

KHÔRAL LOVE? KIERKEGAARD AND DERRIDA ON HOSPITALITY

¿AMOR KHÔRAL? KIERKEGAARD Y DERRIDA ACERCA DE LA HOSPITALIDAD

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Abstract: This paper explores the notion of hospitality and faith in Derrida and Kierkegaard. The aim is to trace the topological core of existence in relation to an ongoing debate in contemporary continental philosophy of religion about khôra. The paper shows how khôral traces are at work in Kierkegaard's thinking in relation to the topological proximity of love. The claim is that Kierkegaard emphasizes the vulnerability rather than the hostility of what I coin khôral love as the vibrating space between the anonymous and the amorous, call and response. The unknown X of the khôral becomes the topos of existence – the “stepping out”, the “you are here (X)”. A “you” called forth by the commandment of love or the visitation of the stranger.

Key words: PLACE; KHÔRA; HOSPITALITY; FAITH; LOVE; EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY; WEAK THEOLOGY; KIERKEGAARD; DERRIDA; CAPUTO; KEARNEY

Resumen: Este artículo explora la noción de hospitalidad y fe en Derrida y Kierkegaard. El objetivo es rastrear el núcleo topológico de la existencia en relación con un debate en curso en la filosofía continental contemporánea de la religión sobre khôra. El artículo muestra cómo operan las huellas khôral en el pensamiento de Kierkegaard en relación con la proximidad topológica del amor. La tesis es que Kierkegaard enfatiza la vulnerabilidad más que la hostilidad de lo que denominamos amor khôral como espacio vibrante entre lo anónimo y lo amoroso, entre la llamada y la respuesta. La X desconocida del khôral se convierte en el topos de la existencia: el “salir”, el “estás aquí (X)”. Un “tú” llamado por el mandamiento del amor o la visitación del extraño.

Palabras clave: LUGAR; KHÔRA; HOSPITALIDAD; FE; AMOR; FILOSOFÍA EXISTENCIAL, TEOLOGÍA DÉBIL; KERKEGAARD; DERRIDA; CAPUTO; KEARNEY

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God After the Death of God

Deicide! The crime to end all crimes. An impossible felony. Impossible to execute, impossible to solve. What would an autopsy reveal? What would the obituary notice look like? Like Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* maybe. We might file the case under B620-B659 like in Kant's first *Critique* concerning the impossibility of different proofs of the existence of God. So, is God dead? Did God not die on the cross? Was the Cartesian God not executed by the Kantian guillotine of reason, or by Nietzsche's lion-spirit? Or by all of us? The death of God seems to create a gap, a possibility of new gods to arrive, or the risk of old ones to mutate and rise from the grave, like Nietzsche's dragon-god. At the end of the *Zarathustra*, it prophetically says that one day mightier dragons will rise again (KSA 4: 185). Maybe greater and more powerful feline spirits will too – "the wild cats must become tigers (ibid)" - in order to slay these shiny idol-reptiles in an endless" twilight of the Hydras"?

So, what happens *after* the death of God, or the death of a certain kind of God? What God? The God of onto-theology, that is! As Caputo puts it: "God as a Highest Being – a steady hand at the wheel of the universe, ordering all things to good purpose, the spanning providential eye o'er-seeing – has had a good run" (Caputo 2013: IX). The gap opened by the death of the old God of metaphysics makes room to rethink God after the death of God like Nietzsche's *Dionysus*, Heidegger's *last god*, Marion's *God without Being*, Kearney's *God who may be*, Derrida's *tout autre* and Caputo's *insisting call of the event of a weak perhaps*. In his postmodern theology or "theo-poetics", Caputo thinks of God, not as a mighty-being, but a "might be", not an Omnipotent supreme being, but an "Omni-possibilizing" "weak force, a weak call of the event of what we cannot see coming, the coming of the future for better or worse.

Along this line of thinking we are faced with a religion without religion (Derrida), a hope against hope (Paul), a desire beyond desire of something I know not what (Caputo). This is what Kierkegaard called *faith* - faith in something we cannot grasp or know, without certainties, beyond an economy of penalty and reward with 'fear and trembling', called forth by the commandment of *love*. To welcome what we cannot see coming, the stranger which might be the Devil or the Messiah, is what Derrida on the other hand called *hospitality*.

In this paper, I'm going to present a notion of hospitality in relation to the discussion going on in the field of continental philosophy

of religion about *khôra*². The aim is to trace hospitality to its topological core or the *topos atopos* of existence itself.

