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#### Repository Citation

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## Oh My Neighbors, There Is No Neighbor

*International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* Special Issue on Kierkegaardian Echoes: The Reception of Kierkegaard in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Philosophy and Theology 90.4-5 (2019): 326-343. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21692327.2018.1488149>

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**Abstract:** This article meditates on the Christian command to love the neighbor as yourself by focusing on how both Jacques Derrida and Søren Kierkegaard have read this command. I argue that Derrida, failing in his faithfulness to Kierkegaard, makes a mistake when he includes this command in the Greek model of the politics of friendship in his *Politics of Friendship*. Such a mistake is illumined by Kierkegaard's understanding of the neighbor in this command from *Works of Love* because this understanding helps to develop Derrida's vision of a democracy and politics that resists the hegemony of the masculine and remains open to the event of a non-hierarchical relation to the other.

**Key words:** Kierkegaard, Derrida, neighbor, love, politics, philosophy of religion

While the Derrida-Kierkegaard relationship is nothing new under the sun,<sup>1</sup> the facets and contours of this relationship remain multifarious and warrant further exploration. After all, Derrida has told us, 'But it is Kierkegaard to whom I have been most faithful and who interests me most.'<sup>2</sup> One such contour that has not been fully explored and explicated concerns the way both figures read the command from Jesus, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Matthew 22:39 NRSV). To trace the relation of their readings requires that we move beyond the focus of much scholarship on Derrida and Kierkegaard, namely Derrida's engagements with Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works, in order to engage the relation among Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* and Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. By following their readings, we see a surprising moment in Derrida's corpus where his faithfulness to Kierkegaard wanes when a turn to the

Dane's work would bolster one of the threads of thinking that Derrida is developing. This turn away from Kierkegaard is surprising not simply because the scholarship on these philosophers' relation has yet to note this turn away from Kierkegaard. But, more importantly, and which has also been missed in the scholarship,<sup>3</sup> this turn is surprising because Kierkegaard's own understanding of the neighbor in *Works of Love* operates in his text in the same way that Derrida's understanding that every other is wholly other (*tout autre est tout autre*) operates in the ethical and political timbre of deconstruction.

I argue that Derrida misreads this command from Jesus by fitting it into the 'Greek model' of the neighbor, in which the neighbor belongs to the familiar and expected at the exclusion of the female and the other, because understood through the eyes of Kierkegaardian faith this command is a figuration of the politics for which Derrida hopes. For Kierkegaard, the neighbor never exists in the singular, because every other is the neighbor, and resists the necessity of identifying the gender of the neighbor. This reading points to a possible politics beyond fraternity that Derrida envisions. To unfold this contour of the Derrida-Kierkegaard relationship, I begin by situating Derrida's reading of the neighbor in the larger project of his *Politics of Friendship*. Here I show how Derrida thinks that the neighbor fits the Greek model of friendship before turning to Kierkegaard's understanding of the neighbor that shows how the neighbor resists the model to which Derrida has submitted it. I conclude by continuing to follow Kierkegaard's reading in order to align its ethico-political project with Derrida's own political project centered around the notion that *tout autre est tout autre*.

### **DERRIDA'S NEIGHBOR**

Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* belongs to the triptych of *Specters of Marx*, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, and *On Hospitality*<sup>4</sup> as well as his later piece *Rogues*. In these texts, Derrida

draws on Levinas's understanding of the call of the other as the originary experience of our responsibility in order to re-envision our ethico-political and democratic way of life. Derrida foregrounds a concern for the other (*autre*)—what the Jewish and Christian traditions call a concern for the widow, the orphan, the poor, the stranger, and, as we shall see in the end, the neighbor—for our ethical and political lives. With this, Derrida politicizes 'Levinas' ethical appropriation of the powerful and revolutionary command to recognize the trace of God in the face of the neighbor and the stranger, of the friend and the enemy.'<sup>5</sup> *The Politics of Friendship* specifically re-envisions democracy through developing at least two questions: 'the question of friendship as the question of the political' and the question of the political beyond fraternity and brotherhood (PF 28).<sup>6</sup> He poses and develops these questions by engaging the various readings in the history of philosophy of the epigraph, first attributed to Aristotle by Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 'O my friends, there is no friend' (PF vii). Derrida explores its meanings by focusing on how this phrase has been repeated throughout history in the works of, to name a few, Diogenes, Augustine, Cicero, Montaigne, Friedrich Nietzsche, Maurice Blanchot, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Luc Nancy, Carl Schmidt, and, naturally, Aristotle himself. Derrida mines the depths of this history of reception (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) in order to discover and unfold two ideas: the Greek model of friendship and *another* kind of friendship.

Regarding the Greek model of friendship, Derrida aims to discover and explain the political way of life that has been proposed around Aristotle's text. Moreover, when he comes to Jesus' command, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' he groups this command with the Greek model's adherence to the familiar or the home, reciprocity, and the brother at the exclusion of the strange, the homeless, and the sister.<sup>7</sup> He finds on this model that the 'concept of politics rarely announces itself without some sort of adherence of the State to the family, without what we will

call a schematic of filiation: stock, genus or species, sex (*Geschlecht*), blood, birth, nature, nation' (PF viii). This grounds the politics of this command in a gathering of the familiar, the Greek home or hearth (oi1koj), to the exclusion of the unfamiliar and the strange. Though Derrida does note that the Christian notion of love (a0ga/ph) does not come from the more Greek notion of love (fili/a) (PF 136), the former gets conflated with the Greek model's love of the hearth and kinship that requires 'the familiarity of the near and *the neighbor*' (PF 154 emphasis mine).

Accompanying this metaphors of friendship is the notion of reciprocity. The Greek model presupposes 'the phenomenon of an appeased symmetry, equality, reciprocity between two infinite disproportions ... and singularities,' that is between two others (PF 220). Whether we have friendships of pleasure, utility, or virtue, to follow Aristotle's distinctions, a notion of reciprocity or equality understood through reciprocity prevails. Friends are chosen not for nothing or for altruistic reasons on this model. Friends are chosen because more often than not we expect something in return from a friendship. Even in parental relationships, which we hope to be altruistic, this notion of reciprocity remains because the parents hope, expect, and even demand at times that their children take care of them when the parents are too old to care for themselves. At the least, parents hope their children visit them in the nursing home. Such a hope is an expectation of reciprocity for all that they have done as the parents of their children.<sup>8</sup> Derrida associates the love of neighbor with this same reciprocity when he echoes Nietzsche's own reading of Jesus' command, which associates the love in this passage with a 'lust' for new possessions or property (PF 65).

