

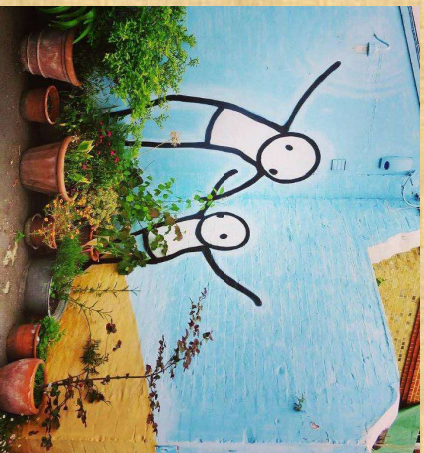
## Agapeistic Ethics:

### Exploring the Second Person Perspective

PhD Course

Graduate School, Arts at Aarhus University

May 27 and 28, 2021



#### Key note speakers

Stephen Darwall, Yale University

Werner G. Jeanrod, Oslo University

Peter Kline, St. Francis Theological College, Brisbane

#### Program

##### Thursday, May 27

13.00-13.15: Welcome  
13.15-14.00: Reading session 1 (Kierkegaard and Weil)  
14.00-14.30: PhD paper by Emily Martone (Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa): "A Political Reading of Loving and (as) Mourning"  
14.30-15.00: Postdoc presentation by Kasper Lysemose (Aarhus University): "It's Nothing Personal. (Im)personal Encounters in Spinoza, Kierkegaard and Weil"  
15.00-15.30: Break  
15.30-17.00: Keynote address by Stephen Darwall (Yale University): "The Second-Person Perspective in Deontic and Non-deontic Contexts"  
17.00-17.30: PhD paper by Anders Hee Nørhøj Poulsen (Syddansk Universitet Odense), "Why Broaden the Scope of the 'Source' from Where an *Appell*, an *Anspruch* can Come From?"  
17.30-18.00: PhD paper by Anna Bank Jeppesen (Aarhus University): "Loving the Real Other: Anders Nygren and Max Scheler on Unmotivated Love towards the Concrete Neighbour"

##### Friday, May 28

9.00-10.30: Keynote address by Peter Kline (St. Francis Theological College, Brisbane): "Consent Not to Be a Single Individual: Kierkegaard and Moten on the Social Life of Debt"  
10.30-10.45: Break  
10.45-12.15: Keynote address by Werner Jeanrond (Oslo University): "Neighbour-Love in the Dynamic Network of Interdependent Love Relationships"  
12.15-12.45: Lunch break  
12.45-13.30: Reading session 2 (Levinas and Buber)  
13.30-14.00: PhD paper by Panu-Matti Pöykko (University of Helsinki), "Commanded Love: Prophetic Subjectivity and Normativity in Levinas"  
14.00-14.30: PhD paper by Theodor Sandal Røfsen (UiT: The Arctic University of Norway), "Between 'Being-at-home' and 'Being-for-the-other' in Levinas"  
14.30-14.45: Break  
14.45-15.15: PhD paper by Lars Inge Fredrik Smetana-Nilsson (Fjellhaug International University College), "Levinas Beyond Agapeistic Ethics?"  
15.15-15.45: PhD paper by Philip Strammer (Centre for Ethics, University of Pardubice): "Relating to an *Other*: A Buberian Outlook on Plurality and Togetherness beyond the Immediate Encounter"  
15.45-16.00: Rounding off

## Description

The concept of perspective seems to be tied to the first person as the central point from which any perspective ultimately arises. "The 'I think' must be able to accompany all my representations," as Kant wrote. Phenomenologists, likewise, will argue that whoever or whatever is given, is intentionally given *for me*, i.e., in a sphere of minimal self-awareness. The challenge of exploring the second person perspective is therefore to conceive of a perspective where I am I only to the extent that I am also a *Thou*. In what is arguably the founding text of the philosophy of dialogue, Martin Buber thus wrote that: "The human being becomes an I by the *Thou*."

