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RECIPROCITY AND POWER IN PHILOSOPHIES OF DIALOGUE

The Burning of a Buddhist Temple in Finland

Introduction

In the dark hours of the night of 11 September 2010, in Turku, Finland, the Vietnamese Buddhist temple, which was still under construction, was vandalised. A fire was set outside the building, and the flames quickly spread along the walls to the ceiling. The fire department managed to put out the fire before it got out of hand, but the damage was extensive and the authorities soon established that the fire had been set on purpose.

It was not the first time that the Lotus Hearts Temple in Turku had been subjected to vandalism. Only a week earlier, a temporary altar had been destroyed, and swastikas had been sprayed on signposts in the nearby area. In an interview with a local newspaper the following day, a member of the Buddhist community expressed feelings of sorrow and distress. At first, he explained, we thought this was mischief carried out by local youths. But the symbols, the date chosen for the attack, the targeted assault on the altar, and the can filled with urine found outside the building all pointed to a hate crime and the intention of desecrating the temple (*Turun Sanomat* 12/9/2010).

The aggression directed at the Buddhist community in Turku was extraordinary and received abundant media attention all over the country, but the chain of events that unfolded *after* the attack was equally remarkable. Before politicians, researchers, or representatives of the Lutheran state church had time to respond in protest, a solidarity group for the Buddhists in Turku had already been established—by an anonymous individual—on Facebook. Within days, this group garnered more than three thousand members, many of whom belonged to other minority groups in Finnish society. This group quickly emerged as a visible and engaging dialogue forum that seemed to pay no attention to the conventional hierarchies and forms of official interreligious dialogue in Finland.¹

¹ The group “Turun Buddhalaistemppelin Solidaarisuusryhmä” is open to all users of Facebook. The short English introduction states: “A Buddhist temple has been

For a researcher specialising in creative forms of interreligious dialogue, this dramatic episode in my hometown caused me to reflect on the current metamorphosis of interreligious dialogue; both from an empirical perspective and in relation to the epistemological starting points of dialogue research in general. From a philosophical point of view, this case of the burning of the Buddhist temple and its aftermath can be seen as centring on questions of power and reciprocity—issues that lie at the very heart of dialogue research today, mirroring relevant changes both in contemporary views of religion and of dialogue (Leirvik 2011: 23). In this article I will examine the reflections on power and reciprocity presented by three dialogue philosophers: Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Knud E. Løgstrup. Their claims are analysed against the background of contemporary critical dialogue research. The case study is described on the basis of a vast range of empirical material, including newspaper articles, discussion groups, and social media on the Internet as well as ethnographic interviews.²

The analysis, hence, touches on the following questions: Is reciprocity a necessary condition for dialogue or does it represent a naïve ignorance of the power relations that always set the basis for concrete and contextualised dialogues? And what should be the goal of a dialogical engagement: Does reciprocity necessarily imply similarity and acceptance or can it be reframed as a notion acknowledging difference and asymmetry while still creating a shared space of interpersonal understanding? Furthermore, questions of representation and sincerity arise: Who represents whom in this case study and on what grounds? In academic research, interreligious dialogue is often described as a sincere, mutual, and egalitarian endeavour. Anne Hege Grung, for example, defines dialogue as “a mutual encounter between equal parties, without hidden agendas, not aiming at transforming the other but at taking part in a mutual transformation that may happen through the encounter” (Grung 2011: 59). In light of this proposal, one might ask: Does it not seem implausible that anonymous forums

under construction for years in Turku. The work has been done mostly by volunteers and on donated money. But during the entire building process, the site has been a target of vandalism, culminating in the recent attempted arson. The destruction has caused grief in the Finnish Vietnamese community, and others in the country. This group is a politically and religiously neutral solidarity group that supports the rights and efforts of the Finnish Vietnamese community to build their long waited place of worship. We condemn all attacks on peaceful practise of religion.” Available at: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/pages/Turun-BuddhalaistemppeleinSolidaarisuusryhm%C3%A4/154410107911806?sk=info> (accessed 13 May 2011).

