WORKS OF NEIGHBORLY LOVE

Literature, philosophy, and the Neighbor

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To my neighbor and friend Florian Kafka (1983–2021)

IT MAY WELL BE that the ability to love one's neighbor lies beyond the province of animal nature.[1] But let us just assume for a moment that the animal, too, is part of the dynamics of neighborly love. What consequences would this have for our understanding of who qualifies as a (Good) Neighbor—and who does not? Does a newborn qualify? Does an animal? Could an animal cultivate a sense of altruism if it so required? Or is the idea of a noble beast merely the expression of an anthropocentric notion of neighbor-love?[2] Literature is teeming with stories and parables in which animals show mercy to human beings, and where animals are the (only) ones who care. One could call it natural love or instinct—in contrast to romantic love or *agape*,[3] but all attempts to define the boundary between human and animal kindness conceptually disguise a more elementary fact. After all, in the moments of greatest need, it is utterly irrelevant *who* performs the "works of love" and mercy. As long as just anybody—friend or foe, stranger or confidant, man or beast—is *there* to do it.[4]

The parable of the Good Fox

In her poem 'Findelkind' (1978; English translation: 'Foundling', 1991), the Austrian writer Ilse Aichinger (1921–2016) hauntingly depicts the precarious character of neighborly love by constantly blurring the boundaries between animal and human love.[5] The poem confronts us with the cruel fate of a frail and defenseless foundling without a name, who has been left to die in the snow-covered forest:

Foundling
Foisted off to the snow,
not named before angels,
no bronze, no refuge,
not presented to the fairies,
only hidden in caves,
their signs deftly
erased from the forest maps.
A crazed fox
bites and warms him,
favors him quickly with his first caresses
until, trembling and tormented,
he goes off to die.
Who helps the child?
The mothers
with their old fears,
the hunters
with their fake maps,
the angels
with their warm feathered wings
but without orders?
No sound,
no wings in the air,
no shufflings on the ground.
But come again then,
old crazy helpmate,
drag yourself back to him,
bite him, scratch him,[6]
warm him, if your predator's paws are still warm,
because except for you no one comes,
be sure of that.[7]

At the heart of Aichinger's poem is the demand to act, to help, to bring solace—an emphatic demand to care. Due to the lack of human companions available, a wild animal—a crazed fox—is called upon to take care of the abandoned child and to come to its rescue, because "except for you no one comes." But how is the beast supposed to do it? How can the wild creature, itself already on the brink of death, be expected to show tenderness to the child? It does so by biting and scratching, through physical contact, and thus, by satisfying the basic human need for another's caring presence and touch. The poem tells a story of lack, of abandonment, and, most notably, the story of the vital necessity of neighborly love and care in the moments of greatest need.

In an elaborate reading of Aichinger's poem, the Austrian novelist and playwright Marlene Streeruwitz (b. 1950) takes its essence to be an imperative call for responsibility: "The beasts of the forest. They have to provide care. The mothers. The fathers. The angels. They do not. They will not. They have not done it. They did not. But. The foundling survived."[8] Only the beast, in the guise of a crazed fox, comes to the child's aid, thus proving itself a true neighbor. Being the only one who responds to the child's appeal for help, the fox represents all the world for the foundling.[9]

What I am proposing here is to read this poem as a literary variation on the parable of the Good Samaritan as told by Jesus in Luke 10:25–37[10]—the paradigmatic case of neighbor-love in Judeo-Christian tradition. Both the Samaritan parable and the poem outline a series of existential figures of thought that go far beyond a strictly conceptual understanding of neighbor-love. Rather, as I will argue, they delineate a nuanced poetics of neighborly love and givenness that no concept—be it anthropological, theological, or religio-ethical—could ever hope to capture fully and adequately.

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The famous biblical parable begins with an act of violence which involves robbery, serious bodily injury, and attempted manslaughter: "A man [*anthrōpos*] was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went

away, leaving him half dead." (Luke 10:30) The fact that the victim does not die on the spot is only due to the arrival of the Samaritan who picks up the half-dead man[11] from the road, tends to his wounds and takes care of him. At this point, the very first words of the parable prove decisive. The ancient Greek *ạnthrōpos* refers to man as a generic name without regard to gender and is therefore rather to be translated as "human being" or "person."[12] Apparently, *ạnthrōpos* may be *anybody* and is, therefore, *everybody*. We shall come back to the intriguing nexus between anybody and everybody. Thus, the biblical text refuses to give the slightest hint as to what kind of person the badly wounded man might be. We learn nothing about the traveler's age or profession, nothing about social standing or religious affiliation. "A human being" is the most unspecific denomination imaginable, and as listeners/readers of the parable we are not able, indeed we are not even expected to form a picture of that individual.

The constellation in Aichinger's poem is quite similar. An abandoned child is "foisted off to the snow"[13] while the text reveals nothing whatsoever about its backstory: It has no name, no age, no gender, no origin. All we do know is that it is a human being—an *ạnthrōpos*—and that no one seems to have mercy on it: Not the angels, not the fairies, not the mother(s), not even the hunter. It is such stuff as Grimms' fairy tales are made of: Both Hansel and Gretel ('Hänsel und Grethel', 1810), Foundling-bird ('Fundevogel', 1810) and Snow White ('Sneewittchen', 1810) are sent to their certain death in the forest. It is an ancient story: "Take the child out into the forest. I don't want to have to lay eyes on her ever again. You must kill her and bring me her lungs and liver[14] as proof of your deed."[15] Snow White's jealous stepmother is known, above all, to have no mercy for the girl. Something collapses, breaks open, once a/the child in all its vulnerability is "foisted off to the snow," sent to the forest, and thus denied caring acceptance within the community of human beings. It is *not* "in another's hands, another's arms, another's eyes,"[16] and thus not included in the paradigm of neighbor-love and care. No fellow man has pity on it. The foundling-child becomes a borderline case of community, of *communitas*, understood as—following the lucid reflections of the Italian phi-

losopher Roberto Esposito (b. 1950)—"a debt, a pledge, a gift that is to be given."[17] In the case of Aichinger's foundling, only a shy forest animal—the fox—is willing to give this gift of love.