In order to think this relation in its primordially, Buber suggests love as a meta-psychological in-between – not unlike Kierkegaard who, in *Works of Love*, situates love as 'the middle term'. But how does love work when it works *in or from* the middle of the *diastasis* of I and *Thou*? Should we think of this work as a call to which I – *coram deo* – must respond in my own name, as has often been suggested in the theological tradition? And does it come with an ethics of our mutual becoming? Further, if it does, is this an ethics of prescribed norms or rather of an existential abode – if not even a certain alienation and homelessness?

Consider, for instance, what happens to the personality of our first- and second-person perspective: In what sense are we still persons if we are loved not on account of any properties that constitute 'who we take ourselves to be' – a woman, a man, a child, a king, a servant, a fool, and so on? Do we simply lose all these 'third personal traits' in agapeistic ethics? Or do they perhaps come back to haunt the dyadic I-Thou relation from which they have been excluded as not properly personal? Does the call of love subjectify us, or does it also depersonalize us as forces of becoming, as Deleuze would argue?

## Literature and guideline questions (reading sessions)

### Søren Kierkegaard, "The Work of Love in Recollecting One Who Is Dead", in: *Works of Love*

Is it possible to translate Kierkegaard's recollection of the one who is dead into a dialogical situation? If so, how does one answer for oneself *before* the other, "who is dead, silent and says not a word," but who, nevertheless, calls me from the "outside"?

### Simone Weil, "The Love of God and Affliction" in: *Waiting for God*

How does agapeistic ethics approach the second person *in absentia*? Can the second person be truly absent and still wholly be the second person?

### Martin Buber, *Postscript to I and Thou*

In what ways does the dialogical attitude of 'You-saying' change our relations to our fellow human beings, and why is the designation of God as a person indispensable for Buber?

### Emmanuel Levinas, "Dialogue: Self-Consciousness and Proximity of the Neighbor" in: *Of God Who Comes to Mind*

Why must a philosophy of dialogue be based on inequality and transcendence rather than reciprocity and the transcendental, according to Levinas?

## Abstracts (PhD papers)

### Emily Martone (Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa): "A Political Reading of Loving and (as) Mourning"

Within an ethical-political perspective, Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* can be read as an analysis of the interactions between the Self and the Other. Through a comparison with Derrida's view on friendship and mourning, my aim is to highlight the immunitarian and communitarian dispositives involved respectively in the Kierkegaardian categories of preferential and un-preferential love. According to Kierkegaard, both erotic love and friendship can be subsumed under the category of preferential love, since they are both grounded on the similarity and reciprocity among individuals, which include by excluding whoever does not participate in such likeness. Within the preferential bonds, being-with is reduced to having-something-in-common (that is, sharing a common substance and a common identity) and otherness is levelled out in the realm of sameness. The Italian philosopher R. Esposito describes the dynamic of inclusion by exclusion with the term immunization, which he borrows from the biomedical field. In the process of immunizing, a weaker infection is caused in order to prevent from its lethal form and to include the danger within the borders, rather than keeping it out of them. The society of preferential bonds is thoroughly immunized against the possibility of a real relatedness and of an opening to otherness.

As Kierkegaard points out in *Two Ages*, congregations of self-sufficient and unrelated individuals are established as a surrogate for communal living. Derrida politicizes this issue by showing how the immunitarian paradigm gives birth to a familial, fraternalist and thus androcentric concept of friendship, which is grounded on the sharing of the same blood and telluric roots. Both authors intertwine the issue of friendship with the experience of mourning. Friendship with the deceased is meant to be the condition of both possibility and impossibility of friendship: thus, it may undergo a process of immunization, allowing as well for a communitarian opening. While the deceased friend can be thought as another self and an extension of oneself, he/she can also constitute an irreducible otherness haunting the subject's identity (as Derrida explores in *Works of Mourning* and in *Fors*). Thus, what happens when disproportion and incommensurability, rather than sameness and redoubling, are turned into the very condition of friendship as well as of mourning? What about social bonds breaking up with reciprocity and recognition? Kierkegaard and Derrida indicate in loving the dead the disabling element of the immunitarian paradigm. Kierkegaard regards love for the deceased as the prototype of neighbour-love, which is the un-preferential love displaying a communitarian dynamic. Drawing on the work of Nancy and Esposito, community is understood neither as a common property belonging to subjects, nor as a substance produced by their union, but rather as a mutual exposure of our own subjectivity to otherness, which breaks the identity of the subject. Loving the neighbour – that is loving the other and oneself as another-You – takes on a political connotation: by deconstructing the immunitarian paradigm, it disables the fundamental divisions of the juridical, socio-political and economic order (such as class, gender, family and race), all mechanisms that regulate and produce socio-political identities.

