made by the other puts me in a position of inevitable responsibility, which I have not chosen, as their life depends on or is affected by how I respond to this request.

This interdependence renders each of us already responsible for the other’s life. The inescapable relationality of our existence at its most primary level, as an absolute interdependence of the one on the other, constitutes the location of taking responsibility and of the impossibility of escaping it. In *Ethics and Infinity*, Emmanuel Levinas notes, «[t]he tie with the Other is knotted only as responsibility, this moreover, whether accepted or refused, whether knowing or not knowing how to assume it, whether able or unable to do something concrete for the Other»¹³. This means my relationship with the other, whether a human or living being in general, is governed by the fact that ‘it concerns me’. The attitude that ‘it concerns me’ is heteronomous, that is, I do not choose it, and it exists even when I «can take no initiative»¹⁴. Thus, I feel uncomfortable when I cannot help the other who needs me.

Each of us is responsible for everything and all those whom we can affect by our actions, and there is no possibility of escaping this responsibility. Chloe Kolyri agrees that «the fate of the last of us concerns the whole of society»¹⁵. We are responsible not only for those with whom we share the world in the present, but also those who have existed (and whose traces of existence we have inherited) or will exist in the future. According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, «Each person you know about and can affect is someone to

¹³ Levinas, E., *Ethics and Infinity. Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. by Cohen, R., A., Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1985, p. 97. Nevertheless, hostile to all ontology because it annihilates the absolute otherness of each singular person, Levinas does not infer responsibility from interdependence. For him, responsibility is unfounded, an-archic. It comes from an immemorial, non-retrievable, un-representable past that was never present and in which I was never present: «The unlimited responsibility in which I find myself comes from this hither side of my freedom, from a ‘prior to every memory,’ [...] from the non-present par excellence, the non-original, the an-archic, prior to or beyond essence» (Levinas, E., 1994, *op.cit.*, p. 10).

¹⁴ Derrida, J., *The Gift of Death*, trans. by Wills, D., Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 91.

¹⁵ Kolyri, C., *Gender as Decoy: Psychoanalysis, Politics and Art* [*Το φύλο ως δόλωμα: Ψυχανάλυση, πολιτική και τέχνη*], Athens: Patakis, 2017, [in Greek] p. 58.



whom you have responsibilities: to say this is just to affirm the very idea of morality»¹⁶. Morality is born of the fact that we are interdependent beings. The question of 'what I ought to do' arises because our actions (or inaction) and words affect others including other non-human living beings. The fellow human being calls us to responsibility through their material, spiritual, or emotional needs. The other's needs put us in a position of solidarity toward them. In this inescapable dependence on each other, «I» means I am for the other.

Usually, responsibility is perceived as concerning the actions of an acting subject and as if it were founded on the freedom of their will. However, responsibility is not something I choose so as to easily abdicate it. The life of the other, whose preservation and prosperity depends on my own, renders me responsible. Therefore, when responding to others' call for help, this response does not stem from a moral rule by which one decides what is ethically good or not and then acts accordingly. The response is because from the beginning, one is implicated in the lives of others and they are involved in one's own life¹⁷. Thus, opening the door of our home or borders of our country to the other is not so much a virtue as an acknowledgment of the responsibility arising from the primary interdependence of the «I» with others and of others from the «I». Refugees' vulnerability, the danger threatening their lives, their precarity, their poverty, do not only concern them. They concern every other human being to the extent that the improvement or even deterioration of their condition in general depends little on themselves and much more on us, the others. Most, if not all, one's vital needs involve others, since their fulfillment also depends on them. Being a refugee or being displaced, poor, homeless, or any other condition of extreme precarity clarifies the degree of dependence on us of people under these conditions. It also makes obvious that our unwillingness to stand in solidarity with them can literally crush their lives, even making us «murderers», according to George Faraklas¹⁸.

¹⁶ Appiah, K., A., *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006, p. xiii.

¹⁷ Butler, J. & Athanasiou, A., 2013, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁸ Faraklas, G., «Why it is in our Interest to Welcome the Refugees» [«Γιατί μας συμφέρει να υποδεχτούμε τους πρόσφυγες»], *Eneken*, 45, October-November-December 2016, [in Greek] p. 255.



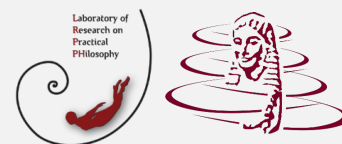
Since we are involved in an infinite number of interdependencies, there are no *a priori* limits to our responsibility. We cannot say we are responsible only for our own people, that is, our relatives, friends, or compatriots and fellow citizens. These are not the only ones whose survival or well-being depends on us. In a globalized environment, we have a responsibility also for the life of someone geographically distant from us, because, for example, the continuation of the life of an indigenous person from the Amazon depends 'also' on us. Some individuals or groups protest in favor of these people, collect signatures, write articles to raise awareness in the rest of the world, and so on. They do so because they believe their actions can affect the lives of these people and they feel the responsibility to do so.