But let us return to the biblical parable and its commandment to love one's neighbor.[18] Crucial for the following considerations is the Samaritan's extraordinary gesture of neighbor-love triggered by the sight of the half-dead human being: "He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him." (Luke 10:34) What is remarkable here, even more than the charitable act itself, is the Samaritan's physical reaction that precedes and provokes the courageous act. Once again, the choice of words in the biblical passage—"and when he [the Samaritan] saw him [the human being], he was moved with pity"—makes it unmistakably clear that this is a thoroughly physical and, as a matter of fact, visceral reaction. The ancient Greek *splanchnizomai*, which means "to be moved with pity," "to be seized with compassion," literally refers to the innermost parts of the human body, namely its bowels (*σπλάγχνον—splanchnon*, pl. *splanchna*). According to the German *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (New Testament Theological Dictionary), the term undergoes a change of meaning from the originally rather coarse designation for the entrails of the sacrificial animal in pre-Christian literature to New Testament usage, where the term becomes an attribute of Christian conduct. In the New Testament context, the word is usually used to refer to the character of Jesus, though there are three notable exceptions. All of them occur in the context of the parables, where the verb *splanchnizomai* is used in crucial passages in the text, this time referring to strong human emotion. In the narrative of the Good Samaritan, *splanchnizomai* is singled out as "the decisive basic attitude of human and thus Christian activity."[19] And even if, according to the theological dictionary, this changed meaning hardly "betrays its original connection with the terminology of sacrifice,"[20] the dimension of violent physicality and sacrifice is still preserved throughout the text, as indicated by the Greek verb.[21] At the sight of the dying man, the Samaritan is so deeply moved that it turns his stomach. He is over-

come by an immediate gut-wrenching emotion that prompts him to act instantaneously and benevolently. It's a remarkable scene, and the startling conclusion that follows is that the "good" Samaritan[22] is not *a priori* a "good" person. He is not necessarily a better person than the priest or the Levite who would both, famously, "[pass] by on the other side" (Luke 10:31). But unlike the Samaritan, the priest and Levite are forbidden by law to touch one who is already half dead, as is the human being in the parable. They would be unclean for days and unable to perform their ministry. This sheds a different light on the failure of the two men to help. It says nothing about whether they are morally "good" or "bad" people, but merely states that the two men behave according to their religious socialization. They are aware of the purity laws imposed on them, and thus act in accordance with the law. Meanwhile, and rather unexpectedly, the Samaritan's guts turn at the sight of the half-dead body. The pitiable scene hits him in the stomach, it churns his bowels. He is violently seized and moved in his innermost being. The Samaritan literally *suffers* neighbor-love. He feels his neighbor's suffering in his own body in that very moment when a human being (*ạnthrōpos*) is revealed to him.

What the parable and Aichinger's 'Findelkind' poem (for all their differences) have in common at this point is the sudden irruption of mercy, exercised by a stranger on a stranger.[23] Moreover, in both texts, it is a stranger from whom one would have least expected it. In the New Testament, the Samaritans belong to a community "who did not enjoy any special prestige in the Judaism of that time or were even generally despised."[24] Obviously, the wounded would have chosen someone else as his savior, and his choice would have had a clearly sociohistorical and even sociopolitical background.[25] In contrast, the tension in Aichinger's poem is created by an existential encounter between animal and human, between "man-cub"[26] and fox. The poem is, among many other things, a Tale of Two Species for which the same (ethical) laws do *not* apply. Two species who—at least that's what we have to assume—do not share any concepts of right and wrong behavior. However, both parable and poem tell the story of the vital necessity of neighbor-love which is practiced by those who are not obliged to do

so, neither by blood ties nor by commandments or laws. No one would expect *them*, of all beings—neither the Samaritan, nor the fox—to take care of their neighbor. Hence the (Good) Neighbor is introduced in a guise that is not only unexpected but downright outrageous: The neighbor in Luke 10:25–37 turns out to belong to a socially marginal community of outlaws, whereas the neighbor of the poem approaches the child in the skin of a predator. This brings back the idea of the noble beast. No one knows how the wild animal will behave towards the child and whether it will behave at all. Not even the lyrical voice, urging the fox to drag its dying body back to the child ("drag yourself back to him"[27]), knows. Will the beast have pity on the foundling, or will it just follow its predatory instinct? Will it keep the child warm one last time before it perishes itself? Or will it take the child with it to its death? The fox appears as a neighbor beyond good and evil. And like the biblical parable, the poem is silent about the fate of its forsaken protagonist. We do not know if the *ạnthrōpos* of the parable will recover, we do not even know if he will survive. In the case of the poem, at least the title promises that the child—the foundling—*will* be found. We are left to hope that it is a merciful neighbor who will find it.

Yet another parallel concerns the setting of the two "neighbor love stories," both of which are situated in a barren and barely inhabitable landscape. It is no coincidence that the robbery in the Samaritan parable happens on the travel route between Jerusalem and Jericho. This road is a dangerous and deserted section of an old trade route. The desolation and danger of the road are an essential part of the parable, because in the wasteland one is more than otherwise dependent on the help of the neighbor who happens to pass by. And indeed, the sequential appearance of the three men at the scene of the crime is purely coincidental, they all pass by "by chance" (Luke 10:31). Likewise, the Snow Country in which Aichinger's foundling finds itself immersed is punctuated by a dire lack of care and responsibility. As in the fairy tale, in order to survive, the foundling will have to find its place in the world of man—in order to be granted the right to be taken care of.

At this point, the question remains *whom* we actually acknowledge as our neighbor—and why we do it. Who decides *who*—among all

beings—qualifies as a neighbor? Neither story gives a concrete answer to this. Instead, both texts are vague. The Lukian parable, to begin with, does not talk about the cries of pain the assaulted must have uttered, nor the deadly terror he must have felt. The text remains silent when it comes to the Samaritan's revulsion at the nearly lifeless body covered in blood and excrement. Instead of talking about all this, the parable *demands* something from both its protagonists and its audience. And it is an utterly radical demand: In order to love your neighbor, you must overcome those attitudes, beliefs, and fears that are the most deeply rooted in you. This may even mean that you have to break the rules, defying conventional norms and standards. To understand the radical nature of this demand, it is essential to remember that help, in the parable, comes from a stranger from whom the injured person (this is how the text is constructed) would never accept anything under other, less dramatic circumstances. The Danish philosopher and theologian Knud Ejler Løgstrup (1905–1981) puts it all in a nutshell: "[I]t is true in general that help [...] can nonetheless still be provided in such a way that the recipient may be unpleasantly affected by it, and would just as soon not have it."[28] To make clear how petrified—or simply incapable of action—the needy person must be to accept this kind of help without resistance, it is instructive to reflect on the guise in which the threatening neighbor would confront us today, here and now. Imagine the most nightmarish encounter you can think of. Would it be a terrorist? A gunman? A Taliban fighter? A humanoid AI application? This pushes to extremes what Løgstrup means when he speaks about the fact that our lives are seamlessly interwoven with the lives of others. If the half-dead man had had a choice, he would probably have preferred someone else as his neighbor and savior. But he is no longer able to make such a differentiation. Naked and helpless he lies in the wasteland, at the mercy of human and animal predators. The parallel with Aichinger's foundling is palpable.