Hospitality and Faith

What is hospitality then? According to Derrida, hospitality must be *unconditional* otherwise it is not hospitality. If we only welcome the ones we know, our friends, that means others are *not* invited, not welcome but excluded. That cannot be hospitality. If we invite the ones we don't know but with a clause, a condition, a restriction it cannot be hospitality either. Why not? Because if we only welcome what we are ready to welcome, there is no hospitality. Hospitality presupposes a radical openness, hands down, a non-restricted non-prepared welcome of the stranger, the event or the wholly other (*tout autre*). It is not an invitation at all, but a visitation, a *visitation* without invitation! To welcome the uninvited other, the unforeseeable stranger without a horizon of expectation. That contains a certain risk, indeed, because we cannot see what or who is coming, what the result will be by receiving and hosting the unknown with open arms. We do not know whether the stranger is a friend or foe. As Caputo says: "Should I answer an insistent and unexpected knock on my door in the middle of the night. Is that not the height of folly?" (Caputo 2016: 63). Yet, hospitality must be this unconditional welcome without the "must be". Here, Derrida notes the etymological ambiguity in the word *hospitality* derived from Latin *hostis*, a stranger which might be *hostile* or a guest *hôte* in need of a *host*. So, the notion of both *hôte* (guest), *host* but also *hostage* and *hostility* is inscribed in the word *hospitality* which he captures with the neologism "hosti-pitality" (Derrida 2010: 401f). But is this kind of radical openness not *impossible*? Yes, it is! Of course, it is difficult to practice such a non-restricted openness. It sounds mad to welcome any one, especially after 9/11 (Caputo 2013: 263).

Further, the unconditional law of hospitality needs the laws of conditional hospitality i.e. the juridical-political setting in order to be concrete, effective otherwise it might risk to become utopian, abstract, illusory (Derrida 2000: 79). A negotiation between the two laws are required. But this relationship consists of *aporia*. The laws of conditional hospitality will secure that the one we welcome is identified and the stranger must state his/her intentions, pledge goodwill and fulfill certain obligations in order to stay. But this assurance that maintains the sovereignty of the host clashes with what we understand by genuine hospitality – the unconditional

[2] The terms *khôra*, *khora*, *chora* are used synonymously.

welcome of the stranger. The very condition of the possibility of hospitality (juridico-political laws) becomes the very condition of its impossibility (unconditional welcome) (see Rubenstein 2008: 140f).

But unconditional hospitality is also impossible in a different sense. Derrida: “the welcoming one asks for forgiveness, because one is always failing” (Derrida 2010: 380). We never give enough and we are never prepared of welcoming the other, exactly because it is a visitation without expectation. The relation between *host* and *guest* in terms of forgiveness is impossible because what has to be forgiven remains unforgivable, otherwise it would not be necessary to forgive. It is about doing the impossible or the possibility of the impossible but *as* impossible i.e. to forgive what is not mine to forgive, forgive beyond me, to do something I cannot do. Only the other in me can forgive.

Forgiveness traverses the power of the I. This is called *love* which: “gives itself without giving anything else but itself” (Derrida 2010: 389). Said differently, a forgiveness is granted or takes place exactly there where nobody can forgive anyone: “the granting of a granted forgiveness, by an X, a great Third, God, if you will” (ibid. 397).

Now, the impossibility of welcoming the other, can be found in Kierkegaard’s notion of faith as well. It is expressed in the phrase: “the edifying in the thought that against God we are always in the wrong” (SKS 3, 326). Derrida’s notion of hospitality has a lot in common with Kierkegaard’s notion of faith (see Rubenstein 2008: 174). But what is faith?

Faith is, Kierkegaard tells us, passion (*lidenskab*) and action (*handling*) or a “passionate act”, a p/act, we might say. Faith in what? Faith in God! Then what is God? God is *love*. But love is nothing that grants absolute security or promise salvation by the end of good deeds done. It is not a teleological endgame providing keys to the kingdom in the afterlife. It is faith in something I cannot quite put my finger on, a radical hope beyond hope of something I know not what. I cannot know, since faith exactly begins where reason ends. Faith traverses the sphere of the rational. Faith requires a radical openness and exposedness towards the unknown. It is comparable to Paul’s notion of “the power of the powerless” from the 1. Corinthians (see Critchley 2012). It is a weak force. But faith is not merely *passive* i.e. to be open, receptive to whatever happens. It is hard work! It requires a lot to hold on to faith, to keep believing that the impossible might be possible in the face of pure tragedy. It is what God, or love, or “the commandment of love” demands nevertheless, *unconditionally*: “thou shalt love”. Faith is an unconditional response to an unconditional call.

Caputo links the response to the notion of hospitality or the event of hospitality. To respond to the call is at the same time to enter the king-

dom of God. The kingdom is again nothing beyond, a VIP-lounge in the heavens with border patrols and guest lists. It is right here! It is like, if everyone attended a dinner party, a wedding reception, not just friends and relatives, but the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. A description we find in the Gospels too (Luke 14: 12-14, Caputo 2007: 260). There is a certain madness and anarchy to it: "...mad as any hatter's party attended by Alice" (ibid.). The kingdom is in the midst of *all* of us and vice versa. The key is to say "yes" or to put it more radically, it is an unconditional affirmation without why. It is welcoming the other. In the kingdom, hospitality is a weak force, not invitations circulating back and forth within an economy of exchange (ibid. 262).

Now what interests me here is the connection between *love* and the *topos atopos* of this insecure exposedness. What are we dealing with here?