² The interviews were recorded and later transcribed into text documents. The transcripts are stored in the Folklore Archive at Åbo Akademi University and the archive codes are used as references in the text (see the reference list).

for pastime and social networking in the virtual world could meet such profound criteria?

A New Face for Interreligious Dialogue

The attack on the Buddhist temple in Finland reflects several significant changes in contemporary views and practices of interreligious dialogue. Thus, before presenting the philosophical framework of this analysis, a few additional reflections on the particular case study are called for. As argued above, a remarkable feature of this chain of events is the visible role played by the social media: a platform that emerged as a novel space for dialogue between religious minorities in Finland. In relation to the questions of sincerity posed above, it is important to note that not only private individuals joined the solidarity group on Facebook but also, for example, local religious organisations. The first two groups to post official statements condemning the violence and supporting the Buddhists on Facebook were the Islamic Community of Turku and the Finnish Pagan Network. The neo-pagans stated that the only way to prevent such hostility in the future is to engage in interreligious dialogue.³ The Islamic Community of Turku described their shock at the appalling crime, proclaiming that persecution against religions cannot be accepted in any form, and that they wanted to let our “Buddhist brothers and sisters” know that they were not alone in these difficult times.⁴

Why can this be regarded as a striking turn of events, and how does it reflect the changing face of and conditions for interreligious dialogue today? Three distinctive aspects can be highlighted. First, a novel feature is the visibility of this particular dialogue process. Even though Finland has not been spared from hate crimes in the past, the small community of Vietnamese Buddhists, who have organised low-profile activities in the country for more than twenty years, has seldom been targeted (Ketola 2008: 293). Therefore, the news coverage of the attack and its consequences was extensive and several politicians, researchers, and religious authorities joined in the public discussion. Most Finnish newspapers today are available online, offering their readers the possibility to post comments on news stories. Articles concerning the attack on the Buddhist temple often gave rise to heated debates on subjects ranging from freedom of religion, immigration and world peace to police work, city planning, and juvenile delinquency.⁵

³ The entire statement (in Finnish) can be found at the website of the Finnish Pagan Network: <http://www.pakanaverkko.fi/media/pakanaverkko-paheksuu-uskonnoille-tarkeiden-tilojen-vahingoittamista> (accessed: 11 May 2011).

⁴ The entire statement (in Finnish) can be found at the website of the Islamic Community of Turku: <http://www.tisy.fi/ajankohtaista.php> (accessed 11 May 2011).

⁵ One can mention the examples of several articles and editorials in the local

Second, the forum for interreligious dialogue was new. To underline the increasing importance of social media in interpersonal communication might be a well-worn and familiar tactic, but its impact cannot be ignored in this particular case. The Facebook group, as well as various other online communities, were the spaces in which dialogues actually took place; where opinions were shared and values declared. The importance of popular culture and especially cyberspace as an arena where worldviews are formed, assessed, and shared is increasing steadily as a growing number of people seek their moral edification and spiritual awareness online (Partridge 2005: 125-26). Therefore, the relevance of social media for contemporary interreligious dialogue should not be overlooked.

Indeed, the sympathy and solidarity channelled to the Buddhist community via online sources was not trivialised in this case. Rather, it was perceived as a weighty and valid form of support, according to one of the moderators of the Facebook group (IF mgt 2011/078). Also, the media coverage often made the Facebook aspect the main feature of their stories.⁶ The Buddhists themselves also valued the virtual support: one of the community members said he was “astonished but grateful for having so many cyber friends” (IF mgt 2011/049). A younger member of the community was even surprised at my questioning the relevance of such virtual support, replying: “Of course it is important; it felt like getting 3000 hugs!” (IF mgt 2011/069).