The particular figure who *counts* as a friend in this Greek model is the brother. Such 'phallogocentrism ... qua phratrocentrism' dominates 'the great philosophical and canonical

discourses on friendship' from Plato to Hegel by explicitly tying 'the friend-brother to virtue and justice, to moral reason and political reason' (PF 277-278). Women have been excluded from the canonical history of the politics of friendship because the paradigm for love and friendship has been founded on the presuppositions of masculine rationality and strength. Friendship among or with women certainly has occurred in antiquity, but such friendships have 'not [been] credited and legitimized in the classical axiomatics.'<sup>9</sup> Insofar as the woman has a friend or is a friend, she belongs to the genus of the brother according to these axiomatics (PF 156).<sup>10</sup> Thus, beyond Derrida's first echo of Nietzsche's reading, he more directly associates this neighbor with the brother by turning, in the final chapter of his text, to another of Nietzsche's engagements with Jesus' command. In this, Derrida not only finds Nietzsche to be heralding the friendship that Derrida himself is trying to find in the history of post-Aristotelian philosophy but also fully identifies the neighbor as the brother. Derrida writes, 'One becomes a brother, in Christianity, one is worthy of the eternal father, only by loving one's enemy as one's neighbor or as oneself' (PF 285). Christianity searches for 'the brother qua neighbor,' that is, 'the neighbor, this other brother' (PF 285, 176).<sup>11</sup> Derrida's repeated turns to Nietzsche, namely to Zarathustra, through which he groups Jesus' command with the Greek model, seem to prevent Derrida from following the one to whom he claims to be most faithful. For Kierkegaard will help to show that the love of the neighbor might just herald the friendship that Derrida is also trying to trace in his text. This would mean that not only Nietzsche but also Kierkegaard would be helpful for Derrida's adumbration of this other kind of friendship.

Beyond the Greek model of friendship, he explores the history of reception of the quotation attributed to Aristotle in order to listen to another kind of friendship that places the other, the unfamiliar, or the strange at the center of its political way of life and goes beyond the

hegemony of the fraternal and brotherhood. This is another friendship or, perhaps as more aptly put, an *other* friendship because this friendship remains different from, unfamiliar with, and other to the canonical tradition of friendship. Nevertheless, he searches in and along this canonical tradition of the Greek model for fissures and cracks that allow for this different friendship to unfold. As Derrida says, 'We have attempted to show that the Graeco-Roman model, which seems to be governed by the value of reciprocity ... bears within itself, nevertheless, potentially, the power to become infinite and dissymmetrical' (PF 290). Thus, he deconstructs this history of the politics of friendship in order to open it up to an unexpected, eventful, and surprising reconfiguration of the friend and politics. For example, by exhuming the dominance of the home and the brother in this history, Derrida is not against the idea of the home, the familiar, and the brother *tout court*. He writes, 'Despite the appearances that this book has multiplied, nothing in it says anything against the brother or against fraternity' (PF 305). He is concerned though that the language of the home, the same, the familiar, the brother, etc. has become and can too easily continue to be the paradigm through which we understand love, friendship, and the political. When such an approach has been generalized, the conversation becomes too limited and closed minded because that which does not fit in the same and the familiar, that is the other, is excluded from the conversation.<sup>12</sup> In this, he even at one point seems to question whether his understanding of friendship remains a fraternity that is 'divided in its concept, a fraternity ranging infinitely beyond all literal figures of the brother, a fraternity that would no longer exclude anyone' (PF 237). Derrida is reading this history of friendship in order to open this history to a different dialogue, which can be found in the shadows, cracks, and corners of this history itself.

In the end, Derrida seeks a possible friendship that is ‘without hearth’ (PF 154) and that breaks free from the confines of the familiar, the home, reciprocity, and the brother. This friendship would be ‘aneconomic’ (PF 154) because it would not be grounded upon the symmetry of an equal give and take, of the expectation of reciprocity, or of a tit-for-tat type of mentality. Rather, this friendship would operate according to the logic of *the gift* insofar as it would be grounded upon a giving that expects nothing in return, that is a giving without reciprocity.<sup>13</sup> For example, Derrida, following Aristotle and Cicero, returns more than once to the practice of friendship to the dead as one such example of aneconomic friendship through mourning because regardless of how much we do for the dead, the dead cannot reciprocate. Such a friendship loves the dead for nothing, that is for nothing in return.<sup>14</sup>

As a gift, he finds at the core of this other friendship a hyperbolic *love*. This other love, unlike the Greek model’s love, would be ‘unilateral and dissymmetrical’ because it ‘gives without return and without recognition’ and raises or rends ‘the veil’ of the phenomenon of symmetry, equality, and reciprocity that remains the core of canonical friendship (PF 220).<sup>15</sup> Derrida names this friendship that he seeks ‘lovence’ (*aminance*).<sup>16</sup> This name pushes the concept of friendship toward the aneconomy of love because it intimates that love is becoming friendship or friendship is becoming love. Lovence calls friendship back to the gift and, ultimately, ‘back to the irreducible presence of the other’ (PF 63). *Aminance* calls us to immanence and to the eminence (*éminence*) of the other. It heralds a politics that ‘amounts to an unconditional affirmation of the singularity of the Other, whoever that other may be. This is not a politics of the conventional type, not a paradigm founded on divine right, natural law, or social contract, but one which privileges mercy above retribution.’<sup>17</sup> Lovence names a possible politics that has yet to happen, which is to come.<sup>18</sup> With this, Derrida seems to want Aristotle to be



saying to his friends: O my friends, there is no friend in the sense of love; O my friends, such a friend is yet to come, perhaps.

The possibility of this event of friendship depends on a type of seeing that is ready for the unexpected and the surprise of the stranger at the door. Such seeing cannot depend on the theoretical reasoning found in the canon of philosophy because this canon calls hyperbolic, gift-like friendship paradoxical and impossible. This other friendship ‘belongs to the experience of expectation, promise, or engagement’ whose ‘discourse is that of *prayer*’ (PF 236 emphasis mine). Seeing this friendship requires, then, ‘the eyes of faith, eyes blinded by praying and weeping for an impossible friendship to come.’<sup>19</sup> Perhaps such a friendship can become possible through Kierkegaard’s eyes of faith, which give a figuration of the neighbor that resists the Greek model and approaches, perhaps, love.