**Anders Hee Nørhberg Poulsen (Syddansk Universitet Odense), “Why broaden the scope of the “source” from where an Appell, an Anspruch can come from?”**

My paper consists of three parts. Part one takes as its starting point the all-pervading question in large (not all) parts of contemporary moral philosophy, i.e.: *What ought I do?* You should do *this* (e.g. an answer within a utilitarian framework) or *that* (e.g. an answer within a deontological framework). However, my *doing* emerges since it *responds* to someone (maybe “something”), *which I do not generate myself*. The second part unfolds the element of response, i.e. parts of Bernard Waldenfels’ thoughts on *Erfahrung* as *Widerfahrnis*, and connects it with agapeistic ethic. One could say my *doing* emerges due to an *Erfahrung* understood as a *Widerfahrnis*. In a *Widerfahrnis* I am overwhelmed by an *Appell*, an *Anspruch* – this is the  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\omicron\varsigma$  element in a *Widerfahrnis*. In and with an *Appell*, an *Anspruch* “something” emerges, namely an *Antwort*, a *response* – this is the element of *Responsivität* in a *Widerfahrnis*. Hence *Erfahrung* understood as a *Widerfahrnis* takes place between  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\omicron\varsigma$  and response.

Although not necessarily conceived through the concept of  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\omicron\varsigma$ , *Responsivität* and *Widerfahrnis* one might say an agapeistic ethic shares an intersection with this line of thought, namely *as a respondent* or *as an I start from elsewhere* e.g. from a Thou.

A feature in agapeistic ethic might be put in this way. Ethics is not to be understood from a first-person perspective (ethics is not restricted to the question: What ought I do?), but rather as an *in-between* relation, that is between an I and Thou. Put briefly, an agapeistic ethic is one which ‘is not self-seeking’ (1 Cor. 13:5). How is the relation between an I and Thou to be conceived? One must here give consideration to whether the relation is to be understood as a *call*, or is it so that from a Thou arises a ‘fording’ (*Demand*)? an *Appell*, an *Anspruch*? And is Thou the proper relata of a *call*, an *Appell*, an *Anspruch*? Could it be that ‘fellow human being’ or ‘neighbour’ are more proper as relata? Furthermore, to envisage the relation of a *call*, *fording*, *Appell*, *Anspruch* as a Thou seems to be a too narrow scope – presupposed ones point of departure is a phenomenological concept of *Erfahrung*.

In part three I try to open the scope from where an *Anspruch*, *Appell*, *call* can come from. Taking as *terminus a quo* the idea of *Erfahrung* as *Widerfahrnis* one can ask: What can happen to me, what can befall me? I will present my preliminary thoughts on this question through Marion’s concept of *le phénomène saturé*, and Romano’s concept of *herméneutique événementiale*.

**Anna Bank Jeppesen (Aarhus University): “Loving the real other: Anders Nygren and Max Scheler on unmotivated love towards the concrete neighbour”**

In the protestant tradition of the theology of love, there seems to be the agreement that neighbourly love is not *motivated* by the specific properties of the other, even though it is directed to this *concrete* other (Outka 1972). This understanding of love poses an important theological question: how can we insist on this radical ‘unmotivatedness’ without love becoming purely abstract? Or, formulated differently: how can we maintain that love is directed to *me*, when it is not my particular properties that awaken it?

This question is at issue both for the Swedish theologian Anders Nygren and the German philosopher Max Scheler in their works on Christian *agape*. Thus, a comparison between the two serves as a promising point of departure for a discussion on the subject.