What comes to light at this point is that we cannot choose the neighbor. We cannot cherry-pick as a neighbor whomever we consider acceptable and/or convenient. What the Samaritan is to the wounded man, the fox is to the foundling: A creature you would nor-

mally stay clear of so as not to come into close contact. By translating the neighbor from the sphere of humans into the realm of animals, Aichinger's poem leaves behind questions of gender, nationality, or religion, and thus presents the neighbor as a being beyond denomination. This statement might seem severe, but is it really? The neighbor—in the guise of a fox—is radically reduced to its impenetrable presence; the text will not and cannot provide any information about the animal's motives whatsoever. The neighbor is stripped of its religio-ethical as well as its sociopolitical garb and reduced to its core: A frightening and disturbing presence. Unpredictable and uncontrollable. And this is all true of the "Good Fox": Due to his animality, the old male fox does not act in response to an imperative or law. It is impossible to ascertain where the fox himself stands with respect to the ability to love one's neighbor. He cannot and will not reflect on the ethical basis of his actions, but rather (just like the Good Samaritan) involuntarily and immediately responds to the needs of another creature. What is unfolding at this point is a *happening*, an experience. Maybe for the first time, the foundling experiences another creature's attention and, thereby, a sense of minimal selfhood. Taking a phenomenological approach, Dan Zahavi (b. 1967) introduces the concept of a minimal self that is "integral to experience"[29] and relates to "the basic prereflective or reflexive [...] character of experience."[30] Thus, minimal selfhood is part of any experience regardless of whether this experience is "recognized as a particular intentional act,"[31] or completely unintentional. This "thinner" notion of self is something both infants and nonhuman animals, e.g., foxes, have in common with mature adults since, according to Zahavi, development does not affect or change the most basic structures of pre-reflective self-consciousness. Just like selfhood, gestures belong to the realm of pre-reflexivity: "experiences are not internal, they are not hidden in the head, but rather expressed in bodily gestures and actions."[32] A gesture is not an expression or a consequence of an (ethical) concept.[33] Accordingly, the fox has no concept of *agape* and he doesn't need one either. Rather, the concept gives way to intuition, and instead of contemplating or reflecting on neighborly love, it *shows itself*—through a

gesture. We do not know why the animal approaches the child, but it does. It *responds* to this tiny, vulnerable human being. In Aichinger's poem, the fox's brute caress, the warming scratching of a predator's paws ("Räubertatzen"[34]) turns into the ultimate charitable gesture of love. Neighborly love, phenomenologically speaking, must *be given*—in a voluntary act: Through an attitude, an action, a gesture.

The givenness of the neighbor

If neighborly love must be *given*, who, we must be allowed to ask, gives us the neighbor who would and could perform this act of love? One answer to this question can be found in an essay entitled 'On certain modern writers and the institution of the family,' published in 1905 by the British writer and philosopher G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936).[35] A brief passage of his essay is exemplary in this regard: "We make our friends; we make our enemies; but God makes our next-door neighbour."[36] Chesterton does not only comment on *who* it is that makes our neighbor; he also—and this rips into the heart of the question of neighbor-love—adds an explanation as to *why* we must love our neighbor. Almost on the fly, Chesterton provides us with an answer to a question Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) would, just a few years later, struggle so famously with in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930; English edition: *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 1930/1961):[37]

> [O]ne of the ideal demands, as we have called them, of civilized society [...] runs: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' It is known throughout the world and is undoubtedly older than Christianity, which puts it forward as its proudest claim. [...] Let us adopt a naïve attitude towards it, as though we were hearing it for the first time; we shall be unable then to suppress a feeling of surprise and bewilderment. Why should we do it? What good will it do us? But, above all, how shall we achieve it?[38]

Chesterton's answer is simple: "But we have to love our neighbour because he is *there*—a much more alarming reason for a much more serious operation."[39] We have to love our neighbor because he is *there*.

The point Chesterton makes is more complex than it may at first appear. He makes way for yet another approach towards the idea of the neighbor, namely the rather idiosyncratic etymological account Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) gives in his 1951 lecture 'Bauen, Wohnen, Denken' ('Building, dwelling, thinking') of the German *Nachbar*, referring to a somehow dubious provenance of the term: "The Nachbar is the *Nachgebur*, the *Nachgebauer*, the near-dweller, he who dwells nearby."[40] For both the Catholic (Chesterton) and the phenomenologist (Heidegger), the neighbor is, to begin with, a person who is *there*, who lives near or next to another, focusing on a certain spatial relation between individuals. Thus, being neighbors is to a certain extent a matter of spatial and frequently imposed proximity.

But there is yet another aspect that exceeds simple contiguity and is brought to bear in Heidegger's technical term for human existence, *Dasein*, which may be translated into English as "*there*-being" or "being-*there*."[41]

Thus, Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* introduces not only the formal condition for any concrete experience of and encounter with others ("Dasein is essentially Being-With"[42]), but is basically an analysis of being *there* in its "existential spatiality":[43]

> The 'here' and the 'there' and the 'yonder' are primarily not mere ways of designating the location of entities present-at-hand within-the-world at, positions in space; they are rather characteristics of Dasein's primordial spatiality. These supposedly locative adverbs are Dasein-designations; they have a signification which is primarily existential, not categorial. But they are not pronouns either; their signification is prior to the differentiation of locative adverbs and personal pronouns: these expressions have a Dasein signification which is authentically spatial, and which serves as evidence that when we interpret Dasein without any theoretical distortions we can see it immediately as 'Being-alongside' the world with which it concerns itself, and as Being-alongside it spatially-that is to say, as dissevering and giving directionality.[44]

Yet another, and for our purposes even more promising angle can be found in Chesterton's dazzling remarks which, once again, bring together the notion of neighbor and neighborly love, opening up the ethical dimension of the problem: "He [the neighbour] is the sample of humanity which is actually given us. Precisely because he may be anybody he is everybody. He is a symbol because he is an accident."[45] Not only is the neighbor a *Jedermann*, an "Everyman" (in capital letters), but he is the sample of humanity which is *given us*—and as we've already heard, he is given us by God, through God, according to Chesterton. But is it possible, isn't it even necessary, to make sense of this most fundamental injunction to "love thy neighbor as thyself" also outside a biblical context, beyond God, i.e., from a purely human standpoint?

The ethical demand for genuine care finds its philosophical counterpart in a tradition of thought which is not committed to a normative-deontological ethics of duty or virtue, but instead arises from our relation to others, focusing emphatically on the encounter *with* and concern *for* the other: "We are dependent animals in that our lives are seamlessly interwoven with the life of others."[46]

A major representative of this ethical thinking is the above-mentioned Danish philosopher Knud Ejler Løgstrup. His best-known book, *Den etiske fordring* (1956; English edition: *The Ethical Demand*, 2020), begins and ends with a reference to Jesus's proclamation of the love commandment, claiming that the love commandment relates to something fundamental in our existence and that we must make sense of it not simply as a divine commandment, but in "purely human terms."[47] Thus, Løgstrup suggests that the Great Commandment fundamentally helps us to understand an essential truth concerning our concrete existence here and now. At the center of his phenomenological approach is the idea of life and love as a *gift*. For Løgstrup, the basic structure of the world lies within human interrelatedness and, as its result, a mutual vulnerability out of which there arises a demand to care for others. His position shares several features with that of Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) and, to a certain extent, with Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), who also both believe that who we

are and how we live is to a large extent dependent upon our involvement with others.