Third—and perhaps most significant—the unfolding of events around the burning of the Buddhist temple resulted in a situation where the conventional power base of interreligious dialogue in Finland was seriously shaken. In a country where nearly 80% of the population belong to the Evangelical-Lutheran state church, most dialogue initiatives are naturally orchestrated by this party.⁷ No matter how sensitive the Lutheran church tries to be in using its majority position, it is inevitable that this establishment, which is enormous compared to any other religious organisation in the country, has a stronger influence on the dialogue agenda than any other party. Structured (often state-ini-

newspapers *Åbo Underrättelser* (<http://www.abounderrattelser.fi>) and *Turun Sanomat* (<http://www.ts.fi>) and the leading national newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (<http://www.hs.fi>).

⁶ “Visa ditt ogillande” (Show your dislike), for example, is the title of an editorial dealing with the attempted arson, published in *Åbo Underrättelser* 14/9/2010; an obvious reference to Facebook language.

⁷ For example, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland has working groups called “Church and Judaism,” founded in 1977, and “Church and Islam,” founded in 1988. For further information, see the website: <http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/sp?Open&cid=ContentB2243> and Illman 2010: 100-01.

tiated) conversations between representatives of different religions often tend to strengthen existing hierarchies through established routines for setting the agenda, selecting participants and controlling the conversation. Thus, despite their best intentions to be inclusive, inequalities are reinforced rather than dissolved (Amir-Moazami 2011: 7, 13). In the case study, however, this traditional power balance was sidestepped. Social media offered a forum where minority groups such as Buddhists, neo-pagans, and Muslims could engage in dialogue with one another without the mediation of either the state or the Lutheran church.

In the case study, the changing landscape of contemporary religious engagement and belief was also given a face. Many scholars today argue that the general interest in religion as a dogma-centred, historical institution is decreasing and that, consequently, interest in experience-based and personal dimensions of faith is increasing (see, e.g., Partridge 2005, Ammerman 2008). This vague pattern of transformation—from “finding truth” to “finding oneself” (Furseth 2006: 296)—is often described as a shift from secular to post-secular. In Charles Taylor’s description, the post-secular includes critical reinterpretation of traditional religious authority claims and consequent strivings to form personal religious paths. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of pluralism as an inevitable feature of our societies is central to his view of the post-secular (Taylor 2007: 11, 535). In such contexts, marked by migration and pluralism, an increasing amount of people regard religious identity as a personal choice rather than a genealogical given. The critique of modernism and its reliance on rationality is also coupled with a growing interest in emotional and experiential dimensions of spirituality (Ammerman 2008: 4, 7-8; Pfändtner 2010: 71, 73). Taken together, these trends imply an ongoing transformation of the religious landscape into a “reflexively religious pluralising present” that takes form “after the secular” (Hogue 2010: 350).

Within research on interreligious dialogue, the traditional perspectives focusing on cognitive content are countered today by new critical and less normative approaches, envisioned through, for example, feminist critique and hermeneutic discourses integrating emotions, values, and action into their scopes (see, e.g., Grung 2011; Pfändtner 2010). Dialogue is no longer envisioned merely as an abstract, meta-level comparison of theoretically and historically fixed traditions but also as a social and spiritual encounter between human beings, joining in tangible action against racism, environmental threats, or the like (Pfändtner 2010: 93). The sharing and community characteristic of dialogue is also increasingly enacted on the Web; a context that can no longer be dismissed as entirely superficial (Partridge 2005: 150). Furthermore, questions of representation, legitimacy, power, and agency are increasingly raised as critical responses to official dialogue forums and their strategies of rendering religious difference harmless (Amir-Moazami 2011: 13). As a consequence, the notion of dialogue is becoming increasingly ambiguous. As Michael Hogue

states, dialogue today is necessarily becoming a “cross-difference enterprise” where voices from different actors—believers and secularists, conservatives and liberals—are engaged and where different kinds of questions are addressed: traditionally religious as well as social, moral and political. Such enterprises require constructive and serious engagement with historically specific traditions while simultaneously recognising that “religious traditions are increasingly porous, religious identities are increasingly permeable, the moral world is increasingly vulnerable, and normative religious claims are increasingly fragile” (Hogue 2010: 353).