Love or Khôra?

In recent debates in continental philosophy of religion, the notion of *khôra* plays a crucial role. *Khôra* is a term Derrida uses as a surname for *différance* – "the play of differences". It is a term he borrows from Plato's *Timaeus*, though stripped for almost all of its platonic legacy. For Plato, *khôra* is this peculiar "place, space, receptacle, container, womb, nurse", the *triton genos* in which paradigm unfolds and the cosmos is created. For Derrida, it has no cosmological status. *Khôra* isn't really anything or it is not even possible to say that *khôra* is or is not, only "there is *khôra*" – (*il y a khôra*). *Khôra* is an outcast, an odd fish for it exceeds the polarity of both *mythos* and *logos* (Derrida 1995: 92). It is not even possible to grasp *khôra* through the metaphoric discourse of "womb, nurse, receptacle etc". because the polarity between metaphorical sense versus proper sense is itself inscribed within *khôra* (ibid.). In this sense, *khôra* is a place-less place that gives place without actually giving anything – it oscillates between two types of oscillation: "the double exclusion (*neither/nor*) and the participation (*both this and that*)" (ibid. 91).

Now, here is a question from Derrida which echoes into the ongoing debate. *Khôra* is a place or a placeless place but is this place created by God, Derrida asks? Is it part of the play? Or else is it God himself, is it opened by God, by the name of God or by appeal by response, the event that calls for response, or is it older than creation? Is it impassively foreign to all of this? (Derrida 1995: 75f). In short, "who are you, *khôra*?" or maybe more accurate "Where are you?" Do we have to choose between the two, God or *Khôra*? This is what Derrida calls "The test of *khôra*". The question is rephrased by Caputo: "What is the

wholly other... God or *Khôra*? What do I love when I love my God, God or *Khôra*? How are we to decide? Do we have to choose?” (Caputo 1997: 37). In a discussion of this very question, Richard Kearney suspects that Caputo is suggesting that we *don't*, because the issue remains undecidable, but he disagrees (Kearney 2003: 110). We do have to choose, but he also understands *khôra* in a different way than Caputo does. For Kearney *khôra* is an *abyss* (see Kearney 2003, 2003b). In a more familiar language he says, *khôra* is experienced as misery, terror, loss and desolation: “*Khôra* is Oedipus without eyes, Sisyphus in Hades, Prometheus in chains [...] *Khôra* is the *tohu bohu* before creation; it is Job in agony [...] Jesus abandoned on the cross (crying out to the father) [...] It is Conrad’s “heart of darkness” [...] Monte Christo’s prison cell, Primo Levi’s camp” (Kearney 2003: 113). In short, *khôra* is an *abysmal experience*. In *Anatheism* (2010) However, Kearney underlines a different notion of *khôra* i.e. as the “womb of Mary”. In this sense, *khôra* is not merely a dark void, a monstrous abyss, but also an empty place where something can come to be, the nursing uterus that makes possible the incarnation.

Now, Caputo’s response is clear. For him, *khôra* is neither a monster nor an abyss. It is a sphere of ambiguity and undecidability within which the movement of faith is made, where God and *khôra* bleed into each other (Caputo 2013: 13). *Khôra* is not the black sheep because without it there is no faith, only triumphalism, dogmatism and fundamentalism (Caputo 2003: 127). In *Anatheism*, we might add, Kearney seems to agree on this point. Without the gap, without *khôra*, there could be no love, no leap and no faith (Kearney 2010: 56).

In “Testing the heart of *Khôra*: Anonymous or Amorous?” (2010), James H. Olthuis pushes the question even further in his own appeal to Caputo. Why not think of *khôra* as a vulnerable womb-like matrix opened by appeal, by the God of love which is constantly bedeviled by the anonymous *il y a* (Olthuis 2010: 178)? Why not think of the relation between God and *khôra* as an amorous connection rather than an anonymous structure? Once again, Caputo’s answer is clear. Faith in love, in God, in the womb of love is “a movement made within the play of *khôra/différance*. It is not a structural feature of it as such” (Caputo 2010: 195). However, in *The Insistence of God* (2013), Caputo’s notion of *khôra* is further explicated in a more differentiated or conciliatory direction. He talks about insistence as a weak call harbored in the name of God. God is not a strong supreme being but a weak perhaps, a *peut-être*, a “may-be” which is at the same time also a “may-be not”. The name of God offers nothing but a hope, a prayer, a faith in something coming which might turn out to be a nightmare as well

as the opposite. Khôra is thought of as the very spacing of *peut-être*, the slash between maybe/maybe not (Caputo 2013: 13). Khôra is required for there to be a perhaps. What is the difference between khôra and perhaps?