Likewise, Løgstrup develops his notion of neighbor-love based on his conviction that it is simply impossible to meet others without being confronted with the radical demand to concern ourselves with their lives: "It is simply a fact that we are one another's world, whether we want to be or not."[48] Whether we want it or not, we mean the world to each other, which, as we've seen in Aichinger's poem, has radical consequences for living together and, even more so, for the problem of neighbor-love and care. And it should come as no surprise that, for Løgstrup, the child plays a special role within this interpretive paradigm since, more than any other living being, the child is in dire need of protection and loving care: "If they [children] do not encounter love, their future possibilities in life are destroyed."[49] The parallels to Aichinger's 'Findelkind' poem are obvious.

However, it is instructive to consider that Løgstrup does *not* develop a normative ethics in any traditional sense: "It contains no instructions, no precepts, no morals, no casuistry—nothing which takes responsibility away from human beings by solving in advance the conflicts into which the demand places us."[50] Instead, Løgstrup's demand is based on a situational ethics which "in a sense [. . .] forces the individual to start afresh in each new situation, to the extent that it provides no precise instructions."[51] Every individual is constantly called upon anew to make responsible decisions in every moment, during every encounter with others. Loving one's neighbor is not simply a matter of acting according to a commandment or law, but a necessity arising from the principle of human interrelatedness. We are thrown back on our own responsibility—understood as non-reciprocal love of neighbor in purely human terms.

Interestingly, in Løgstrup's view, literature is key to coming to terms with philosophical problems. And he never gets tired of pointing this out:

> Only by an analysis of an episode from Joseph Conrad [. . .], have I been able to come to the result and to make it clear that moral-

> ity does not consist in precepts, rules, maxims but is based on the challenges from life, for which reason morality hardly plays any part when things get heated.[52]

Only by an analysis of a literary text, the philosopher points out, can complex philosophical questions be addressed adequately. But how are we to understand what literature tells and teaches us about the ethical demand to concern ourselves with the lives of others? This is exactly what the idea of a poetics of love and neighborliness is all about, as the following literary example will make even clearer.

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In Doris Lessing's (1919–2013) 1983 novel—programmatically entitled *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* and initially published under the pen name of Jane Somers—two women meet who could not be more different: The first one is attractive middle-aged Janna, the well-off editor of a women's magazine, who has hitherto "successfully" avoided getting more deeply involved in intimate relationships—even with her late husband and her deceased mother. The other one is ragged, ill-tempered Maudie in her early nineties. By sheer chance, the two women come across each other, and their meeting becomes a life-changing encounter—a sort of, phenomenologically speaking, "unpredictable landing," as the French phenomenologist and theologian Jean-Luc Marion (b. 1946) would put it.[53] From the very first moment, their encounter is a *happening*:

> But then I was in the chemist's and *this happened*. I saw an old witch. I was staring at this old creature and thought, a witch. [. . .] A tiny bent-over woman, with a nose nearly meeting her chin, in black heavy dusty clothes, and something not far off a bonnet. She saw me looking at her and thrust me a prescription and said, "What is this? You get it for me."[54]

Little by little, self-centered Janna moves from her first act of reluctant charity ("I struggled with myself, and then gave her a hug. [. . .] I

was fighting with disgust, the stale smell of her."[55]) to caring concern, committing herself unstintingly to this "fierce angry old woman."[56] She does the shopping, the washing-up, she cleans up the cat mess, and even washes the frail body of the ninety-one-year-old woman:

> I washed and washed her, all her lower half. [. . .] When it came to her bottom she thrust it out, as a child might, and I washed all of it, creases too. Then I threw away all that water, refilled the basin, quickly put the kettles on again. I washed her private parts, and thought about that phrase for the first time: for she was suffering most terribly because this stranger was invading her privateness. [. . .] And I made her stand in the basin and washed her feet, yellow gnarled old feet.[57]

What may sound like a somewhat kitschy novel about friendship and love between two women who could not be more different, turns out to be something very different. In the context of this volume on neighbor-love, there are at least two things worth commenting on.

First, there is the ethical significance of vision and the act of seeing. Really and truly *seeing* the neighbor does not simply mean seeing the other as he or she "really" is, with all imperfections and faults. There is a fundamental difference between the empirical act of detecting and seeing. Seeing the other means seeing him or her from a close distance. There is a most noticeable passage in Kierkegaard which gets to the core of the matter:

> At a distance the neighbor is a shadow that walks past everyone's thoughts on the road of imagination, but that the person who actually walked by at the same moment was the neighbor—this he perhaps does not discover. At a distance everyone recognizes the neighbor, and yet it is impossible to see him at a distance; if you do not see him so close at hand that before God you unconditionally see him in every human being, you do not see him at all.[58]

The opening scene of Lessing's novel reads like the literary counterpart to Kierkegaard: Maudie walks into the chemist's, she walks by, stops in front of Janna, close at hand. "And this happened":[59] Janna's eyes were opened, and she realized what she had been ignoring practically all her life:

> I thought how I rushed along the pavements every day and *had never seen* Mrs Fowler, but she lived near me, and suddenly *I looked u*p and down the streets *and saw*—old women. Old men too, but mostly old women. They walked slowly along. They stood in pairs or groups, talking. Or sat on the bench at the corner under the plane tree. *I had not seen them*.[60]

By moving from not seeing to seeing, or seeing differently, Janna suddenly becomes located in and involved with the world around her: "And now it is as if a transparency has been drawn across that former picture and there, all at once, are the old, the infirm."[61] For Janna, this proves to be a hitherto unexperienced way of being-in-the-world which makes it impossible for her to continue to rely on her previous conventional world view: "But I have been thinking. *Thinking*. Not the snap, snap, intuitions-and-sudden-judgement kind, but long slow thoughts."[62]

The second thing to notice in this opening scene is the accidental character of the encounter with the neighbor. There is a striking phenomenological dimension to it, and I would like to quote a crucial passage on the phenomenon of the accident from Jean-Luc Marion's seminal work of phenomenology *Étant donné* (1997; English edition: *Being Given*, 2002)[63] which highlights its unique phenomenological significance: According to Marion, the accident "offers a privileged figure (the only one) of phenomenality, since it gives itself without preliminary, presupposition or foresight."[64] While, as we've seen in Chesterton, the neighbor is the sample of humanity which is given us, the accident *gives itself*, excluding any predictability, and thus, any choice whatsoever. Once again, it becomes clear that we cannot choose the neighbor, as was already the case in Luke and in