Nygren is (in)famous for his concept of *agape*, which he defines both as indifferent to value and as value-creating. *Agape* is the spontaneous love from God that is not motivated by, but bestows value upon, the concrete, sinful human being, who in himself has no inherent value (Nygren 1930). His definition is to some extent inspired by Scheler’s work on the phenomenon of *resentiment*, where Scheler describes Christian *agape* as a *Bewegungsumkehr* from the antique, upward striving *eros* that does not seek the *summum bonum* but the poor sinner (Scheler 1923a). However, although Nygren appears to be sympathetic to Scheler’s project at large, he is also critical of decisive elements of Scheler’s account of *agape*: Scheler, whose main concern is the given value-hierarchy of reality, claims that *agape* in contrast to humanitarian love/altruism is not addressed to the existing human being, but to the ‘ideal spiritual person’ (the ideal value-picture) (Scheler 1923a). To Nygren, the consequence is that love is neither understood as truly unmotivated, since it is motivated by the inherent spiritual value, nor addressed to the concrete, existing other.

Conversely, what Nygren seems to miss, is that Scheler introduces the idea of the ideal value-picture exactly to avoid that love becomes dependent on specific properties or values of the loved one. In *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*, Scheler defines love as ‘a movement *in direction* of the ideal value’ and thereby explicitly denies that love should be *striving* for this value (Scheler 1923b). On the contrary, it is love that initially opens the gaze for value altogether.

This being said, it is questionable whether Scheler actually succeeds in connecting love to the concrete other by means of the ideal value-picture, because an *ideal* implies an ‘ought’. Therefore, with Nygren it can be argued that Scheler’s notion of the ideal value-picture ‘pollutes’ the ‘unmotivatedness’ of love and prevents it from being directed to the existing, real human being. The divergence between Nygren and Scheler is ultimately due to their respective points of departure: Nygren is a radical ‘theologian of revelation’ and sees God’s *agape* as the ultimate bearer of value that levels out all other values, whereas Scheler is an ethical phenomenologist to whom the values are already given.

*References*

- Nygren, Anders. 1930. *Den kristna kärlekstanken genom tiderna : eros och agape*. Stockholm.
- Outka, Gene H. 1972. *Agape : an ethical analysis*. Yale publications in religion ; 17. New Haven.
- Scheler, Max. 1923a. *Vom Umsturz der Werte*. 2. durchgesehene Aufl. ed. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Leipzig: Neue-Geist Verlag.
- . 1923b. *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*. 2. vermehrte und durchgesehene Aufl. ed. *Die Sittengesetze des emotionalen Lebens*. ; 1. Bonn: Friedrich Cohen.



**Panu-Matti Pöykkö (University of Helsinki), "Commanded Love: Prophetic subjectivity and normativity in Levinas"**

In *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* Levinas famously provides his puzzling definition of the ethical subject as prophecy, that is, as an ever recurring and bottomless response to the infinite *call of the other*: "Prophecy would thus be the very psyche in the soul: the other in the same (...). Infinity is not announced in the witness given as a theme (...). [I]n the saying without the said of sincerity, in my "here I am," [...] I bear witness to the infinite (...). The transcendence of the revelation lies in the fact that the "epiphany" comes in the saying of him that received it." (Levinas 1998, 150)

This paper aims at elucidating Levinas's understanding of prophecy claiming that despite its strong religious-theological overtones, in Levinas's hands prophecy is a philosophical notion evoked to bring forth the structure of the ethical subject. First, it is maintained that what is at issue in Levinas's description of the ethical subject as prophetic, is *normativity*. To respond to the call is, it is claimed, is to acknowledge the ethical call of the other as the "the norm of norms" which gives sense to being and to orient one's life in terms of it. Furthermore, this paper argues that the Levinasian analysis as a combination of Heidegger and Kant in which Kantian call of practical reason serves as a crucial corrective to Heidegger's understanding of the call of conscience. Prophetic subjectivity is a response to an ethical demand which simultaneously has as its source the presence of the other person as face and calls the subject from within to become what she truly always already is, that is, responsible to all and everything: "here I am". To answer this ethical call is to enter the normative space governed by a commanded love without recompense.