### **KIERKEGAARD’S NEIGHBOR**

Kierkegaard penned his *Works of Love* to be a textual, Socratic gadfly that would pull people out of their sedimented ways of thinking about love and the practice of love.<sup>20</sup> He wanted his text to ‘call to them, [and] turn their comfortable way of thinking topsy-turvy’ (WL 469-470).<sup>21</sup> To speak anachronistically, *Works of Love* offers a deconstruction of the practice of love by challenging people’s preconceived notions and opening up the conversation to a hyperbolic love. Though this text may be a deconstruction, Derrida would certainly not sign off on every aspect of the text.<sup>22</sup> After all, Kierkegaard does insist on a distinction between God as eternal and human beings as temporal. Yet even though he makes use of this distinction, he does allow for the eternal-temporal distinction to unravel or deconstruct itself when he maintains, for example, that love ‘connects the temporal and eternity’ (WL 6). The source of all love, as Kierkegaard argues in his first chapter, is God who is love, but this source remains hidden, secret, and even

abyssal or groundless.<sup>23</sup> Yet what is disclosed and made manifest are the fruits of love. Love *as such* is hidden, but the works or practices of love in temporal life reveal or make love manifest (WL 8). Love is made known through works of love. In this way, practices of love allow the eternal to touch the temporal. And when the eternal touches the temporal for Kierkegaard, the eternal becomes a possible future. He writes, '[W]hen the eternal is in the temporal, it is in the future ... or in possibility .... [I]n time, the eternal is the possible, the future' (WL 249). Thus, though we may find differences between Kierkegaard's distinctively Christian reading of the neighbor and Derrida's own account of the neighbor, we find a common connection among them. They each hope for a love and an ethico-political life that is possibilized from out of the future. They find this hope in a topsy-turvy *other*, a surprising event, to come that appears according to the conditions of life now to be impossible.

Kierkegaard's notion of the neighbor opens the possibility of this other politics if we follow an implicit distinction in the text between the conditions for and the *how* of love. While the conditions for love involve recognizing that each person is the neighbor regardless of any distinctiveness that people possess, that is, be they male, female, rich, poor, upper class, lower class, etc, the *how* requires loving each neighbor at the same time according to her distinctiveness.<sup>24</sup> This two-fold distinction in Kierkegaard's text frames the following pages in two readings. The first reading focuses on the nature of the neighbor that Jesus commands to love while the second reading focuses on the ethico-political nature of this command in conjunction with Derrida's vision of politics. In both readings, the distinction followed is a deconstructed one insofar as Kierkegaard admits that both sides of the distinction work with and depend on one another. As he says, 'First, [love] makes no distinction, none at all; next, which is just like the first, it infinitely distinguishes itself in loving the diverse' (WL 270).

Kierkegaard sets two conditions for love of the neighbor. The first, which is not surprising considering his relationship to Christianity, maintains that God who is love is the source of all love. The second, more interesting condition revolves around how Kierkegaard defines the neighbor. This definition entails recognizing that every person is the neighbor regardless of any worldly distinctions. Yet this distinction is much more developed than just this simple statement because the neighbor is said in many ways in this text. The neighbor is the ‘essential other’ (WL 88), the self, the ‘nearest’ (WL 21), and the one who offers hospitality to the outsider, the different, and the other. Kierkegaard discusses this polysemy of the neighbor in a way that allows each distinct meaning to speak with the others.

To begin with, the neighbor is the essential other in the sense that the neighbor is ‘what thinkers call ‘the other’’ (WL 21). This signification is used ‘to safeguard the alterity of the other, to be sure that in love we allow the other to be more than an extension of ourself.’<sup>25</sup> This figure of Christian love names a plurality because the ‘neighbor in itself is a multiplicity, since ‘the neighbor’ means ‘all people’’ (WL 21). Yet he insists that Christian love ‘has only one single object, the neighbor’ (WL 55). As singular, then, the neighbor is not a term for a crowd of people because *each* person, insists Kierkegaard, is the neighbor. He maintains that ‘everyone is the neighbor’ and ‘every other human being’ is the neighbor (WL 44, 58 cf. 89 and 142).<sup>26</sup> Thus, the neighbor marks a singularity—love *the* neighbor—yet this singularity applies to all people in the sense that each person is the neighbor. The neighbor is singular plural.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, this essential alterity is ‘the common watermark’ that is ‘common to all’ in that it names who each person is before God and in relation to one another through God (WL 88, 89). The neighborliness of the neighbor is not based upon the neighbor being ‘the beloved,’ ‘your friend,’ ‘the cultured individual with whom you have a similarity of culture,’ or ‘someone

who is more distinguished' or 'lowly than you' (WL 60). The neighborliness of the neighbor is based not on any person's similarity or dissimilarity with someone. Rather, neighborliness is based solely on the equality that everyone has before God, the source of love. Every person is the neighbor.

On account of this being the name common to all people, the neighbor also signifies one's own self. Kierkegaard writes, 'The concept 'neighbor' is actually the redoubling of yourself' (WL 21). With this, Kierkegaard takes the 'as' in the command—'Love your neighbor *as* yourself'—to mean not simply that this command calls people to love others in the way that they love themselves. In fact, Kierkegaard maintains that this command speaks directly against grounding love of the other in self-love. Jesus' 'commandment, as with a pick, wrenches open the lock of self-love and wrests it away from a person' (WL 17).<sup>28</sup> For him, the love that holds two friends together or two lovers together in erotic love is based upon self-love. Jesus' call to love the neighbor as oneself is a love that is grounded in self-*denial* rather than self-love. Accordingly, Kierkegaard reads the 'as' of the command in a hermeneutical sense to mean that the self in the yourself is the neighbor too. The *ego* or the 'I' on which the majority of philosophical systems have been built is marked by the alterity of being a neighbor to itself. In an important sense for Kierkegaard, then, I am not my own. I am a neighbor unto myself.<sup>29</sup> Jesus calls out to love the neighbor who is also the self. In a topsy-turvy way, then, learning to love the neighbor becomes the proper way to love the self. He writes, 'To love yourself in the right way and to love the neighbor correspond perfectly to one another; fundamentally they are one and the same thing' (WL 22). When we learn to love the neighbor, that is to say when we learn to love each person simply because he or she is the neighbor, then and only then are we properly loving

the self. Thus, the command comes to mean, as well, that the neighbor is to be loved *at the same time as* the self.

This neighbor that is each person, including the self, is also the nearest because of an etymological link between the neighbor and the nearest. He writes, ‘Who, then, is one’s neighbor [*Næste*]? The word is obviously derived from ‘nearest [*Nærmeste*];’ thus the neighbor is the person who is nearer to you than anyone else’ (WL 21). Yet caution must be exercised with this etymological link,<sup>30</sup> especially considering that the neighbor is as near to the self as ‘you are to yourself’ (WL 21). After all, one of the major trajectories of Kierkegaard’s corpus is about the *task* of becoming a self before God. As a task, and not an accomplishment, this becoming a self is one that requires an entire lifetime because it is interminable. Becoming a self is a task because even though the self is most near to us, it remains far from us because we do not know ourselves. And coming to know the self in relation to God and the other is ongoing and never ending.