Aichinger's poem. Again, it is Chesterton who sets the scene by reflecting on the relationship between love for humanity, love for the neighbor, and personal choice:

> That is why the old religions and the old scriptural language showed so sharp a wisdom when they spoke, not of one's duty towards humanity, but one's duty towards one's neighbour. The duty towards humanity may often take the form of some choice which is personal or even pleasurable.[65]

There is certainly no element of personal choice in Janna's encounter with Maudie (and vice versa): "I was in a panic. I had committed myself. I was full of revulsion."[66] The reason the two women are exposed to each other is neither personal nor pleasurable: "I woke feeling ill, because of being so trapped,"[67] Janna remarks when she remembers that she had promised Maudie to visit her again the next day. It is certainly not for business, nor for pleasure. It is purely *accidental*: "But after all, she got along before I blew into her life—*crashed* into it."[68] In short, Maudie—and that's Lessing's novel in a nutshell—is the "sample of humanity" given to Janna. And, as Chesterton so precisely puts it, "because she may be anybody, she is everybody."

Neighborly irruption

In the second chapter of his 1847 treatise *Kjerlighedens gjerninger* (English edition: *Works of Love*, 1946/1995), as I have already discussed in another article,[69] Søren Kierkegaard gives a staggering depiction of the biblical commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself, focusing on the tension between equality (*lighed*) and dissimilarity (*forskjellighed*). Is it desirable or even possible, Kierkegaard asks, to love without making distinctions? Or must the demand for equality in loving inevitably be shipwrecked on man's natural inclinations? One of Kierkegaard's answers is, indeed, alarming: Only in death, he argues, do all dissimilarities disappear:

> Go, then, and do this, take away dissimilarity and its similarity so that you can love the neighbor. [. . .] Death, you see, abolishes all dissimilarities, but preference is always related to dissimilarities; yet the way to life and to the eternal goes through death and through the abolition of dissimilarities [. . .].[70]

In their interpretation of Kierkegaard's "books of love", Slavoj Žižek, Eric L. Santner and Kenneth Reinhard tie in with the idea of the abolition of dissimilarities. They go to such lengths as to claim that "the ideal neighbor that we should love is a dead one—the only good neighbor is a dead neighbor."[71] Considering Kierkegaard's discourse on 'The works of love in recollecting one who is dead', as one of the chapters in *Works of Love* is titled, it would be somewhat short-sighted to argue that "the ideal neighbor that we should love is a dead one."[72] Unless we turn to literature.

◆

Certainly, one of the most bewildering contemporary literary variations on the disturbing claim that "the ideal neighbor that we should love is a dead one" comes from the Belgian novelist Amélie Nothomb (b. 1966) in her 1995 novel *Les Catilinaires*, strangely enough translated into English as *The Stranger Next Door* (1998). It is a slim work packed with literary, mythological, and ethical references. The story, in brief, goes as follows: Emile Hazel, a high school teacher of Greek and Latin, retires. He and his wife Juliette pursue their dream of ivory-tower solitude. They move to an idyllic and isolated cottage in the countryside, in every way the antithesis of their former city life. But their tranquility is shaken when their only neighbor, the gargantuan doctor Palamedes Bernardin, begins a succession of increasingly disturbing afternoon visits. He stays for exactly two hours, hardly ever speaks, while questions are mostly answered in monosyllables. He proceeds to drop by every day thereafter, with no change in attitude, forcing the Hazels to try a range of futile tactics—escape, frivolity, and even boredom—to put an end to their neighbor's increasingly disconcerting visits. But nothing works, and they cannot decide whether he

is an imbecile or utterly diabolical. In short, Palamedes is the "bad neighbor" *par excellence*, a "neighbor from hell," oscillating between irritating and downright threatening.

At this point, it is illuminating to attend more closely to the nature of yet another variety of neighbor-love, narrowly tied to the figure of the "monstrous neighbor" who turns out to be, as Žižek has succinctly put it, "an inert, impenetrable, enigmatic presence that hystericizes me."[73] Any "real" encounter with the neighbor is traumatizing because "the Other qua Real"[74] cannot be gentrified, not trivialized, and certainly not downplayed.[75]

It is precisely this irruption of the neighbor, in all its "impenetrable, enigmatic presence," that Chesterton portrays in his above-mentioned text from the essay collection *Heretics*. The British philosopher gives a detailed and downright ceremonial description of the on-stage appearance of this (as he describes it) "strange monster [...] of the suburban street":[76] "Hence he comes to us clad in all the careless terrors of nature; he is as strange as the stars, as reckless and indifferent as the rain. He is Man, the most terrible of the beasts."[77] Does the noble beast in the end turn out to be none other than Man himself, this "most terrible of the beasts"?[78]

Chesterton's "terrible" neighbor comes to us as the force of nature personified, a beast, a monster. Although differing in detail, it is striking how the characteristics of Chesterton's neighbor remind us of what we encounter in Nothomb's novel. Palamedes Bernardin, as well, resembles a force of nature, strange and indifferent, and his adversary Emile puts it this way: "When the cyclone hits—whether war, injustice, love, sickness, *the neighbor*—you're always alone, completely alone, you're a newborn and an orphan."[79] This immediately recalls Aichinger's 'Findelkind' and once again, in the literary text, the figures of neighbor and foundling/orphan are facing each other.

Whereas Chesterton, in his essay, seriously attacks modernist notions of family, community, and neighborliness, Nothomb's novel turns the problem of the neighbor into a bonfire of dark anecdotes. The novel provides a treasure trove of mocking remarks about (referring once more to Žižek's essay) "Neighbors and other monsters."

With relish, it spells out a variety of figures of neighbor. Among other things, the problem of an impossible taxonomy of the neighbor is discussed, while at the same time making fun of it. Once more, literature proves to be not philosophy's adversary, but its creative interlocutor. The text defies strictly epistemological taxonomies of neighbor as put forward by, for example, Kenneth Reinhard (b. 1957)[80] who distinguishes between a religio-ethical register, a sociopolitical concept, and a mathematical set of meanings of neighbor.[81] In a totally different manner, *Les Catilinaires* presents us with a witty Borgesian play with antinomies and double negations. Emile explicitly refers to Jorge Luis Borges's (1899–1986) famous fictitious Chinese taxonomy, which serves to illustrate the arbitrariness of any attempt to categorize the world, or, in our novel's case, the impracticality of categorizing the neighbor:

> "[. . .] There's something staggering about describing a being starting with what it isn't. What would happen if we decided to first try to mention everything that a being isn't? [. . .] Imagine, my dear friend, that I got into my head to describe you by first enumerating everything that you're not! It would be insane. 'Everything that Palamedes Bernardin isn't.' This list would be long, because there are plenty of things that you're not. Where would I begin?"
>
> "For instance, one could say that the doctor isn't an animal with feathers!"
>
> "Indeed. And he is neither a pest, nor a boor, nor an idiot!" Juliette's eyes grew wide.[82]

In a highly playful manner, Nothomb's novel illustrates in which way the neighbor appears as a persistent annoyance that both irritates and thus infinitely resists systematic thinking.