Who should represent whom in interreligious dialogue in this situation, and on what grounds? How should the relationship between persons meeting in dialogue take form and what should be the goal of a dialogical engagement? These are all increasingly problematic questions. As Oddbjørn Leirvik has proposed, the issue of power and its relation to reciprocity in the interpersonal encounter are among the most prominent questions at stake in the contemporary rethinking of dialogue research (Leirvik 2011: 19). Such rethinking can, I propose, be fruitfully enhanced by returning to the contributions of three philosophers of the previous century for whom interpersonal encounters formed a central concern: Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Knud Løgstrup. These philosophers have, individually and in dialogue with one another, envisioned the relationship between self and other in ways that shed light on our main concern of power and reciprocity in interreligious dialogue.

The line of thinking described as “philosophy of dialogue” or “dialogue philosophy” takes its starting point in the view of humans as fundamentally relational beings, intrinsically tied to other human beings (Leirvik 2011: 16). The philosophy of dialogue, Levinas contends, has developed in opposition to the atrocities of the twentieth century and to “the philosophical tradition of the unity of the I or the system, and self-sufficiency, and immanence” (Levinas 1986: 137). In contrast, dialogue philosophy portrays interpersonal relations as an essentially ethical matter—a question of being fully present in the encounter with the other, of affirming her uniqueness and responding to her call by acting responsibly. In Buber’s understanding, ethics begins in the realm of the “between”: the space of mutuality created in the meeting of I and Thou. Levinas takes his starting point in the observation that the “face” of the other summons me from a height. For Levinas, therefore, the encounter takes place on uneven ground where the Other dominates the self (Kelley 2004: 226-27). Løgstrup’s philosophy resonates well with the ethical themes inherent to both Buber and Levinas—especially with the focus on responsibility and trust as basic conditions of human existence (Wyller and Heimbrock 2010: 16).

Buber: Encounters and the In-Between

As mentioned above, Martin Buber's understanding of dialogue is based on an exploration of the so-called "realm of the between": the space of openness and mutuality created in the meeting of I and Thou (Buber 1932/2002: 9). According to Buber, a person's worldview always includes an other; a counterpart in the form of an It or a Thou (Buber 1923/1970, 53).⁸ The distanced attitude I-It is supplemented by the relation I-Thou, which represents encounters and dialogue. The relationship I-Thou is a whole-hearted, attentive engagement while the attitude I-It is more distanced and analytic in nature: a reflective, indirect, and categorising attitude giving our experiences a place in time and space (Buber 1970: 59, 84-85). I-It can thus be interpreted as a way of creating boundaries between the self and the other; I-Thou, as a way of crossing or overcoming the very same.

These positions should not be understood as binary oppositions or as hierarchically unequal, but rather as complementary aspects of each person's involvement with the world. Because of this two-part description, Buber is often criticised for being simplistic and dualistic. These two attitudes, however, need to be regarded as different but equally important: the former can be seen as included in the latter. Thus, even though Buber presents his view of human inter-relatedness as a dualism, I interpret it as a description of the manifold nature of our relationships with one another (Buber 1970: 84).

As a consequence of this argument, identity is always formed in relation to others, Buber claims. In dialogue, the other appears in her/his uniqueness and I can acknowledge: "This man is not my object; I have got to do with him" (Buber 2002: 11). Therefore, for Buber, dialogue is the relationship of different persons that is only represented in their engagement with one another, that is, "between" them. This dimension of existence is created in the living exchange between I and Thou where neither party aims at forcing her own views on the other and where the one is open to the possibility of allowing the encounter to influence her own position (Leirvik 2011: 17-18).