Beyond this broader, existential reason for exercising caution with this notion of nearness, we must recall that Kierkegaard uses this term *not* in kinship or familial terms but in spatial terms. The nearness of the neighbor does not fit the metaphors of the familial and the familiar because the neighbor, the object of love, is contrasted with the beautiful. The beautiful is ‘the immediate and direct object of immediate love, the choice of inclination and of passion’ (WL 373). The beautiful is a figure of the familiar who we expect to love, which Kierkegaard identifies as the ‘the beloved and the friend’ (WL 373). The beautiful belongs to the familiar, the home, and the expected. But the neighbor is ‘the un-lovable object’ (WL 373). As unlovable, the neighbor is ‘the ugly ... whom one shall love’ (WL 373). As the ugly, unlovable object, the neighbor is not just the familiar who we would choose to love but the stranger, or the one who is markedly different, who we would not expect to have to love. This does not mean that the friend

and the beloved are not also the neighbor. To the contrary, the command to love for Kierkegaard is a command to love those both for whom we have an inclination and desire to love as well as those for whom we do not have this inclination because in both cases our preference to love one over the other is bracketed.<sup>31</sup> Kierkegaard uses the aesthetics of the ugly not to limit the scope of the neighbor but to highlight how we should understand the nearness of the neighbor. This nearness of the neighbor is a paradoxical, topsy-turvy nearness that should more readily be associated with that which is far from us because this nearness describes the unfamiliar. Thus, Kierkegaard may be speaking ironically when he says that the neighbor is the nearest in the sense of the self. Or, perhaps, even that which is nearest still remains far away so that we have to *work* at loving the neighbor. This would make Kierkegaard's text about the *work(s)* of love.

Furthermore, this nearness is not what we would expect because of the final signification of the neighbor. The neighbor is the one who offers hospitality to the outsider, the different, and the other, that is, the neighbor in the previous senses. Here the neighbor is not just a noun but also a verb: *being* a neighbor. This is the infinitized neighbor. Kierkegaard writes, 'The one to whom I have a duty is my neighbor, and when I fulfill my duty I show that I am a neighbor' (WL 22). He draws on the parable of 'the merciful Samaritan' (WL 22) in the Gospel of Luke as the exemplar of this meaning of the neighbor. In this parable, a person, traveling along the road to Jerusalem, gets robbed and beaten close to death. Walking along the path at different intervals are a Levite, a priest, and a Samaritan. The Levite and priest belong to the hearth (oi1koj) of the religious institutions of the time. They know their duty is to help the person who has been beaten, but they pass by without helping. The Samaritan, due to prejudice during the time, is the cultural and societal outsider to the hearth of the religious powers that be. Nevertheless, the Samaritan shows mercy by taking the person to an inn, caring for the person's wounds, and

footing the bill for the stay. This outsider shows that neighbor means *being* a neighbor by showing mercy to the unlovable, ugly object: the beaten and nearly dead drifter. Thus, being a neighbor is about offering hospitality to the stranger, that is, to the neighbor. In this, Kierkegaard shows that who Jesus calls to be loved is identified not by the nearness of their social or cultural status, not by the appearance of their face, or the condition of their body but solely through their essential alterity as *neighbor*. Whether or not the neighbor is also the friend or the beloved, Jesus' command is 'to play Stranger with the old and familiar' (WL 210). Being a neighbor involves recognizing that every other is the neighbor, and on this basis *alone* loving the neighbor. In this, Kierkegaard's text begins to shift into the second important distinction that we are following: *how* we are to love the neighbor.

The conditions for love, *why* we are to love, come from God and the neighbor. In this, all particularities, distinctions, or, what Kierkegaard calls dissimilarities, are bracketed or put out of play. These conditions do not condition the command to love. Yet, for Kierkegaard, the command to love every one, each and everyone, as the neighbor does not 'take away the dissimilarity' that people have from one another (WL 70). Such 'dissimilarity of human life' must continue 'as long as temporality continues' because dissimilarity 'is like an enormous net in which temporality is held' (WL 70, 71). Though Jesus calls for everyone to be loved equally as the neighbor, *how* precisely each is loved as the neighbor requires us to 'love the people we see' (WL 159). This aspect of the command to love assures the immanence of this love. Kierkegaard is concerned that the command to love will remain too transcendent in loving God alone and, thereby, miss the world of actuality altogether. He writes, 'Christian love is not supposed to soar up to heaven, since it comes from heaven and with heaven' (WL 173). The command to love the neighbor is a command to love immanence, which Kierkegaard labels 'the people we see.' This

command of immanence insists to ‘become sober, gain actuality and truth by finding and remaining in the world of actuality as the task assigned to one’ (WL 161). And love remains immanent by loving the neighbor as she is and not as we may want her to be. We must not try to imagine her differently, and, then, love this image of her. When we love the neighbor *that we see* ‘it is important that one does not substitute an imaginary idea of how we think or could wish that this person should be’ (WL 164). The neighbor must be loved immanently with his or her perfections, imperfections, strengths, and weaknesses, that is, her dissimilarities. Kierkegaard says, ‘The truly loving one ... loves every human being *according to his* distinctiveness’ (WL 269 emphasis mine). And to love the distinctiveness of someone is ‘an appreciation and cultivation of their alterity.’<sup>32</sup> Thus, a person must be loved *because* she is the neighbor, but in order to immanently love her, she must be loved according to her own particularities, distinctive qualities, or dissimilarities. Kierkegaard uses the example of a husband’s love for his wife as an example for how the distinctiveness of the spousal relation is to be used when someone loves the neighbor-wife. He writes, ‘Your wife must first and foremost be to you the neighbor; that she is your wife is then a more precise specification of your particular relationship to each other’ (WL 141). The distinctiveness of being-a-wife is *not* the cause for the husband to love the wife. The wife *as neighbor* is this cause. Rather, being-a-wife is a specification as to how the wife is to be loved *as* this particular neighbor. The same idea would extend to other dissimilarities for Kierkegaard. In this way, the love of the neighbor ‘makes no distinction,’ because each person is the neighbor, while this love ‘infinitely distinguishes itself in loving the diverse’ (WL 270).

This other understanding of the neighbor and the love that is commanded toward her may be cut just to fit Derrida’s possible politics. After all, Kierkegaard has told us, ‘The neighbor is the absolutely true expression for human equality. If everyone in truth loved the neighbor as



himself, then perfect human equality would be achieved unconditionally.’<sup>33</sup> In order to unfold the ethico-political register of Kierkegaard’s neighbor we must reread the two-fold distinction above in conjunction with Derrida’s text.

### **EVERY NEIGHBOR IS *TOUT AUTRE* AND A POSSIBLE POLITICS**

We have seen that Derrida has traced the history of the friend and its relation to the fraternal in order to re-envision democracy or to provide hope for what he calls a democracy to come. He writes, in conclusion of his text:

[I]s it possible to think and to implement democracy ... while uprooting from it all these figures of friendship (philosophical and religious) which prescribe fraternity: the family and the androcentric ethnic group? Is it possible, in assuming a certain faithful memory of democratic reason ... to open out to the future, or rather, to the ‘come,’ of a certain democracy? For democracy remains to come (PF 306).

The mark of this democracy to come will be an equality beyond fraternity, ‘a friendship beyond the fraternalism of the canonical concept of friendship ... a friendship that can only be measured by the measurelessness of its gift.’<sup>34</sup> In rereading the core distinction in *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard’s neighbor becomes a possible instantiation of this democracy. For this neighbor marks an equality beyond friendship, a concept beyond the canonical concept of friendship, and the measurelessness of a gift.