In order to understand the end of *Les Catilinaires*, however, one must return to Žižek, Santner and Reinhard's "ideal dead neighbor" and the problem of neighbor-love. One night, Emile happens to rescue his bothersome neighbor from a suicide attempt in the neigh-

bor's own garage, but he soon—and that's the fictional character's own reasoning—starts to realize the do-goodism in this gesture of saving the other's life. He should, so he considers, definitely not have saved his bothersome neighbor because "[n]one of the objections I presented to myself held up: there was not the slightest reason for him to live, there was not the slightest reason for him not to die, I had not the slightest excuse not to kill him."[83] Through the eyes of a literary character, we enter the realm of ethics and moral proposition. What is at stake here, from a philosophical point of view, are questions of (self-)righteousness and even a case of arbitrary law. According to Løgstrup, to work out what the ethical demand involves can mean that we may have to go against the expressed wishes of others, and instead use our own insight, imagination, and understanding: "The individual must use their own experience and insight, their own judgement of the other's situation and their mutual relationship, and not least, they must use their imagination, to determine with what words or with what silence, with what act or omission, the other is best served."[84]

Along these lines, the novel's protagonist callously presents us with the idea of euthanasia, of mercy killing *as* neighborly love. In the protagonist's mind the act of murder is turned into an act of grace and, eventually, into an act of purely altruistic love:

> I didn't judge the fate of another by my own criteria, I didn't perform an act that would earn me the esteem of normal people; on the contrary, I had gone against my own nature, I had put the salvation of my neighbor before my own, with no chance of being commended by my peers. I had trampled my convictions which were of little import, but also my inherent passivity, which was considerable, to fulfill the desire of a poor man—so that his wish would be granted, and not mine.[85]

In a highly disturbing manner, the idea that "the one who truthfully praises neighborly love cannot expect any gain from his work, let alone to become loved in recompense"[86] is turned inside out and

serves Emile as an explanatory model, even as plain justification for assisted suicide. He kills his neighbor by suffocating him with a pillow. As a result, his relationship with his hereafter *dead* neighbor improves considerably: "Moreover, since his death, I felt great friendship for my neighbor. It's a well-known syndrome, you love the people you help."[87] The neighbor that Emile suddenly loves is a dead one. In the end, we are left with the bizarre suggestion that suffocating one's neighbor is an act of salvation rather than an act of murder. And that's how the novel ends—with a ghastly and murderous gesture of neighbor-love.

Postscript

We return one last time to the poem that became the starting point for these various attempts to understand the love of neighbor. Whatever the reason might be that the fox in Aichinger's 'Findelkind' approached the abandoned child in the first place, he *did* approach it; he "came near" (Luke 10:33); he did not pass by. The predator responds to the small vulnerable human being at his paws. What is it that stirs in his bowels? Hunger? Pity? A last burst of vitality? Could it be mercy? We will never know for sure. Nevertheless, or precisely for this very reason, the fox's rough caresses—the warming and scratching of its "predator's paws"[88]—turn into a pre-reflective beneficent gesture of love. It no longer matters if the fox is "good" according to a normative-deontological ethics of duty or virtue. The fox, and the fox alone, is *there*. No one else is. If it is true that we "have to love our neighbour because he is *there*,"[89] as Chesterton puts it, then it is equally true that whoever approaches us to be *there* when we are in dire need of help—whatever the motives may be—inevitably morphs into the Neighbor.

NOTES

1 Editor Irina Hron's research was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [Grant-DOI 10.55776/M2575]. This includes her contribution to the introduction and her chapter 'Works of neighborly love: Literature, philosophy, and the Neighbor,' as well as her work as editor of this volume.

2 On anthropocentric philosophical preconceptions "from Descartes, to Darwin and then onto behaviourism, the cognitive revolution and the rise of cognitive ethology," see, for example, Barrett 2016, p. 26.

3 For the different types of love (Affection, Friendship, Eros, Charity), see C.S. Lewis's *The Four Loves* (1960).

4 This article contains condensed excerpts from my forthcoming book and is a slightly revised reprint of Hron 2024. I am grateful to the editor-in-chief of *Orbis Litterarum* for permission to reprint.

5 On Streeruwitz's ethics of love, see Hron 2022.

6 This verse line is curiously missing in Patricia Dobler's translation and was added by the author of this article.

7 German original: "Findelkind/Dem Schnee untergeschoben,/den Engeln nicht genannt,/kein Erz, kein Schutz,/ den Feen nicht vorgewiesen,/in Höhlen nur verborgen/und ihre Zeichen behende/ aus den Waldkarten geschafft./Ein toller Fuchs/beißt es und wärmts,/erweist ihm rasch die ersten Zärtlichkeiten,/bis er sich zitternd und gepeinigt/zum Sterben fortbegibt./Wer hilft dem Kind?/Die Mütter/ mit ihrer alten Angst,/die Jäger/mit den verfälschten Kartenbildern,/die Engel/ mit den warmen Flügelfedern,/aber ohne Auftrag?/Kein Laut,/kein Schwingen in der Luft,/kein Tappen auf dem Boden./ Dann kommt doch du/noch einmal,/alter, toller Helfer,/schleif dich zurück zu ihm,/ beiß es, verkratz es,/wärm es, wenn deine Räubertatzen noch warm sind,/denn außer dir/kommt keiner,/sei gewiss." (Aichinger 2016, p. 94.)

8 All translations, unless otherwise attributed, are my own. German original: "Die Tiere des Waldes. Sie müssen die Fürsorge übernehmen. Die Mütter. Die Väter. Die Engel. Sie tun es nicht. Sie werden es nicht tun. Sie haben es nicht getan. Sie taten es nicht. Aber. Das Findelkind hat überlebt." (Streeruwitz 2020, p. 60.) This is a slightly revised reprint of Streeruwitz 2011.

9 At this point, the question arises why it is an "old crazy helpmate," Aichinger 1991, unpag.; "alter, toller Helfer," Aichinger 2016, p. 94, and not a vixen, i.e., a representative of the mother-instinct.

10 All biblical citations follow the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

11 Whenever I speak of "the man" or use the pronoun "he," I refer to the English translation of *ạnthrōpos* from the NRSV. This has no bearing on my own reading of *ạnthrōpos* as "person" or "human being."