Almost nothing (ibid. 267). Although “perhaps” is neither amorous nor indifferent but neutral, it “constantly verges on becoming uterine – *ne uterine*, like a womb, a primal place in which, from which existents emerge” (ibid. 259)”. This sounds a lot like khôra. Just after this passage, Caputo goes on to quote Derrida’s “test of khôra”. Is it the same? At least, the “perhaps” doesn’t seem to be completely foreign, neither to the primal womb- matrix (amorous?) nor to the abyss (monstrous?). What is it? Caputo: “it is a kind of kin of the *il y a* (Levinas), the *es gibt* (Heidegger), of the *tohu wa-bohu*, a *cousin/cousine* of the *tehom* of Genesis” (ibid. 260). Is “perhaps” a kin of khôra as well or the other way around? If khôra is anything at all, it is a bastard of incestuous (non)relationships - the first “Snow” *par excellence*.

Now, this battle between *love* and *Khôra* and how they might be (dis)connected seems to echo the strife of anxiety, despair and melancholia on the one hand and faith and love on the other in Kierkegaard’s philosophy of existence. Is the placeless place then the arena of a “pit-fight” or as Silesius expressed it – one abyss calling to the other?

Love and Khôra?

The notion of khôra is nowhere to be found in Kierkegaard’s *oeuvre*, yet certain tropes and concepts come close, like the “instant” which David Kangas defines in the following sense: “Of itself it is nothing, it is nowhere; it neither is, nor is not. And yet everything changes in the instant” (Kangas 2007: 4). Or it could be the abyssal fear and trembling, faith as passion without certainty experienced by Abraham (See Caputo 1997: 59, Kearney 2003: 117). Certain traces of what seems to be of a *khôral kin* can be found at the heart of the *non-place place* of the “movement at the spot” which Anti-Climacus is talking about, the *fracture* in the self-relation, the *silence* of the lilies of the field or this very *field* itself.

Originally, the word “khôra” signified a “field” or an “open region.” The field is a place for something to grow, a “rural womb” for something to blossom, not unlike the womb, nurse, receptacle of Plato’s khôra or the womb of Mary, the container of the uncontainable – the *khora akhorathon*. As a field, khôra is also opposed to the *Polis*, “the city state” and hence a place for beasts or gods. It both contains this notion of a place for things to grow, but also a certain exposedness, a dangerous place, because out

in the open, one is vulnerable for predators and enemies. The notion of fertility and vulnerability, or the hospitable and the hostile is at play here. When Kierkegaard is talking about love, he is using this analogy of the silent work of nature hidden in the fields, beneath the cereal. This is what he calls *edification*.

It seems like Kierkegaard actually do reflect on khôra, though not by name (a point I shall return to) and God. What is the relationship between them? First of all, what is God? Kierkegaard gives us three main definitions:

1. God is love (*Works of Love*)
2. God is the middle-term (*Works of Love*)
3. God is that for God everything is possible (*The Sickness unto Death*)

The first definition “God is love” can be rephrased as “God is edification”. One of the first things Kierkegaard emphasizes in *The Works of Love* is the ontological manifestation of love—love is. This “is” is further qualified as becoming. Love *is* becoming, yet God (or love) never changes. This is in some way tricky, because it is not some sort of process ontology. Love is also linked to the *instant* which isn’t a temporal category or process but the “atom of eternity”, the point where eternity crosses time (SKS 4, 391). There seems to be “a play of differences” at stake here. The notion of the unchangeable becoming of love, considered along the line of the third definition – “for God everything is possible” really points to some sort of victorious God, a supreme Omnipotent creature, the mightiest of all kings – a king of trumps and triumphs – “thy will be done!” But this is slightly the case though. Kierkegaard explicitly rejects such a notion of God. There is something else going on. On the one hand, the instant is *intense* because everything changes in it. On the other hand, it is *fragile*, weak because it belongs to the realm of silence. One word is enough, and the instant is gone. The definition “God is that for God, everything is possible” points to an ontology not of actuality but of *possibility* – even a possibility of the impossible. The Being of love then seems to be closer to what Caputo has in mind, when defining God as “may-being” i.e. not in terms of “Omni-potency” but “Omni-possibilizing”. However, the second definition might blur things up. God is the middle-term [*Mellem-bestemmelsen*] (SKS 9, 111). God or love is between people, me and my neighbor, a *bond* or relation, we could say. In ontological terms, we might recall Nancy’s qualification of Heidegger’s “Being-with” [*Mit-sein*]. In *Being Singular Plural* Nancy

remarks that God is Being-with or the togetherness of being-together of all that is (Nancy 2000: 60, 200n52) or God is the *among* or the *with*, the *between* of us (Nancy 2013: 30). God effaces himself or is himself the effacement. Mankind *is* on the other hand, the abandonment of God. This, however, does not mean to live in the absence of God but to affirm the effacement among us i.e. God is the *among*, this Nothing we share among us in neighboring (ibid.). This term could also be useful in order to interpret Kierkegaard's notion of the "Omni-presence" [*Allestedsnærværelse*] of God, not as pantheism, panpsychism or some sort of occasionalism but as Being-with, an ontological proximity that emphasizes existence *as* co-existence. Is the Being of love *may-being* (Caputo) or *being-with* (Nancy)? Is it neither of the two or both? Maybe something third?