This possible politics arises first from the nature of every neighbor as every other. For Kierkegaard, the neighbor is every other or every other is the neighbor. When talking about who the neighbor is Kierkegaard insists that ‘no one can be excluded’ (WL 61). Thus, each person regardless of their gender is the neighbor. All people are equal before God and before one another when talking about the source of love because each one is first and foremost the

neighbor. For this reason, if Kierkegaard were to continue the history of reception of the text attributed to Aristotle, if only through paraphrase, his would read, O my neighbors, there is no neighbor. No neighbor in the singular exists because everyone is the neighbor or because every other is equally the neighbor. The neighbor is singular plural.

This notion of equality built into the idea that every other is the neighbor may *seem* problematic because for Derrida a notion of equality has lurking within it the canonical metaphors of the friend: the near, the familiar, kinship, etc. In contrast, Derrida's notion of the friend 'invokes the dissymmetry of friendship and conceives the friend on the model of the *other* rather than of equality, intimacy, and sameness.'<sup>35</sup> Yet this analysis misses the other notion of equality that is operative within Derrida's text, and overall corpus, that avoids the canonical metaphors of the friend. Moreover, Kierkegaard's insistence that every other is equally the neighbor follows this non-canonical equality. Derrida develops this other equality with his use of the French phrase *tout autre est tout autre*. In his famous, important, and closely studied reading of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, Derrida uses this phrase to maintain that every other is wholly other in the sense that every iteration of the other is as wholly other as Abraham's God who commands Abraham to sacrifice his son without disclosing the reasons as to why. On Derrida's reading of Kierkegaard's text, God is transcendent or wholly other because 'God is himself absent, hidden and silent, separate, secret, at the moment he has to be obeyed. God doesn't give his reasons ... he doesn't have to give his reasons or share anything with us.'<sup>36</sup> Abraham does not know, initially, that his ordeal is a test because God does not, and does not have to, tell him. Such transcendence is structurally the same, according to Derrida, for any other be it human, non-human animal, linguistic, or geographical.<sup>37</sup> Thus, every other is as wholly other as God. His analysis of alterity is built upon, then, another notion of equality that differs

from the canonical equality that he wants to avoid. For Derrida insists with this phrase that every other has an equal standing insofar as each is equally singular. This is a notion of alterity ‘where every other is *equally* altogether other’ (PF 22 emphasis his). Such alterity that is ‘without hierarchical difference ... would free a certain interpretation of equality by removing it from the phallogocentric schema of fraternity’ (PF 232). Kierkegaard’s notion of the neighbor is precisely this non-hierarchical alterity.

For when Kierkegaard talks about the conditions for loving the neighbor, he likens these conditions to blindness insofar as the distinctiveness of a person is not to condition *why* one loves. The why for love is the equality that each person has as neighbor. For example, he writes:

The distinction *friend* or *enemy* is a difference in the object of love, but love for the neighbor has the object that is without difference. The neighbor is the utterly unrecognizable dissimilarity between persons or is the eternal equality before God .... Shut your eyes and remember the commandment that you shall love; then you love—your enemy, no, then you love the neighbor, because you do not see that he is your enemy ... you do not see the dissimilarity of earthly life (WL 67-68).

Much like the distinction friend/enemy becomes convertible in love (PF 72), Kierkegaard’s love of neighbor brackets hierarchical distinctions because the neighbor is every other. Love of neighbor makes us most blind when considering the conditions for love because it insists that earthly dissimilarities are like ‘an actor’s costume’ (WL 87). This does not mean for Kierkegaard that love of neighbor abolishes the distinctiveness of people. Rather, this love does not want such distinctiveness to be the cause for loving everyone equally. Thus, he says that this love of neighbor ‘wants the dissimilarity to hang loosely on the individual, as loosely as the cape the king casts off in order to show who he is, as loosely as the ragged costume in which a

supernatural being has disguised himself' (WL 88). Therefore, love of neighbor is unmotivated by the fraternal and phallogocentrism because such distinctiveness is held loosely so that it does not condition the *why* for love. Each neighbor is as equally the neighbor whether male or female.<sup>38</sup> Love of neighbor, then, resists not only the fraternal but also the canonical concept of friendship and begins to resemble Derrida's hope for *lovence*.

Kierkegaard's notion of the neighbor begins to parallel Derridean *lovence* even further because *how* the neighbor is loved, as the one who is nearest and in her distinctiveness, is a hyperbolic gift. When Derrida develops his notion of *tout autre est tout autre*, he problematizes our everyday understanding of responsibility. His point is that we never get a free pass or we are never absolved from our absolute responsibility to any other. If every other is wholly other, then my responsibility to any other is absolutely binding. This aporia, which is constitutive of responsibility, is meant to be unsettling and unresolvable according to Derrida. For his *Politics of Friendship*, this means that every other must be loved with *lovence*. This is a hyperbolic becoming-love of friendship toward every other. Kierkegaard's love of the neighbor has these same hyperbolic leanings. He says that if every other is the neighbor, if the neighbor is singular plural, then Jesus' command is to love the whole human race equally, to love 'unconditionally all,' and 'to exist essentially equally for every human being' (WL 49, 85).<sup>39</sup>

Kierkegaard's hyperbolic love resembles Derrida's logic of the gift, which leads Derridean *lovence*, when Kierkegaard describes it as being 'limitless' (WL 167) through the example of mercifulness. The parables of the merciful Samaritan and the widow who gives all that she has, which is only two pennies, to the temple follow the logic of the gift around the themes of loving without reward, loving without economy, and loving with a love that teeters on impossibility. The merciful Samaritan saves the person on the verge of death and pays the bill at

the inn *for nothing*. The Samaritan does not get a thank you and, insofar as the biblical text indicates, gives no indication of wanting a reward or any recognition. The love that the Samaritan shows for the neighbor is self-sacrificial and ‘without the requirement of any reward’ (WL 130). As such, the hyperbolic love that is the love of neighbor is ‘a *thankless* task’ (WL 78 emphasis mine). Loving the neighbor requires no expectation of recognition or a thank you, which is to say any reward. To love without reward is a love that also operates without economy. In the usual economy of gift giving, one person gives something to another person, and in this exchange, the giver may expect something in return—a thank you note even—but more often than not the recipient feels bound by some expectation to reciprocate the gift with his or her own gift. Love of neighbor resists this economy because the one who loves does so without expectation of anything in return and loves in such a way that the neighbor does not feel bound to reciprocate. For this love gives in such a way that what it gives already ‘looks as if it were the recipient’s property’ (WL 274).<sup>40</sup> Kierkegaard writes, ‘[T]he truly loving person loves all and without demanding reciprocal love’ (WL 237; cf. 241).<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the love of neighbor does not calculate how much to love and does not keep an accounting of how much love has been given. The one who loves remains in an infinite debt because every other is the neighbor each of whom must be loved limitlessly (WL 178, 181). The infinitude of such debt to love equally every neighbor who is every other is not meant to cause despair and paralysis. Kierkegaard, like Derrida, highlights an interminable fact about our ethico-political lives: regardless of what we do, our debt to love the other never lessens. Though this infinite debt is never *completely* fulfilled, Kierkegaard insists that we must love the people we see, and we can *perfectly* love each according to his or her distinctiveness.<sup>42</sup> Though the debt is infinite, the first neighbor, ‘the first the best’ (WL 68), the neighbor at hand, or the neighbor nearest us is the place to begin.