12 See *Elberfelder Studienbibel* 2021 (Lexikalischer Sprachschlüssel zum Neuen Testament, Wortnummer 447 [Lexical Language Key to the New Testament, word number 447]).

13 Aichinger 1991, unpag.

14 It is no coincidence that the Queen lusts after the girl's lungs and liver. Even in pre-Christian times, the lungs and liver were among the "nobler entrails" of a sacrificial animal, consumed at the very beginning of each sacrificial meal. Snow White thus is turned into a (sacrificial) animal and by means of sacrificial terminology the connection can be made to the term *splạnchna* from the Samaritan parable.

15 Tatar 1999, p. 84.

16 Welz 2008, p. 245.

17 Esposito 2010, p. 6.

18 The demand to love one's neighbor *as oneself* plays a subordinate role in this

article. On this, see Christian Benne's article in this volume.
19 Friedrich 1964, p. 554.
20 German original: "von seinem urspr Zshg mit der Opferterminologie [verrät]" (Friedrich 1964, p. 552).
21 This is based on the lexical language key to the New Testament, word number 4531, *Elberfelder Studienbibel* 2021.
22 Only the common metaphor of Good Samaritan makes the man a "good" person; the word "good" never appears in the biblical parable.
23 On this, see Caroline Sauter's article in this volume.
24 See the lexical language key to the New Testament, word number 1189, *Elberfelder Studienbibel* 2021.
25 Historically speaking, the Samaritan is the neighbor from whom the severely injured (in all likelihood) Jew least expects, and desires help.
26 This is the name/denomination by which the animals in Rudyard Kipling's (1865–1936) two famous "Jungle Books" refer to the human child and foundling Mowgli (Kipling 2008). For more on this, see my forthcoming book.
27 Aichinger 1991, unpag.
28 Løgstrup 2020, p. 77. Danish original: "Men det gælder i almindelighed, at en hjælp [. . .] kan ydes på en sådan måde, at modtageren, ubehageligt berørt af den, langt vil foretrække at være den foruden." (Løgstrup 2008, p. 76.)
29 Zahavi 2017, p. 193.
30 Zahavi 2017, p. 194.
31 Zahavi 2017, p. 195.
32 Zahavi 2001, p. 153.
33 It would lead too far afield in this context to address the scholarship on gestures in any detail. On a theory of gestures, see, for example, Agamben 2004, and, more extensively, Flusser 1991. See also the anthology on reading gestures (*Lesegebärden*) published in 2024 (Hron & Benne 2024).
34 Aichinger 1991, unpag.
35 Chesterton 1985.
36 Chesterton 1985, pp. 139–140.
37 On this, see Michael Azar's and Eric L. Santner's article in this volume.
38 Freud 1986, p. 109. German original: "Eine der sogenannten Idealforderungen der Kulturgesellschaft [. . .] lautet: Du sollst den Nächsten lieben wie dich selbst; sie ist weltberühmt, gewiß älter als das Christentum, das sie als seinen stolzesten Anspruch vorweist [. . .] Wir wollen uns naiv zu ihr einstellen, als hörten wir von ihr zum ersten Male. Dann können wir ein Gefühl von Überraschung und Befremden nicht unterdrücken. Warum sollten wir das? Was soll es uns helfen? Vor allem aber, wie bringen wir das zustande?" (Freud 1972, p. 468).
39 Chesterton 1985, p. 140.
40 German original: "Der Nachbar ist der 'Nachgebur', der 'Nachgebauer', derjenige, der in der Nähe wohnt." (Heidegger 2000, p. 148.)
41 See the English translation of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Heidegger, 2013. For a discussion of the term in the tradition of Leibniz, Kant, Gottsched, and Kierkegaard, see the entry in the German *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe* (Dictionary of Philosophical Terms, Regenbogen & Meyer 2013, p. 133).
42 Heidegger 2013, p. 156. German original: "Dasein ist wesenhaft Mitsein" (Heidegger 1993, p. 120).
43 Heidegger 2013, p. 156. German original: "existenzialen Räumlichkeit" (Heidegger 1993, p. 120).
44 Heidegger 2013, pp. 155–156. German original: "Das 'hier', 'dort' und 'da' sind primär keine reinen Ortsbestimmungen des innerweltlichen an Raumstellen vorhandenen Seienden, sondern Charaktere der ursprünglichen Räumlichkeit des Daseins. Die vermutlichen Ortsadverbien

sind Daseinsbestimmungen, sie haben primär existenziale und nicht kategoriale Bedeutung. Sie sind aber auch keine Pronomina, ihre Bedeutung liegt vor der Differenz von Ortsadverbien und Personalpronomina; die eigentlich räumliche Daseinsbedeutung dieser Ausdrücke dokumentiert aber, daß die theoretisch unverbogene Daseinsauslegung dieses unmittelbar in seinem räumlichen, das ist entfernend-ausrichtenden 'Sein' bei der besorgten Welt sieht." (Heidegger 1993, pp. 119–120.)

45 Chesterton 1985, p. 140.

46 Fink 2007, p. 12.

47 Løgstrup 2020, p. 11. Danish original: "rent humant" (Løgstrup 2008, p. 11).

48 Løgstrup 2020, p. 31. Danish original: "Vi er nu engang hinandens verden, hvad enten vi vil eller ej." (Løgstrup 2008, p. 191.)

49 Løgstrup 2020, p. 188. Danish original "Møder det [barnet] ikke kærlighed, tilintetgøres dets livsmuligheder." (Løgstrup 2008, p. 31.)

50 Løgstrup 2020, p. 23. Danish original: "Det er ingen anvisning i den [fordringen], ingen forskrifter, ingen moral, ingen kasuistik, intet der tager ansvaret fra mennesket ved på forhånd at løse de konflikter, fordringen stiller det i." (Løgstrup 2008, p. 128.)

51 Løgstrup 2020, p. 139. Danish original: "På en måde stiller den [fordringen] den enkelte på bar bund i hver ny situation, forsåvidt den ingen præcise anvisninger giver." (Løgstrup 2008, pp. 102–103.)

52 Danish original: "Komme til de resultat og gøre det klart, at moral ikke består i forskrifter, regler, maksimer, principper, men grunder sig I de udfordringer, som tilværelsen stiller os, hvorfor en besindelse på moralen sjældent spiller nogen rolle, når det går på livet løs, har jeg kun kunnet med en analyse af en episode fra Joseph Conrad [...]." (Knud Ejler Løgstrup, 'Kunst og virkelighed', manuscript 1962, p. 1, quoted after and translated by Bugge 2017, p. 220.)