Thus, the between is not understood as an independently existing space: it is an opening that is unique to and reconstituted in the meeting of I and Thou (Kel-

⁸ It is important to note that Buber uses the word *du* in his original German writing. The translator of the edition I am using here, Walter Kaufmann, objects to the usual translation as the English "thou" (which is the standard translation of Buber's terminology), arguing that "thou" is formal, distanced, and pretentious while *du* is spontaneous, friendly, and close (Kaufmann in Buber 1970: 14). While this is linguistically and historically wrong (the English "thou" is the equivalent of the German *du*), *thou* has in the course of history acquired a formality through its use with respect to God in religious settings. It is important to keep in mind that Buber does use *du*.

ley 2004: 229-30). Buber's dialogue also requires intentional action: it is realised as a consciously chosen attitude and never as a result of random intentions. Furthermore, dialogue is not understood solely in linguistic terms: it is responding as an attitude, not as a speech act, that is central. Buber claims that in dialogue I do not listen to the echo of my own voice but to a response (Buber 1970: 60). To its external forms, this interpersonal in-between is often a modest space in time: it may take form in such "unpretentious yet significant" corners of existence as a glance of a stranger passing by in a busy street (Buber 2002: 5).

"Relation is reciprocity," Buber claims (Buber 1970: 67). The term relation (*Beziehung*), as well as encounter (*Begegnung*), is applied by Buber only in describing the sphere of I-Thou, and, therefore, one can conclude that reciprocity plays a central role in his understanding of dialogue, which belongs to the I-Thou world. Difference is, nevertheless, a vital feature of this reciprocal relation. Buber claims that in the encounter, the Thou is experienced as "inseparable, incomparable, irreducible." But one's own distinctive personhood also needs to be acknowledged: the I is also "existing but once, single, unique, irreducible" (Buber 2002: 15, 29).

Reciprocity and mutuality are thus constitutive features of dialogue for Buber, but so is difference. In my opinion, one should be careful of equating reciprocity with similarity. For Buber, it is, in fact, difference that makes dialogue possible. Becoming an I for a Thou is a privilege granted by the other; one cannot demand such a relationship. Thus, the I must intend a mutual relationship but the other must be allowed to remain other. The goal is not uniformity but increased awareness and community. It is in fact only in relation to the different other that one can truly become an I, as it is only against the background of a shared language that one can speak of finding one's own voice (Friedman 1992: 204).

Returning to the case study and the offence against the Buddhist temple in Turku, it is clear that Buber's approach to dialogue and his emphasis on reciprocity and spiritual unity resonates well with the common use of the term in the online discussions and ethnographic interviews. A member of the Buddhist community, for example, uses dialogue as a synonym for interaction with the surrounding society. For a number of years, he explains, we tried to keep as low a profile as possible: not disturbing anyone and refraining from engagement with other religions. "Some thought it was better that way; and safer," he states. Now, however, the general opinion within the community has changed, and he strongly believes that opting for a reciprocal relationship with other religions is a more viable route: "Today, dialogue is the right thing" (IF mgt 2011/069). Reciprocity, hence, is regarded as an intrinsic part of dialogue—even if the response may at times be unconstructive and harmful, as the Buddhists have experienced.

Levinas: Asymmetry and Proximity

Another twentieth-century European philosopher, for whom Buber became an important dialogue partner, was Emmanuel Levinas. Their philosophies bear considerable resemblance to one another but also show significant differences. Levinas is critical of Buber's claim that dialogue rests on reciprocity. For Buber, Levinas contends, "I am to the other what the other is to me" (Levinas 1999: 100). In his view, however, such initial reciprocity needs to be questioned. As soon as one expects reciprocity from the other, the relationship diminishes into a mere exchange of good behaviour. Instead of reciprocity, Levinas therefore emphasises responsibility: "the other appears to me as one to whom I owe something, toward whom I have a responsibility." Equality in dialogue is thus exchanged for a "radical inequality between the I and the you" (Levinas 1999: 101).