However, the finitude of our strengths and capabilities does not allow us to meet everyone's needs; thus, we must choose whose needs we prioritize and meet each time. Which of these responsibilities we can meet or how is, among other factors, determined by the finite nature of our strengths, of the opportunities and limitations provided by our situation, and of our own needs and capabilities. However, this does not mean it is up to us to decide who or what we are responsible for. Therefore, each time, the issue is, as Judith Butler points out, «to open ourselves to the world»¹⁹, to be available to the world in the best possible way. This is so even though, more often than not, our material conditions, the finitude of our forces, and political and social conditions within which we are called to act undermine such desire, such opening, such effort.

After all, the finiteness of our individual strengths often leads us to collective action so that we can respond more effectively to the demands of others. The unlimited nature of our responsibility does not allow us to be complacent in our actions as individuals—for example, to be satisfied by caring only for our own cat or those in our neighborhood—but requires us to care for other cats too through the creation of collectives such as an animal welfare group or organization.

McIntyre contends that many of our needs cannot be solved at the level of individual relations or networks of receiving and giving, but require collectives or political entities such as a local community or the state. Many decisive needs at both the individual and

¹⁹ Butler, J. & Athanasiou, A., 2013, *op.cit.*, p. 109.



group or small society levels can only be met at the present time through the use of state resources and invocation of the interventionist institutions of the state. This has also been the role of the welfare state, namely to provide the means a society as a whole needs, including health care, education, housing, and work. Of course, the question of means, such as what means individuals and groups need to achieve their well-being and development or through what ways networks of solidarity and support can be maintained and strengthened, is politically at stake. Similarly, there is no predetermined, undeniable answer to what constitutes a person's well-being. Rather, this is subject to discussion.

When we take our responsibility as finite and contextual, not as infinite, a position endorsed by philosophers such as David Wood and Eddo Evink²⁰, as if it arises from a context and is therefore limited by finite powers, then our responsibility is limited from the outset, since we consider having no moral obligation to the others not included in this context, even if they need our help. This delimitation of responsibility may allow us to sleep peacefully at night believing we have done our duty (see 'good conscience'), but it is unfair to those we exclude. Even if the request to which the subject is morally committed may arise from a specific situation, for example, from the hungry cat at the entrance of my apartment building, the request cannot be fully reduced to this situation. It supersedes it and goes in the direction of universality, that is, it includes in principle all cats, and therefore, it is universal²¹. As Levinas mentions in *Totality and Infinity*, «The third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other»²². Here, he means that through this specific, singular other who calls me to responsibility every time, the potential presence of all others in a similar situation is revealed to me. *Ethics and Infinity* adds, «The more I am just, the more I am responsible»²³.

²⁰ Wood, D., «Responsibility Reinscribed (and How)», in: *The Step Back: Ethics and Politics after Deconstruction*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 146 / Evink, E., «Patočka and Derrida on Responsibility», *Analecta Husserliana LXXXIX* (Logos of Phenomenology and the Phenomenology of Logos. Book Two, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka), 2006, pp. 307-321.

²¹ Critchley, S., *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*, London & New York: Verso, 2007, p. 42.

²² Levinas, E., *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, The Hague/Boston/London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979, p. 213.

²³ Levinas, E., 1985, *op.cit.*, p. 105.



However, are all the needs of others binding on us? Let us use the following example. If someone is addicted to heroin and constantly feels the need to use this substance, do I have the moral responsibility to assist them in satisfying their need? For me, it is not the individual needs of each person per se that bind us morally, but their life and well-being. The fulfillment of the other's needs acquires morally binding significance for us in the context of the preservation and flourishing of their life. Our ethical responsibility as interdependent beings is to help the other person stay alive and flourish in the best possible way²⁴.

Therefore, returning to the example above, the satisfaction of their need may not be imposed on us in a binding way if we consider it detrimental to their life. However, we are still bound by the responsibility for their life in general. We cannot leave this person at the mercy of God and have a clear conscience about it. Consequently, people get together and form associations or groups supporting these individuals or demand the creation of structures by the state.