53 Cf. Marion 2002, p. 132: "To *arrive* must here be understood in the most literal sense: not of a continuous and uniform arrival, delivering identical and foreseeable items, but of discontinuous, unforeseen, and entirely dissimilar arrivals. [...] Rather than of arrivals, we must therefore speak of the unpredictable landings of phenomena, according to discontinuous rhythms, in fits and starts, unexpectedly, by surprise, detached each from the other, in bursts, aleatory. [...] [O]ur initiative is limited to remaining ready to receive the shock of its anamorphosis, ready to take a beating from its unpredictable landing." French original: "*Arriver* doit s'entendre ici au sens le plus littéral: non d'une arrivée continue et uniforme, livrant des items identiques et prévisibles, mais d'arrivées discontinues, imprévues et toutes dissemblables. [...] Plutôt que d'arrivées, il faut donc parler d'arrivages de phénomènes, selon des rythmes discontinus, par saccades, inopinés, par surprise, détachés les uns des autres, par rafales, stochastiques [...] [N]otre initiative se borne à rester prêts à recevoir le choc de son anamorphose, à encaisser le coup de son arrivage." (Marion 2013, pp. 217–218.)

54 Lessing 2002, p. 10.

55 Lessing 2002, p. 24.

56 Lessing 2002, p. 51.

57 Lessing 2002, p. 52.

58 Kierkegaard 1995, pp. 79–80. Danish original: "Og dog, paa Afstand, er 'Næsten' en Indbildning, han, som jo er ved at være nær ved, det første det bedste Menneske, ubetinget ethvert Menneske. Paa Afstand er 'Næsten' en Skygge, der ad Indbildningens Vei gaaer ethvert Menneskes Tanke forbi—ak, men at det Menneske, der i samme Øieblik virkeligen gik ham forbi, var Næsten: det opdager han maaskee ikke. Paa Afstand kjender Enhver

'Næsten', og dog er det en Umulighed at see ham paa Afstand; dersom Du ikke seer ham saa nær, at Du ubetinget, for Gud, seer ham i ethvert Menneske, saa seer Du ham slet ikke." (Kierkegaard 2004, p. 85.)

59 Lessing 2002, p. 10.

60 Lessing 2002, p. 11; my emphasis.

61 Lessing 2002, p. 21.

62 Lessing 2002, p. 136.

63 Also, the gift-character of neighbor-love could be illuminated more closely on the basis of Marion's redefinition of the gift in terms not of economy but of givenness, compare, for example, Marion's essay 'The reason of the gift' (2005).

64 Marion 2002, p. 152. French original: "[M]ais il [l'accident] offre pourtant une figure privilégiée (la seule réelle) de phénoménalité, puisqu'il se donne sans préalable, présupposé, ni prévision." (Marion 2013, p. 252.)

65 Chesterton 1985, p. 140.

66 Lessing 2002, p. 14. As in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Janna's response is a thoroughly physical and visceral reaction.

67 Lessing 2002, p. 26.

68 Lessing 2002, p. 35.

69 See Hron 2018.

70 Kierkegaard 1995, pp. 61–62. Danish original: "Saa gaa da hen og gjør det, tag forskjelligheden og dens Lighed bort, at Du kan elske 'Næsten'. Tag Forkjerlighedens Forskjel bort, at Du kan elske Næsten. [...] See, Døden avskaffer alle Forskjelligheder, men Forkjerlighed forholder sig altid til Forskjel, dog gaaer Veien til Livet og til det Evige gjennem Døden og gjennem Forskjellighedernes Afskaffelse [...]" (Kierkegaard 2004, pp. 68–69).

71 Žižek, Santner & Reinhard 2005, p. 3.

72 Žižek, Santner & Reinhard 2005, p. 3. However, I agree that for Kierkegaard the way to non-preferential neighbor-love goes through death and through the abolition of dissimilarities.

73 Žižek 2005, p. 140.

74 Žižek 2005, p. 143.

75 On this, see Eric L. Santner's article in this volume.

76 Chesterton 1985, p. 138.

77 Chesterton 1985, p. 140.

78 Chesterton 1985, p. 140.

79 Nothomb 1998, p. 86; my emphasis. French original: "Quand arrive le cyclone—la guerre, l'injustice, l'amour, la maladie, le voisin—on est toujours seul, tout seul, on vient de naître et on est orphelin." (Nothomb 1995, p. 89.)

80 At this point I would like to express my personal thanks to Kenneth Reinhard, who contributed to the conference from which this volume emerged with a personal video message from California on September 2, 2021.

81 Reinhard 2014, p. 706.

82 Nothomb 1998, p. 49. French original (Nothomb 1995, pp. 52–53):
"– [...] Décrire un être en commençant par dire ce qu'il n'est pas a quelque chose de vertigineux. Que se passerait-il si l'on s'avisait de dire d'abord tour ce qu'il n'est pas? [...] Imaginez, cher ami, que je me mette en tête de vous décrire en commençant par énumérer tour ce que vous n'êtes pas. Ce serait fou. 'Tout ce que n'est pas Palamède Bernardin.' La liste serait longue, car il y a tant de choses que vous n'êtes pas. Par où débuter?
– Par exemple, om pourrait dire que le docteur n'est pas un animal à plumes!
– En effet. Et il n'est pas un emmerdeuer, ni un rustre, ni un idiot.
Juliette écarquilla ses yeux."

83 Nothomb 1998, p. 148. French original: "Aucune des objections que je m'adressais à moi-même ne tenait: il n'avait pas la moindre raison de vivre, il n'avait pas la moindre raison de ne pas mourir, je n'avais pas la moindre excuse de ne pas le tuer." (Nothomb 1995, p. 148.)

84 Løgstrup 2020, p. 90. Danish original: "Den enkelte må bruge sin egen erfaring

og indsigt, sin bedømmelse af den andens situation og deres indbyrdes forhold, og ikke mindst må han bruge sin fantasi ti at blive klar over, med hvilket ord eller med hvilken taushed, med hvilken handling eller undladelse den anden er bedst tjent." (Løgstrup 2008, p. 124.)

85 Nothomb 1998, p. 150. French original: "[J]e n'avais pas jugé le sort d'autrui avec mes propres critères, je n'avais pas accompli un exploit qui me vaudrait l'estime des gens normaux; au contraire, j'étais allé au rebours de ma nature, j'avais fait *passer le salut de mon prochain avant le mien*, sans aucune chance d'être approuvé par mes pairs, j'avais piétiné mes convictions, ce qui n'est pas grand-chose, mais aussi ma passivité native, ce qui est considérable, *pour exaucer le désir d'un pauvre homme—pour que soit exaucée sa volonté, et non la mienne*." (Nothomb 1995, p. 150; my emphasis.)

86 Welz 2008, p. 243.

87 French original: "En outre, depuis sa mort, j'éprouvais de l'amitié pour mon voisin." (Nothomb 1995, p. 150.)

88 Aichinger 1991, unpag.

89 Chesterton 1985, pp. 139–140.

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