Furthermore, in addition to loving without reward and loving without economy, the love of neighbor stands on the cusp of madness and impossibility. For a love that gives without expectation of return, says Kierkegaard, is like ‘sticking money in a person’s pocket and calling it stealing’ (WL 241). To the rest of the world, this love of the neighbor *looks like* letting someone steal something right out of your hand or someone simply giving money away and ‘not in the slightest way wish[ing] or demand[ing] to get it back again’ (WL 242). The self-sacrifice of the widow, who gives all that she has to the temple even though this amount does not amount to much, is to the rest of the world ‘madness’ (WL 131). When Jesus sees this widow give all that she has in her two pennies, he responds, ‘This poor widow has put in more than all of them [i.e. the rich people]’ (Luke 21:3). To which Kierkegaard responds, ‘But what madness ... that the poor person gave the most .... What a wonderful arithmetic problem, or rather what a wonderful kind of arithmetic’ (WL 318). Such is the mad arithmetic that accompanies the love of neighbor. When a person operates according to this hyperbolic logic of the gift in loving the neighbor, each one equally, she easily ‘becomes like someone who does not fit into earthly life’ (WL 73; cf. 81 and 86). Such love to every other without reward, expectation of recognition, and economy seems to most people as if it were impossible. This possible love for which Kierkegaard hopes seems impossible to the rest of the world. Such love is, in the end, a gift of love.

In conclusion, Derrida has intimated that, perhaps, the Christian notion of neighbor goes beyond the Greek model and approaches the friendship for which he hopes. He writes:

And the neighbor, this other brother ... is he not something else again than the Greek friend, than the near one of *oikeiôtēs* ...? Would this neighbor be something altogether

different from my relatives, something else again in being altogether other, the trace or the son or the brother of an altogether other (PF 176)?

Yet he does not develop this line of questioning. Moreover, we can see in his questions that he still associates the neighbor with the Greek model. He does not quite associate the neighbor with the other, with a figuration that resists the hegemony of the masculine hearth, because in the final lines of his question he suggests that, perhaps, the neighbor is at best a *trace* or indication of the other who is to come and who heralds a different friendship, an *other* friendship. As a trace, though, the neighbor would not be this other. Yet following Kierkegaard's understanding of the neighbor, the neighbor herself heralds this friendship to come and its accompanying politics of the neighbor. For in following Kierkegaard's distinction between the conditions of love and the how of love, we have seen that the neighbor signifies the other or the stranger who is not to be loved on account of his or her gender but solely because he or she is the other before God. Such a neighbor does not fall prey to the Greek model of friendship ruled by the hegemony of the brother, the same, the familiar, and kinship. Moreover, this notion of the neighbor is singular plural so that, like the other in Derrida's own philosophy, every neighbor is the other or every other is the neighbor. Consequently, the ethics and politics following on the heels of Kierkegaard's reading of the command to love resemble the ethics and politics of Derrida's wider project. For if every other is the neighbor, then the command demands a hyperbolic, gift-like love where every other has equal standing and is to be loved equally regardless of individual differences. Therefore, in Derrida's development of the love and friendship that would inhabit a democracy to come, we hear echoes of the Kierkegaardian neighbor set to solicit our understanding of love and its demands or, more simply, set to turn it, topsy-turvy, on its head.

Understood through Kierkegaard's eyes of faith the neighbor might just be, perhaps, the other inaugurating this other democracy.<sup>43</sup>

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### **AUTHOR INFORMATION**

Dr. Harris B. Bechtol is currently a lecturer in the Psychology and Philosophy department at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. His work focuses on the history of philosophy in general but especially on continental philosophy since Kant as it has developed in phenomenology, hermeneutics, existentialism, and continental philosophy of religion.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the many articles written on this topic, see, especially, Mark C. Taylor, *nOts* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), Mark Dooley, *The Politics of Exodus: Kierkegaard's Ethics of Responsibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), Jonathan Llewelyn, *Margins of Religion: Between Kierkegaard and Derrida* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009) and, of course, much of John D. Caputo's work but especially his *Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993) and seminal *Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, trans. Giacomo Donis (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2001), 40.

<sup>3</sup> Avron Kulak's comparison of Kierkegaard's and Derrida's wider philosophical projects makes a similar argument in wanting the upshot of Derrida's 'every other is wholly other' to be the same for Kierkegaard's notion of the neighbor. However, Kulak missteps in making this move by forgetting the distinction in Kierkegaard's work between God and the human. Kulak maintains that the alterity of God, which Kierkegaard calls the infinite qualitative difference, becomes 'a concept . . . [that] characterizes . . . our relationship to each other as neighbor' ('Kierkegaard, Derrida, and the Context of Context(s),' *Philosophy and Theology: Marquette University Quarterly* 17.1-2 (2005): 148). While an interesting interpretation of Kierkegaard, this interpretation moves too hastily in making connections throughout Kierkegaard's pseudonymous corpus and does not cite where Kierkegaard makes this connection between God's alterity and the alterity of the other. Kierkegaard makes a couple of comments in *Works of Love* that point in the direction of Kulak's interpretation. For example, Kierkegaard says that Christianity turns 'every one of your relationships to other people into a God-relationship' (WL 376). And he explains this further when he says that in every relationship, be that with God directly or with another person, this person 'relates himself to God' (WL 381). Yet these passages only point in the direction of Kulak's interpretation because Kierkegaard maintains throughout *Works of Love* his distinction between God who is eternal and the human who is temporal. My argument in what follows remains faithful to Kierkegaard's overall project while also more persuasively drawing the connections between Kierkegaard's neighbor and Derrida's other.

<sup>4</sup> Some of the upcoming translations of Derrida's lecture courses that cover the theme of hostility and hospitality could also be included with the essays in *On Hospitality*.