Levinas' philosophy is often interpreted as a more drastic engagement with difference—or *alterity* as he writes—than the position developed by Buber. Alterity describes the unabridged otherness of the other: a fact against which I am powerless; an unalterable mystery that can neither be grasped nor owned. A relation to alterity is a relation that is always somewhat out of reach (Levinas 1989: 50). In comparison with Buber, one could argue that Levinas makes an even stronger claim for the right of the other to remain other. His notion of alterity provides a vital role for the ethical and dialogical character of understanding as reverence for unabridged difference. "The multiplicity of thinking beings, the plurality of consciousnesses, is not a simple fact—some sort of contingency, or a purely empirical 'misfortune'—like the effect of some fall or ontological catastrophe of the One," he contends (Levinas 1986: 143). Very much to the contrary: the basis of dialogue moves beyond the self-sufficiency of the subject and shows the possibility of excellence in another human dimension than the purely individual.

The Levinasian Other is characterised by its having a Face (Levinas 1969: 193). This implies that the other is regarded as a self—a subject in its own right that signifies something other than one's own powers and that resists possession (Levinas 1969: 197). The Face of the other presents the self with another claim to truth; therefore, the alterity of the Other is absolute. In Levinas' view, there is no *and* possible between I and Thou; they form no totality (Levinas 1986: 145). Nevertheless, dialogue is made possible as a bridging of the seemingly contradictory notions of distance and proximity. Our relation to alterity, to the Other as other, is that of responsibility, Levinas claims: it is an ethical relation where the paradox of proximity and distance is reconciled (Levinas 1969: 197). In reference to Buber's terminology, Levinas contends: "It is precisely because the *You* is absolutely other than the I that there is, between the one and the other, dialogue" (Levinas 1986: 146).

By emphasising the moral dimension of dialogue, Levinas moves his focus away from the realm of the between towards the other; from the central hub of equality and towards the far end of the interpersonal space where the face of the Other dominates. The Other bears the power of good in Levinas' ethical thought, and, therefore, it challenges the self-understanding and worldview of the I. The Face of the other thwarts our visions of self-sufficiency by revealing that it is not the self that measures the other in the encounter but actually the Other that "measures me with a gaze incomparable to the gaze by which I discover him" (Levinas 1969: 86). As Drew Dalton argues, the Face makes it clear that the world is not ordered and organised around the self or the subject's needs but that existence is "primarily oriented toward the otherwise—and available for use *for the sake of* the Other" (Dalton 2009: 39).

Levinas thus regards the relation to the other as essentially asymmetrical in character: Buber's reciprocity is countered by the insistence that the I is the servant of the Thou in dialogue (Kelley 2004: 227).⁹ The face of the other summons me; it judges me and sees me as responsible. Therefore, dialogue is not reciprocity: it is the "non-indifference" of the Thou to the I; an encounter where the other "counts above all else" (Levinas 1986: 147, 150). In understanding interpersonal relations, Levinas commences not with the self or even with the realm of the between, but with the other who is always out of reach (Levinas 1989: 43). One's relation to the other, who is one's superior, is thus not a rational act: the face of the other that speaks to the self "tolerates only a personal response, that is, an ethical act." Hence Levinas makes his famous claim that ethics is the first philosophy (Levinas 1969: 219, 304).

Dialogue as non-indifference rather than reciprocity can also be regarded as an essential feature of the specific interreligious encounter analysed in this article. Especially the online discussion within the solidarity group on Facebook displays a character that seems to correspond more readily to Levinas' terminology than to Buber's.¹⁰ Deep-reaching reciprocity is definitely not established in short, semi-anonymous exchanges of status updates, but neither does that appear to be the aim of this conversation. Rather, the aim seems to be to fight one's own indifference. For many of those who felt affected by the attack on the Buddhist temple, expressing solidarity on the Web offered a suitable way to

⁹ As Kelley observes, both Buber and Levinas regard the human relationship with God as a social relationship where the divine can never be separated from interpersonal relationships. For Buber, this relationship takes shape as an encounter with the Eternal Thou, for Levinas, the height of the Other reflects the height of God. The point of Levinas' critique of Buber is thus that by advocating reciprocity, Buber turns God into an equal (Kelley 2004: 228).

