

Mutuality – Presence – Personal Revelation Through the Word

Father Dumitru Stăniloae and Martin Buber's Relational Ontology

MARIAN PĂTRU*

In this paper I intend to point out the common features and differences between the theological anthropology of Father Stăniloae and Martin Buber's personalist view. To do so, I will concentrate on the role played by the presence of human and divine otherness within relation, seen as an event that places man within a type of personal existence, which is totally different from that inherent to an individual. In order to describe this becoming of an individual within person, I will expose in the first part of this paper Martin Buber's vision from I and Thou on this subject. This exposition of Buber's relational ontology intends to underline a conceptual pattern which is to be found again in the theology of Father Stăniloae, but which Stăniloae overcomes by referring anthropology to triadology, in virtue of an iconic relation between the two ontological levels.

Keywords: *Martin Buber, Dumitru Stăniloae, personalism, relational ontology, ecclesiology*

In defining the historical and civilisational context which generated Buber's *I and You*, Maurice Friedman cites the spiritual crisis of the European culture as the first cause. He believes that: "our culture has, more than any other, abdicated before the world of It"¹. Elaborated mostly during the communist regime, Father Dumitru Stăniloae's personalist theology can also be interpreted as an implicit reaction to the reality of a totalitarian system in which the human person was crushed under a human mass without personality and freedom. The intellectual and political history of the 20th century has therefore at its core the idea of human person, on one side by the totalitarian denial of it, on the other by its philosophical and theological assertion. Father Stăniloae uses the Buberian conceptual apparatus in order to present the patristic personalist ethos to the modern world, in an attempt to give an orthodox solution to a *Zeitgeist* marked by the extremes of depersonalized individualism and collectivism.

The relational ontology of Martin Buber's *Ich und Du*

The small volume written in 1923 has a double significance: a real mistagogy of human existence and at the same time a denouncement of the

* Marian Pătru, PhD student at the Institute of Orthodox Theology, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. Contact details: Str. Mitropoliei 20, 550179 Sibiu, Romania; e-mail: marianpatru@gmail.com

¹ Maurice S. Friedman, *The Life of Dialog*, Chicago 1956, p. 62.