<sup>5</sup> John D. Caputo, 'Who is Derrida's Zarathustra? Of Fraternity, Friendship, and a Democracy to Come,' *Research in Phenomenology* 29.1 (1999): 197. Following this line of thinking, I disagree with Dooley's understanding of the relationship among Levinas's and Derrida's works. I disagree with his main argument that Levinas and Derrida are far apart from one another on their notions of hospitality based on their different readings of Kierkegaard, in particular *Fear and Trembling* (Mark Dooley, 'The Politics of Exodus: Derrida, Kierkegaard, and Levinas on 'Hospitality.'" in *The Works of Love: International Kierkegaard Commentary*, 167-192 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999)). While their readings of *Fear and Trembling* differ, Derrida, in contrast to Dooley's interpretation, develops insights from Levinas beyond Levinas' own focus. In particular, Derrida is much more interested in a politics while Levinas is mainly interested in explaining our ethical responsibility to the other as originary for our ethical, which is to say for him our ontological, life.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 1997). Citations appear parenthetically as PF followed by the page number. Derrida specifically states, 'Let us ask ourselves what would then be the politics of such a 'beyond the principle of fraternity'' (PF viii).

<sup>7</sup> Another important theme for Derrida's text is the theme of counting our friends. Though the theme of counting will arise in relation to Kierkegaard's reading of Jesus' command in the following two sections of this paper, Derrida does not discuss the relationship of Jesus' command to this theme of counting. For this reason, I leave out Derrida's discussion of this theme.

<sup>8</sup> For these reasons, Tanya Loughhead is incorrect to point to parental love as 'not need[ing] reciprocity' in an effort to offer a friendship or kinship that moves beyond the canonical notion of friendship that Derrida is deconstructing in his text ('Shall I love you as My Brother? Deconstruction, Friendship, and Our Shared Future,' *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 82 (2009): 194).

<sup>9</sup> Caputo, 'Who is Derrida's Zarathustra?' 189.

<sup>10</sup> The current political climate in the United States, especially, is a reminder today that we still fail to legitimize such relationships because we have yet to overcome this hegemony of the brother and exclusion of the

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sister in our own concept of the political. When women are labeled as excessively emotional or easily overcome by their emotions while men are commended and admired for their lack of emotion, we find ourselves part and parcel of the ongoing history of repetition of this Greek model of the politics of friendship.

<sup>11</sup> Derrida makes this same connection in *Rogues* when he explores ‘a series of values most often associated with that of the brother: the values of the neighbor (in the *Christian* sense), the fellow, the compeer, or the like’ (*Rogues*, trans. Pascal-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 60 emphasis mine).

<sup>12</sup> Caputo creatively explains, ‘Derrida questions the tradition of the ‘(br)other,’ that he would deconstruct the brother on behalf of the other, break open the tradition of the brother in order to affirm the other’ (‘Who is Derrida’s Zarathustra?’ 191).

<sup>13</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992) for an extended discussion of this logic.

<sup>14</sup> Derrida could have also turned to Kierkegaard on this topic because Kierkegaard devotes the entirety of chapter nine in part two of *Works of Love* to the aneconomy of loving the dead. This reference to friendship of the dead is emblematic of what Derrida, and Kierkegaard, are both trying to develop insofar as this friendship is a limit case or test case of friendship that allows us to see how friendship and love is to be practiced with the living. This approach overcomes the criticism that friendship to or love of the dead is understood as the *only true* form of friendship and love, which would entail that friendship or love is not toward the living. M. Jamie Ferreira defends Kierkegaard against such a critique along these same lines (*Loves Grateful Striving: A Commentary on Kierkegaard’s Works of Love* (New York: Oxford, 2001), 209-227).

<sup>15</sup> For an interesting tracing of this notion of love along Derrida’s other kind of friendship in *Politics of Friendship* see David Wills, ‘Full Dorsal: Derrida’s Politics of Friendship’ *Postmodern Culture* 15.3 (2005). Available online at <http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.shsu.edu/article/186565>. Wills maintains that the relation of this other love with friendship must be extended beyond human friendship to include not only friendship with animals but also with the inanimate.

<sup>16</sup> Wills proposes ‘lovingness’ as an alternative translation of *aminance* (‘Full Dorsal’).

<sup>17</sup> This is Dooley’s succinct account of what he calls the politics of exodus, but it also captures nicely what Derrida means by *lovence* (Dooley, ‘The Politics of Exodus,’ 167). In Dooley’s major text on this politics, he argues that both Kierkegaard and Derrida develop a politics ‘of the émigré—a politics, that is, of one who places the needs of the singular other over those of the universal, of the one who takes up the cause of the outcast and the marginalized, the victims of injustice, the lepers and the lame, as a means of destabilizing the establishment’ (*The Politics of Exodus*, xxi).

<sup>18</sup> A question arises in Derrida’s text regarding the possibility of this politics. For he says at one point that this politics would be like the coming of an unforeseeable event that would resist the current conditions of possibility but would bring with it its own conditions of possibility (PF 18). An event possibilizes itself, then, or makes itself possible over and against our own expectations. Nevertheless, he ends his text maintaining that ‘even when there is democracy, it never exists, it is never present, it remains the theme of a non-presentable concept’ (PF 306). So we may ask Derrida’s text: Well, which is it? Will this democracy come unexpectedly according to its own conditions and not our own? Or will this democracy be almost a Kantian regulative ideal that is to keep our own democracies from becoming sedimented and closed to the other? Or, somehow, both? His text does not provide a definite answer to these questions.

<sup>19</sup> Caputo, ‘Who is Derrida’s Zarathustra?’ 190.

<sup>20</sup> For an interesting and highly original appropriation of Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love* for political life in the twenty-first century see Kyle David Bennett, *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. and ed. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). Citations appear parenthetically as WL followed by the page number.

<sup>22</sup> One aspects of Kierkegaard’s larger ethico-political vision in his signed authorship that Derrida would likely take issue with concerns the debate on the other-worldliness and this-worldliness of this vision. While I am charting the this-worldliness aspect of Kierkegaard’s work in conjunction with Derrida’s own work, the larger debate on this has been thoroughly covered in the literature on Kierkegaard. Ferreira argues that *Works of Love* argues for a concrete ethics that provides the basis for programs of social and ethical reform (‘Other-Worldliness in Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love*,’ *Philosophical Investigations* 22.1 (1999): 65-79 and *Love’s Grateful Striving*, esp.

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53-64). Sylvia Walsh has responded by saying that while *Works of Love* does provide the *basis* for such programs, it falls short of delineating any specific program of reform. She seems to favor an approach to Kierkegaard's ethics that does not ignore the concrete, material needs of the other but focuses mostly on the spiritual formation of the believer (Sylvia Walsh, 'Other-Worldliness in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*: A Response,' *Philosophical Investigations* 22.1 (1999): 80-85). Thomas Joseph Millay has recently provided a *via media* through focusing on the Hegelian structure between the *Moralität* of *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* and the *Sittlichkeit* of *Works of Love*. Yet while Millay maintains that Kierkegaard's focus is both on the other-worldliness of loving God and the this-worldliness of loving the neighbor, he ultimately sees Kierkegaard's focus being the more other-worldliness *Moralität* of loving God (Thomas Joseph Millay, 'Concrete and Otherworldly: Reading Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* Alongside Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*,' *Modern Theology* 34.1 (2018): 23-41, esp. 35-38). After all, points out Millay, to love the other for Kierkegaard 'is to assist them in loving God' (Ibid, 37; he is commenting on WL 107). This idea of an otherworldliness in Kierkegaard's ethics would not sit well with Derrida because for him, as with Levinas, the other is our only access to the divine, if there is any.