**Theodor Sandal Rolfsen (UiT: The Arctic University of Norway), "Between 'Being-at-home' and 'Being-for-the-other' in Levinas"**

This course invites us to 'explore, develop, and challenge theories of agapeistic ethics that situate themselves in the second person perspective'. Among the challenges mentioned, the question of whether a second-perspective ethics leads to an alienation and depersonalization of the self is of critical importance for the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. In this paper, I wish to explore how this problematic is addressed by Levinas in *Totality and Infinity*, and argue that a renewed emphasis on the analysis of enjoyment to be found in that work helps us understand how the Other transcends my world without negating it.

It has been argued that Levinas' ethics leaves no room for an autonomous self. Levinas' description of the relation between the Same and the Other, the critics argue, leaves the self completely blind vis-à-vis the Other. The incomprehensible transcendence of the Other commands me to goodness, thus leaving the subject in an asymmetrical relation of servitude to an authority that remains essentially unknowable to it. The Levinasian subject must accept on face value the obligation that the Other expresses, unable to even ask questions of the Other, for it is primordial that the Other who questions me, is this not a form of radical self-alienation and depersonalization that would leave the subject impotent and paralyzed?

In this context, it is crucial to remember that one of the main themes in *Totality and Infinity* is a rejection of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's *Geworfenheit* for the sake of an

analysis of the ego as an independent and sovereign happiness that is at home with itself (Levinas 2015, 114). Furthermore, the ethical encounter that breaks open this egoism must precisely not be understood as a negation: The face in which the other...presents himself does not negate the same...it remains commensurate with him who welcomes; it remains terrestrial. (Levinas 2015, 203)

Long before these critiques were ever put to him, Levinas was working vehemently to demonstrate that his philosophy does not lead to the negation of the self, but in stark contrast to its elevation. The Other "does not limit but promotes my freedom, by arousing my goodness" (Levinas 2015, 200). In fact, Raouli Moati argues that what separates Levinas' description of the Other's ethical revelation from that of Sartre is precisely "that, unlike Sartre, Levinas does not understand this dispossession as a form of alienation from the world" (Moati 2017, 134-135). The Other dispossesses me, inverts my egoism into a charity for-the-sake-of-the-other, but this is not an abandoning of myself.

Levinas is able to respond to this critique, I argue, through the way in which he delineates the asymmetry between the immanence of the Same and the transcendence of the Other. The Other confronts my egoism, but this confrontation does not consist in the ego losing its sovereign ground. To be an ego is to be concerned with one's ground, with the safety of a home. In the ethical relation, I become concerned with justice, but crucially, this concern does not have an allergic relation with my concern for a home. This apparent conflict is resolved in the welcoming of the Other into my home, or otherwise said, in charity.

*References*

- Levinas, E. (2015) *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Moati, R. (2017) *Levinas and the Night of Being: A Guide to Totality and Infinity*, translated by Daniel Wyche, Fordham University Press, New York

**Lars Inge Fredrik Smetana-Nilsson (Fjellhaug International University College), "Levinas Beyond Agapeistic Ethics?"**

Whether or not Levinas is to be included in agapeistic traditions of ethics is debatable. To talk beautifully and eloquently about love – even agape – and further, about ethics and ethical responsibility, does not automatically imply an inclusion in an agapeistic tradition. Is Levinas in fact going beyond and thereby challenging an agapeistic ethic, also in its different religious expressions?

For Levinas, the ambiguity of love makes him build foundations for the ethical event that is different than autonomous reacting to pre-given laws or deeds primarily motivated by love. Instead, he describes the features that makes goodness and ethics, a basic humanity, possible in our world. Ethics is the first-philosophy, Levinas, who places himself in the phenomenological tradition, nevertheless challenges that tradition in his way of describing the ethical encounter, an encounter that cannot possible be only intentionally given, but overflows while simultaneously individualizing the subject. Ethics as the *first-philosophy* causes Levinas to depict subjectivity and otherness in a way that safeguards and respects both the first-person and second-person perspectives in ethics.