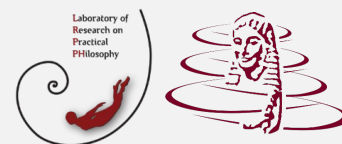
Here, is our responsibility toward the other person symmetrical or asymmetrical? As we know, because of the radical otherness of the other, Levinas describes the ethics between the I and other as unequal and non-symmetrical. In contrast, for a moral responsibility connected with interdependence, the other cannot but share with me the primary responsibility mentioned above. Both my life and the other's are interdependent; thus, we share a common responsibility that weighs equally upon us. This common state of interdependence that we share and that unites us in a common society and the consequent responsibility flowing therefrom is a springboard for «broader social and political claims about rights of protection and entitlements to persistence and flourishing» (F.W., 2). Our lives rely on the existence of social structures that are oftentimes state-owned. Therefore, we demand that these structures exist and are available to everyone: both to us and to others (e.g., medical care, food, housing, education, work, etc.).

²⁴ However, who determines the best possible way? Us or the other? Here, it is important to avoid a paternalistic attitude toward the other's life by respecting their views and desires as well as their otherness and diversity.



Is our responsibility limited only to other people? Could this primary responsibility also concern other living beings or the environment in general? The lives of other living beings and the life of the planet in general depend on our lives, just as our lives depend on theirs. We know what the deforestation of the Amazon means for the survival of the planet, including humans. Even if our lives did not depend on the lives of others, if the relationship between us was one of dependence, not interdependence, we would still have a responsibility to protect those lives. We have a responsibility to preserve the lives of other beings, since these depend on us. We cannot let a dog or cat starve to death, because then we have become complicit in the destruction of a life. Of course, choosing to protect a life, to consider oneself morally bound by it, one must consider that life worth living, accept that it must not only continue to exist, but do so in the best possible way. This concerns other human lives and the lives of other living beings. However, just as we cannot differentiate between human lives by considering them all equally worth living without exception, we also cannot assign a greater value to human life than to the lives of other living beings without succumbing to an incurable anthropocentrism or speciesism. The lives of non-human living animals have their own characteristics, some of which are common with those of human life, depending on the case. However, as for humans, we must protect that life, make it as livable as possible regardless of how each one lives. As such, in the case of other living beings, we have a responsibility to support this life, regardless of what it consists of, to the extent that it depends on us. Otherwise, we would contribute to the degradation of this life's conditions of existence or to its extinction.

However, we know that the continuation of human existence presupposes the sacrifice or death of other living beings. Incessantly, we sacrifice other forms of existence, those of animals and plants, on the altar of our own existence, with no escape from it. For example, if all humanity were to become strictly vegan, the lives of plants would be sacrificed. Philosophy, and ethics in particular, has attempted to provide various answers to the question of 'how can we justify the sacrifice of the life of another living being for the sake of our own existence?'. However, these answers remain anthropocentric. The murderous selfishness of the phrase 'mors tua, vita mea' ('your death, my life') can hardly be justified.



For several philosophers including Seyla Benhabib, social ontology can reveal the bonds or relationships between the self and others; however, «it [social ontology] cannot lead us to normativity»²⁵. According to her, «[e]thics is not social ontology»²⁶. Regarding Benhabib, Larisa Reznik notices that «a social ontology, however rigorous in its accounting for the co-constitution of selves and others, cannot issue the normative *ought* of an ethics»²⁷. Moral justification cannot originate in considerations of the social dimension of the self. Being aware that I am an «ec-statically relational» being, «in a world necessarily inhabited by a plurality of others with a variety of demands upon me, gives me no information about how to decide upon action—what I should do»²⁸.

As mentioned, humans are dependent beings, and this ontological characteristic, namely that something cannot 'be' by itself without the assistance of others, cannot be separated from ethics. Without others' necessary assistance, the human being cannot 'be', cannot exist. Existing per se presupposes the existence of a moral imperative, of an 'I ought'. Without this 'I ought', the human being cannot sustain its own existence or lead a life beyond the level of mere survival. Therefore, existence itself presupposes the interweaving of ontology and ethics, which denies the priority of one or the other. In this case, ethics does not precede ontology, and ontology does not precede ethics; thus, the 'I ought' is somehow derived from 'being'. Our ontological existence cannot be separated from the moral obligations it suggests or implies. For Ann V. Murphy, interdependence may be an ontological self-evident truth, but it may also be more than that. Dependent human existence is a challenge to ethics insofar as this existence requires the response of others to continue to exist²⁹.

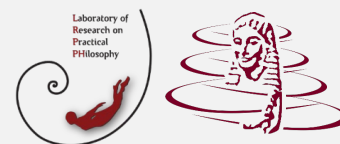
²⁵ Benhabib, S., «Ethics without Normativity and Politics without Historicity: On Judith Butler's *Parting Ways*. Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism», *Constellation*, 20(1), 2013, p. 152.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Reznik, L., «Melancholic Judaism, Ec-static Ethics, Uncertain Politics», *Political Theology*, 16, 4, July 2015, p. 383.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Murphy, A., V., «Corporeal Vulnerability and the New Humanism», *Hypatia*, 26, 3, Summer 2011, p. 577.



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