<sup>23</sup> Kierkegaard writes, '[T]he mysterious origin of love in God's love prevents you from seeing its ground' (WL 10). He even calls love 'a chasmic abyss' (WL 15).

<sup>24</sup> In making this two-fold distinction in my reading of Kierkegaard, I am highlighting what Ferreira argues for differently in 'Other-Worldliness.' I agree with Ferreira when she writes, 'Kierkegaard's dismissals of the relevance of temporal distinctions do not support a charge of acosmic other-worldliness because they do not in themselves mitigate the obligation of those with privilege to be loving or their responsibility for alleviating the lot of others less fortunate. His recommendation to ignore distinctions does not preclude a basis for programs of socio-economic change' (Ibid, 75; cf. *Love's Grateful Striving*, 57). Furthermore, Ferreira draws attention to this distinction in her grounding breaking *Love's Grateful Striving* when she distinguishes between Kierkegaard's focus on our relationship 'to other persons' and our relationship 'with other persons' (4). The former pays no attention to the distinctiveness of each person while the latter includes the qualities that characterize a concrete relationship.

<sup>25</sup> Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> As we know from Derrida's other works on the animal, such as *The Animal Therefore That I Am* and his final seminar, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida would take issue with limiting this name for the other to just the human animal.

<sup>27</sup> I am drawing from Jean-Luc Nancy's understanding of 'being singular plural' in his eponymous text *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Consequently, Dooley's insistence that love of neighbor for Kierkegaard, and Derrida, is grounded upon love of self is surprising. He writes, 'While both [Derrida and Kierkegaard] are committed to the belief that love of the Other is predicated upon love of the self, they are no less committed to ensuring that such love be as open and as welcoming as is possible .... Self-love, on this telling, is a precondition for love of the Other' ('The Politics of Exodus,' 187).

<sup>29</sup> This echoes Augustine's own declaration, 'I am a question [*quaestio*] unto myself' (Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 208 translation modified).

<sup>30</sup> English too has this etymological link between the neighbor and nearness. The Hong translators note that the English word for neighbor comes from 'the Old English *neahgebur* (nigh-dweller)' (WL 500n29).

<sup>31</sup> cf. Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 63.

<sup>32</sup> Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 153.

<sup>33</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View*, trans. and ed. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 111.

<sup>34</sup> Caputo, 'Who is Derrida's Zarathustra?' 186.

<sup>35</sup> Caputo, 'Who is Derrida's Zarathustra?' 192.

<sup>36</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Gift of Death*, Second Edition, trans. David Wills (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2008), 58.

<sup>37</sup> For a full account of this structural similarity between God's alterity and every other's alterity in the *Gift of Death* see my 'Abrahamic Figurations of Responsibility: Religion Without Religion in Derrida and Marion,' *Phainomena: Journal of Phenomenology and Hermeneutics* 100-101 (2017): 135-154.

<sup>38</sup> While Kierkegaard is making the strong claim *against* excluding people from the love of neighbor based on their gender, this is not to deny that the *institution* of religion, Christianity in particular, or Christendom in

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Kierkegaard's parlance, makes exclusions precisely based on gender. This *institution* has failed and continues to fail to enact this command from Jesus with its non-exclusionary scope. What Kierkegaard, and Derrida, are *hoping* for in their approaches to love is a practice that more often than not is practiced rightly. Thus, Derrida calls his democracy a democracy *to come*. Yet this is not to suggest that this practice of love cannot be rightly practiced. They are both pushing back against the phallogocentric practice of love in order to keep the conversation and practice of love open in hopes that a non-exclusionary practice will become possible. To use Caputo's terms in his work on continental philosophy of religion, Kierkegaard and Derrida's hope belongs to a radical theology that insists within the confessional theology of Christianity (*The Insistence of God: A Theology of Perhaps* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 59-86).

<sup>39</sup> Ferreira comments, 'The commandment is to be fulfilled by all without exception in relation to all without exception' ('Other-Wordliness,' 68).

<sup>40</sup> This is not to say that a thank you or recognition would necessarily nullify the gift of love for Kierkegaard. On this point, Ferreira suggests that Kierkegaard and Derrida differ in degree on their notions of the gift. While Derrida's writing on the gift suggests that any form of recognition for a gift nullifies the gift, Kierkegaard seems more open to allowing some forms of recognition. Kierkegaard's concern in giving a gift of love to the neighbor is two-fold. First, he wants to assure that love is given in such a way that the person does not feel *indebted* to reciprocate (Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 162). Second, he wants to assure that the motivation to give does not come from a desire for receiving something back from the neighbor. This asymmetry that Kierkegaard advocates for guarantees 'the unconditionedness of our response to the neighbor' and 'the fact that no one is excluded' from this love (Ibid, 215). Furthermore, both concerns assure that 'responsibility [for the neighbor], rather than reciprocity, is the focus of our attention' (Ibid, 216). Ferreira maintains that the kinds of reciprocity excluded by Kierkegaard include 'forms of bartering, tit-for-tat repayment, economic exchange, compelled response, and self-serving response' (Ibid, 226-227). We may wonder, then, what kinds of reciprocity work for Kierkegaard. Ferreira calls them 'loving response[s]' (Ibid, 225). Yet what exactly such a response would be is not entirely clear. Presumably, a loving response would be motivated by love for the neighbor alone, in accord with the distinctiveness of the person, and in accord with Kierkegaard's two concerns just outlined. If so, however, Kierkegaard's notion of giving comes much closer to Derrida's own notion of the gift.

<sup>41</sup> Kierkegaard anticipates the following objection: perhaps, the one who loves the neighbor loves solely because he or she gets something for the self out of doing so. Kierkegaard responds that in love of neighbor, 'as a rule ... what I give the other receives, not that I myself receive what I give to another' (WL 282). What is given out of love for the neighbor is not received in turn by this one who is *being* a neighbor to the other.

<sup>42</sup> cf. Ferreira, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 125-127. Ferreira draws on Kant and Levinas to say that the command to love the neighbor is *perfectly* fulfillable when we love a particular neighbor rightly, but this particular fulfillment does not mark the *complete* fulfillment of the duty to love the neighbor in general because the latter is infinite. In maintaining this difference between perfectly fulfillable and completely fulfillable duties, Ferreira maintains that Kierkegaard's ethico-political life is livable.

<sup>43</sup> I would like to thank the help of my colleagues David Wright and West Gurley in the philosophy department at Sam Houston State University for reading an earlier draft of this paper and helping me to strengthen my argument throughout it. I also thank two anonymous reviewers for reading this paper carefully and offering helpful feedback.