First of all, that love *is* seems to stress a certain compliancy. Love is the deepest ground of spirit, Kierkegaard says. It seems to be *before* everything else, prior, an alpha-amorous we might say. Love's *address*, the call or the commandment *is* something that doesn't come into being in the second we respond or refuse the call. It is what we always already stand in a relation to and that which still remains even after being heard or answered. It *insists* and *keeps* on insisting. On the one hand, we must do what we cannot *not-do* (in Nancy's terms) i.e. stand in a relation to the unconditional, that which calls upon us. On the other hand, we must do what we *cannot* do. To do the impossible that traverses the power of the I, what only the other in me can do i.e. love. It is the works of *love*, not the works of *me!* The response of faith seems to work at the borders of this "topological proximity" always on the edge of madness, at the rim of the abyss, upon the hyphen of a- topos or the slash between the possible/impossible within paradoxes, in the face of the *khôral*.

Love is a promise that cannot be fulfilled but nevertheless arrives as the promise and must be kept as the promise, not it's content, but the utterance "I love you", Nancy says (Nancy 2003: 265). It exposes the promise *as* such. Or to recall Derrida, love gives without giving anything but itself. With Caputo we might say, that God does not exist, but *insists* – not upon something in particular, but is itself *insistence*. For Kierkegaard, it is an insistence of love, made by love and even answered by love. Even though love is Omni-present, it does not follow that it is revealed through and through. Love withdraws, its source is hidden in the ground, enveloped in secrecy and mystery. This is not some sort of scanty attitude or arrogant denial, but a humble wish and prayer of love. Love is both hidden and revealed, it is and it becomes, it happens and it insists. It even traverses itself or (un)fold within itself, out, across, through itself as itself. It might be a bond, an immaterial elasticity between different domains. The Danish

word *Kjerlighed*, as M. Jamie Ferreira has pointed out, is the word Kierkegaard uses to refer both to "(1) God as love, (2) The love placed in us by God, as well as (3) the neighbor-love we are commanded to express" (Ferreira 2008: 107). Kierkegaard also refers to another triad of love in terms of *edification* i.e. "Love is the *ground*, the *building* and that which *builds*" (SKS 9, 218). In terms of hospitality, Derrida refers to the trinity in a similar threefold sense i.e. God is both *guest*, *host* and *home*. What then is this "placeless place" or "place non-place" of the "taking place" of visitation or edification?

In *Reimagining the Sacred* (2015) Kearney, in conversation with Vattimo, might give us a clue. It could be *khôra*. Kearney's ambition is hermeneutically to rethink the heart of *chora*. He talks about it in relation to the Trinity as the empty space which allows the three persons to constantly move: "So that the Trinity may be rethought as a constant dynamism of mobility and desire, giving something to the other from out of the place of nothing, from the free place one leaves open..." (Kearney 2015: 142)". The topo-logic is a socio-logic or at least a granting, giving, leaving place for the other. The topo-logic is further a kairo-logic, an event: "*Chora* is the *u-topos*, where the *topos* of the Messiah may constantly arrive, promise, call, take place" (ibid. 253). Finally, the topo-logic is an audio-logic in terms of call and response. Kearney interprets the famous "*esher ayeh esher*", God's words to Moses on Mount Sinai in Exodus 3:14, not as "I am who am", (*ego sum qui sum*) but "I am who may be". According to Kearney, God is saying something like: "I cannot become fully embodied in the flesh of the world, unless you show up and answer my call "Where are you?" with the response" Here I am" (see Kearney 2001 & 2006: 43)".

Commonality vs. Otherness

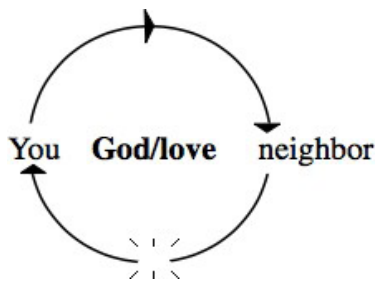
Now, one final thing must be considered. How do we grasp the relation to the *other*? Faith is an unconditional response to an unconditional call. What call? The call of the commandment: "thou shalt love thy neighbor". Of what does this relation consist, the relation to the other, thy neighbor? I am not talking about the ethical discussion concerning the problems of preferential love vs. neighbor love, but the ontology or topology of this relation. The relationality is a topological proximity that does not merely begin in the relation between I and You. Love comes *first*. It calls upon, not an I but a You: "*You shall love thy neighbor!*". Further, the Danish word *Næste* is not literary the same as the English "neighbor"[*Nabo*], although both terms signify some sort of proximity. As Caputo notes, the word *Næste* does not refer to the nearest and dearest, but the *next* one i.e.:

“the next chap to come through the door, whoever that may be, hence anyone, everyone” (Caputo 2008: 97). Ferreira makes a similar observation but stresses the point of proximity as well – the neighbor is the one *next* and *near* to me, though not in terms of preferential love (Ferreira 2001: 261). The *next* also points to some sort of inexhaustibility of whom to love. The *next* is not a chosen one, but is in Kierkegaard’s terms each [*Alle*] and every one [*Enhver*] (SKS 9, 74). There is no *telos* of love because there will always be someone next. The other is both (an)other (and another, and another...) and the *wholly other*. The opposite of the neighbor’s “each and every one” would be what Kierkegaard calls the crowd [*Mængden*] or audience [*Publikum*] i.e. each [*Alle*] and no one [*Ingen*] not unlike Heidegger’s *das Man*. The proximity of the neighbor and the ‘you’ called forth can be found in Kierkegaard’s idea of *hiin Enkelte*. *Hiin Enkelte* does not only refer to “the individual” or “the one”, but is characterized exactly along the same line as the neighbor i.e. as each [*Alle*] and every one [*Enhver*]. We might say when the call addresses a “You” it really puts someone on the spot, “you” not any one, “you”! But even here, we are still in a tension between the onymous and the anonymous. The address is directed to a *specific* someone, but this someone is still everyone, any one - the *second*-person singular “you”. Rather than an I doing something (love is not a property), it is first of all a you *called forth* within this topological proximity. Furthermore, love is the middle-term, the being-with on a social-ontological level. On the other hand, it is *between* the you and the neighbor. There is still a distance i.e. there cannot be a direct access to the other. In this sense, the other is still other.

Let’s rephrase it in the words of James Wirth: “Where is the neighbor when the neighbor is everywhere and thereby nowhere? On the one hand, it is nowhere in specific, for the wholly other is, as Derrida tells us, wholly other – *tout autre est tout autre!* On the other hand, every other – *tout autre* – is wholly other” (Wirth 2004: 220). The You and the other has this “nothing” in common – this “no-where” the indeterminable placeless place withdrawn from any map. That is the topological proximity of *you* and thy *neighbor*.

What then, crosses what cannot be crossed? What gives without giving anything but itself? What does that which cannot be done neither by you nor by anyone else? What is the bond? It is love. Love is both a *proxy* (a vicarious taking place) within this nothing, no- where, placeless-place (where no one can forgive any one) and this very *proximity* (common nearness and distance) itself. What does love do? It *edifies!* (SKS 9, 220). Love and edification are the same. How so?

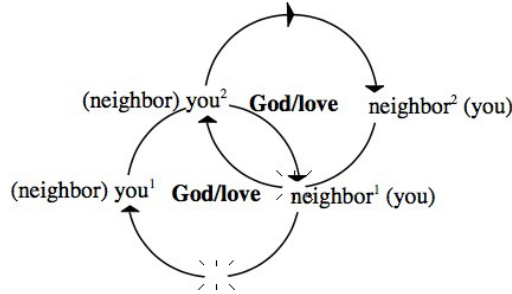
According to Caputo, the Danish *Kjerlighed* is derived from the Latin *charitas* by way of the French *cher* which means “the love of God” or in Greek *agape* (Caputo 2008: 97). Ferreira notes that the Danish noun *Kjerlighed* doesn’t have a verb and while this is true, it is related to the verb *kere*² i.e. “to show love [*kærlighed*]” related to the English *care* and the Latin *cura*. However, Kierkegaard uses the verb *elske*. It says: “Thou shall love [*elske*] thy neighbor”. *Elske* is related to erotic love [*Elskov*] although erotic love and neighbor-love are two very different things. *Elske* also has a different meaning. The word is derived from the Old Nordic *elska* related to the Indo-European root *ala* “nourish, raise [*nære, opfostre*]” (Becker-Christensen 2005: 331) or “grow, feed, create [*avle, give føde, frembringe*]” (Jonsson 1863: 14). To love [*elske*], to edify simply means to “nourish, nurse, make something grow, come into being”. Further, Kierkegaard uses the word “nourishment” [*Naering*] related to “near” [*Naer*] that works within this topological proximity of *you* and thy *neighbor* i.e. “the one *next* and *near*” as well. It is remarkable that the word *elske* bears all these connotations of caring, growing, nourish which, as we have seen in some interpretations, was linked to *khôra* as well. It really emphasizes the *khôral* as something “womb-like”, a uterus within which love calls forth existence by nourishment, edification. The topological proximity, the relation between you and neighbor with love as the middle-term could look like this:



The Danish “*kere*” is etymologically linked to the German *kehren* “turn” but means “to show love” or less strongly “to show concern, solicitude” or “to worry”. While the verb “*kære*”, which actually has an etymological connection with the English “care” and hence an obvious candidate for *kærlighed* in verbal form, it does not connote anything in that direction, but is a juridical term for “appeal”— an appeal to the court. However, *kere* does have a semantic similarity with the English *care* and the Latin *cura*.