Subjectivity is conceived as a rupture in being. The subject, separated from its habitat as free and in enjoyment, is necessary for encountering otherness. Subjectivity occurs passively in the tension and interchange between a de-centered subjectivity and infinite otherness. This relation is non- reciprocal, asymmetric, and simultaneously constitutive for the ethical event, and its non-dualistic qualities is further reinforced by the simultaneity of the Third.

Levinas thus gives his philosophy a certain positionality and potentiality that challenges certain agapeistic and symmetrical perspectives, while simultaneously providing his ethics with a great deal of earthiness and realism. There is no doubt for Levinas that ethics is indeed possible, as is our basic humanity. That, however, requires an ethics that does not derive from nor is motivated by inter- human love, but an ethics that is asymmetrically founded, nurtured by, and always corrected by the presence of the radically Other – the one from infinity.

By investigating central Levinasian perspectives on subjectivity, otherness, and love, I would like to highlight the importance of his contribution to ethics and challenges to certain agapeistic perspectives.

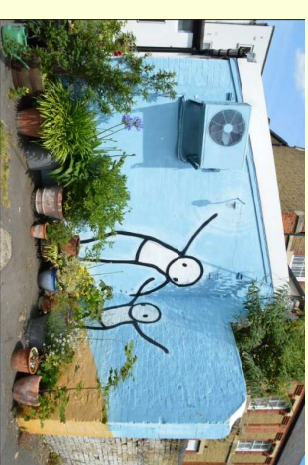
### **Philip Strammer (Centre for Ethics, University of Pardubice): “Relating to *an Other* and Relating to *Others*: A Buberian Outlook on Plurality and Togetherness beyond the Immediate Encounter”**

Although the I-You lies at the core of Martin Buber’s philosophy, his thought is not only concerned with dyadic relations. This becomes clear when looking at his social and political writings. The notion of a loving togetherness is crucial for him, be it between I and You or between a plurality of individuals. But how exactly are we to understand the dyadic togetherness to be related to the togetherness of the many? In *What is Man?*, Buber addresses this issue: what is the “essential You” in the dyadic relation is the “essential We” in a relation of a plurality of men in that both are marked by a “ontic directness” and a sense of “genuine community” between those involved. Yet, it is striking that Buber passes directly from the individual You to the We. It seems that for Buber, even when we speak of plurality, we always do it in addressing a individual other. But is not an important part of our participation in a togetherness of many to be able to address not only *an other* but also *others*? Or do we have to say that, ultimately, there is no such thing as addressing a plurality?

In my paper, I will explore the possibility of standing in a dialogue with a plurality of others while, at the same time, holding fast to Buber’s fundamental insight into the dialogical nature of man’s existence. In doing so, I want to fathom to which extent the I-You (pl.) can be accounted for in terms of the I-You (sg.) and to which extent it must be accounted for in *sui generis* terms. To that end, I will examine three notions that are of central importance in Buber’s dialogism, *exclusiveness*, *directness*, and *reciprocity*, and show how they become challenged – or show themselves to simply become inappropriate – when trying to understand what it means for an I to relate to a plural-You.

As regards exclusiveness, Buber holds that if I wholeheartedly relate to You, my attention will lie *exclusively* on you, I will be concerned *exclusively* with you, etc. But is that not obviously impossible when relating to more than a single other? Or is

exclusiveness attributed to the group of others as a single entity? Secondly, the I-You is marked by embodied and sensuous directness. It is obviously not impossible directly face a plurality but here, quantity becomes decisive: while the engagement with few may still involve directness in terms of, e.g., the tactile sense, this becomes impossible once more others enter the scene; and while the address of a conference audience may still allow for a visual engagement, this is impossible when I publicly voice my opinion to the citizenry to which I belong. Finally, while in the I-You (sg.), there exists a face-to-face reciprocity of addressee and addressed, this is not the case in the I-You (pl.) relation: the one who addresses as plurality is in a radically different predicament than the one who is addressed as a part of a plurality.



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