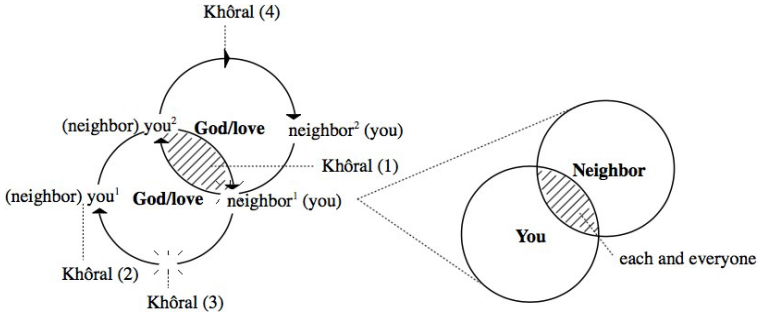
Love is hidden in the ground, concealed, yet it is *placed* within “you”, within each of us, within the human being and it is among us, it is what is “common” and it marks the relation as such. But the *you* and the

neighbor are not two opposite poles in a static relation in need of bridging. The ‘you’ is also already itself a neighbor and whoever is someone’s neighbor is a ‘you’ addressed by love. Hence, *khôra* might not be this “interface” i.e. the circle penetrated *by* God, but rather the irreducible relationality i.e. the placeless place in these spherical crossings of the topological proximity. This dynamic common ‘nothing’ exposed is itself *khôral* and could look like this:



You¹ relates to neighbor¹ and you² to neighbor². But the ‘you’ is also already a (neighbor) and vice versa. This irreducibility of what is common between you and the neighbor is what we share, our Being-with. Nancy expresses it like this: “... I think that the “nearest” is absolutely not the nearest in any sense of neighborhood, nor the nearest by place (...) The nearest is everybody, to the extent that everybody shares with me the same impossibility of being or becoming the fixed enunciation of a certain position” (Nancy 2001: 3). For Kierkegaard, the “each and every one” that holds for you and the neighbor in terms of *hiin Enkelte* is this shared instability of any fixed position. The *khôral* is both (1) this inter-sphere crossed by the circles i.e. love, (2) the very slash between you and the neighbor (being-with, the each and every one), (3) the withdrawal of love and (4) the non- certitude of how this work of love will work *out*. Further, the intersection of you-neighbor is very close to what Nancy calls the *singular plural*. In Latin, the word *singuli* already refers to the plural because it designates “one” i.e. “one by one” (among others) and the term *plus* means “more” i.e. more than *one* (Nancy 2000: 32, 39). The singular plural is the *with* in Being-with, the *co-* in co-existence or existence *is* co-existence, Being *is* Being- with³. This is illustrated in the following pictogram.

[3] In *The Concept of Anxiety*, V. Haufniensis makes a similar point in his description of the relation between Adam and the subsequent individual. Adam is both himself and the race which holds for every other as well: “*man is individuum and as such simultaneously himself and the whole race* (SKS4, 335)”. Existence is co-existence in this socio-historical sense.



Instead of a *hostility* inscribed in the very hospitable relation between I-you i.e. the indeterminable character of the other – friend or foe, Kierkegaard emphasizes a *fragility* and *vulnerability* in this moment of intersection, the event where the instant is filled by the expression of love. The vulnerability is inscribed within the event itself and not so much in a friend/foe uncertainty. The risk of failure and catastrophe depends just as much in the response of the “you” and not in the unknown motives of the other. Love doesn’t begin by such worry or *possible* divisions. It exposes first of all what is *common*, an ontology of equality before the unconditional. Yet, it is an asymmetrical or vicarious relation of you-God-neighbor, not I-you. But how this exposure will turn out when responded to is marked by *perhaps*. It might work out to answer the call of the other, it might not. There is always a *khôral* tension between call and response.

Khôral Love?

Now, let us return to the central issue once more: the relation between love and *khôra* in the event of hospitality or the passionate act (p/act) of faith. Let’s be straight: *Khôra* is no love of mine nor does *Khôra* love me. It doesn’t care about any one - you, the neighbor, the other. It doesn’t give a damn or it isn’t even possible to say whether it cares or doesn’t care, because it is not a subject that does anything. However, withdrawn into untranslatability, what does Kierkegaard’s *khôral* dimensions of existence tell us? Is the absence of *khôra*, the not-mentioning of *khôra* in the texts not the most radical way to demonstrate its anonymity? If it really is so anonymous, it cannot even be named! *Il y a khôra* is already to state too much! “*Il y a khôra*” might be cut down neither to “*il y a*” nor simply “*il*”-but, . What we get is merely *khôral* fumes, notes, sandstorms blowing from the desert hopefully with hidden seeds among the grains, bastards of the bastard to end all bastards!

Yet, if we search within the *oeuvre*, we hit upon a description very close to what could be called khôra or a khôral stretch. By the end of *Repetition*, Constantin Constantius states: “long live dancing in the eddy of the infinite. Long live the wave that drives me down into the abyss. Long live the wave that slings me up again over the stars” (SKS 3, 88). This could be “the sphere of undecidability”, the “spacing of *peut-être*,” in terms of a hydro-fluidity, khôral splashes inscribed within the absent khôra. Is existence the movement of the waves, dancing in the eddy with no choreography, but a chora-graphy of seismographic imprints caused by the very *movement* of existence itself – between “calling forth” and “stepping out” (from Latin *existere*) – the *Bewegt-heit* of *be-coming*? Maybe existence consists of such fluidity? Like Irigaray asked, “of what is Being? Of Air!” (Irigaray 1999: 4-5). We might ask, “of what is existence?” Of water? Of *elements* maybe? Caputo asks a similar question, when considering the myth of creation – of what are we made of? Maybe, he says, being the image of God is compatible with: “being made out of some sort of unimaginable khoral corporeality (khora-poreality) and that we are the stuff of some sort of khoral incarnation? Suppose our corporeal being is deeply interwoven with, or immersed in, these wild, watery, and windy conditions?” (Caputo 2006: 60). The topology might be a hydro-logy or at least a poetics of meteors (atmospheric phenomena), of foam-born bastards. It might be, that such khôral orphans are constantly adopted by love, nursed by love unconditionally without any rock-solid guarantees of how this *work* of love will *work out*. These are the khôral prints and marks we find in Kierkegaard’s texts, the effects of nothing from no-where, scouted by love on the dancefloor of the eddy, between the slings of the waves! Are we then khora-poreal beings neither living in chaos nor in cosmos but in what Joyce called *chaosmos*? And do the address, the event take place within this? Make no mistakes, we are not merely left within a void or seized by the unconditional only. That is why it is important also to stress this (cor)poreal dimension, what Kierkegaard or Anti-Climacus called *body* or *necessity* as opposed to possibility. Or to recall Derrida, the negotiation between the laws of *conditional* hospitality and *unconditional* hospitality.

As I mentioned above, a profound candidate for the verb *Kjerlighed* in Danish could be *kere* as related to *care* and the Latin *Cura*. Now, could it be, that existence, as this openness, might neither be about khôra nor *Cura*, but “*Khûra*” – a neologism, like Joyce’s “*chaosmos*”, Derrida’s “*hosti-pitality*” and Caputo’s “*khora-poreality*”? A place non-place where the amorous can and does take place within the anonymous womb, but without settling or getting too comfort, – like the knight of faith who is constantly in a tension? A tension, that shatters the

slash between maybe/maybe not to the extent that it forms a vibrant X, that puts “you” (X) on the spot..., the one addressed and called forth by love, the mark/de-mark, sign/de-sign in the (a)topography of existence? Could it be the elasticity/fluidity of stepping out, the resonate space of call and response⁴, the reverberating axis between what we might call the *khôra-chaosmic f/act* and the *khûra-poreal p/act* of existence within which we welcome the other unconditionally, but without any support of a sovereign power to sanction possible rejections? Love doesn’t force, Kierkegaard says, but has faith in everything, it hopes everything: “Kjerlighed Troer Alt og Kjerlighed haaber Alt [...] og [...] Ved Tilgivelse skjuler Kjerlighed Syndernes Mangfoldighed (SKS9, 291)”–*Amen!*

Conclusion

Who do I love in the event of hospitality, in the p/act of faith – God or *khôra*? The other, my neighbor? This question rises in the face of the death of the supreme God. A high degree of uncertainty and undecidability hovers like a spook, (a (w)ho(l)ly g/host?) over the onto-theological graveyard. But it is not a gorgon, not the triumphal progress of the nihil, but the necessary condition of faith and love, the possibility to rethink God after the death of God in terms of a weak call. The exposure of the uncertain is of a *khôral* kin, a tomb-womb relationship. This event of an unconditional response to an unconditional call is what Derrida called *hospitality* and Kierkegaard *faith*. For Derrida, hospitality means welcoming an uninvited stranger, the unforeseeable other, unconditionally. For Kierkegaard, faith is a passionate act of love i.e. to nourish, edify the love within the other unconditionally. Both terms seem to grapple with the impossible and the possibility of the impossible on several levels. Further, this uncertainty in the event of hospitality marks the double notion of *hostis*, a *hostile* or a guest in need of a *host*. In the instant of love, the uncertainty points to a *fragility* and a *vulnerability* in the event as such. With Kierkegaard, we get a notion not of *khôra* but the *khôral*, the fractured sediments within this placeless place, that love constantly interrupts and shatters. It is a topological proximity of relations working on borders, in-between spheres - the reverberating space of call and response, in the eddy of the infinite

[4] In his reading of Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love* (SKS 9, 377), Critchley defines God as an “echo chamber” where each sound even the slightest is a repetition that resounds back into the subject’s ears with the intensification of infinity (Critchley 2012: 251). We might even say that the stretch of the *khôral* is at stake here as well, between being both lonely and social i.e. within a shared world of the each and everyone, and neither isolated nor merely a product of social conditions i.e. being the two and being irreducible to either of the two. This is the shared being-with.

chora-graphy. We are kept in the tension between God and khôra, anxiety and faith, the hostile and the hospitable, without certainties but with the power of the powerless, a hope against hope, a possibility of the impossible, the address of love, a chance, a prayer.

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