¹⁰ For a similar conclusion concerning official dialogue forums in Norway, see Leirvik 2011: 19.

move from indifference to non-indifference, but not as far as acknowledging responsibility or acknowledgement of the asymmetrical relationship between self and other, as Levinas urges. Thus, I believe, dialogue as non-indifference is not a negation of the role of reciprocity in dialogue but rather a complement or additional feature (Kelley 2004: 232; Leirvik 2011: 20). Non-indifferent dialogues may be more distanced and unengaged than the reciprocal relationships described by Buber, but they should not be dismissed as insincere or shallow: “It felt like getting 3000 hugs.”

Løgstrup: Power and Vulnerability

As shown above, Buber can be understood to advocate reciprocity in dialogue by focusing on the equal presence of I and Thou in the realm of the between. Levinas, on the other hand, understands dialogue as an asymmetrical encounter with alterity where the other counts more than the self and where the self is vulnerable to its counterpart. Thus, he asks rhetorically: “Is not the very opening of the dialogue already a way for the I to uncover itself, a way for the I to place itself in the disposition of the You?” (Levinas 1986: 150) In this situation, the third philosopher to be discussed in this article, Knud E. Løgstrup, offers additional perspectives to the analysis of reciprocity and power.

In agreement with Buber, Løgstrup argues that human existence is inherently relational, but his additional claim that such interpersonal relationships also are inherently asymmetrical and ethical has led many researchers to compare him with Levinas (Wyller and Heimbrock 2010: 12). In Løgstrup’s view, the other ultimately confronts the self with two alternatives: to care or to destroy (Løgstrup 1971: 21). The dimension of power implicated in all dialogues gives rise to an ethical demand to bear responsibility for the other regardless of how she or he chooses to respond. This asymmetry must nevertheless be understood against the background of shared symmetry: for Løgstrup, the dimensions of power and vulnerability coincide in the interpersonal encounter—both dimensions are equally available to the self and to the other (Andersen 1995: 66). Therefore, Løgstrup’s understanding of otherness can be regarded as a middle position, between the radical alterity proposed by Levinas and the discourse of reciprocity applied by Buber.

As mentioned above, Løgstrup builds his philosophical elaboration on a relational view of life. Indeed, he writes, we “constitute one another’s world and destiny” (Løgstrup 1971: 17). Human beings are thus never isolated: our way of being in the world is at all times related to and dependent on our relationships to others. In communication with the other, we surrender ourselves in trust to the other and consequently move into the power of her words and actions. In such interdependent relationships the power dimension inevitably works both ways: having to do with another person means having at least some degree of control over her. Trust puts the other in my power, but it also leaves

the self exposed and defenceless (Løgstrup 1971: 75). Interpersonal encounters imply vulnerability, Løgstrup argues; therefore, dialogue is always accompanied by a tacit ethical demand to protect the person who has confided a glimpse of her existence in our hands (Løgstrup 1971: 134, 136).

Løgstrup's analysis of trust complements Buber's notions of reciprocity and distance as well as the terminology of proximity and alterity developed by Levinas. Trust is a basic characteristic of what it means to be human, he claims; trust is the initial response to others that is only altered after it has been violated. Without basic trust, human life would be impaired and wither away (Løgstrup 1971: 8-9). This insistence should not be regarded as a naïve refusal to acknowledge the widespread distrust between people. For Løgstrup, trust is not wide-eyed and unrealistic reliance on the nobility of human character—it is a basic trait of communication in general (Andersen 1995: 61-62). Trust is a matter of being present to the other, of exposing oneself by reaching out to another and initiating contact. In Løgstrup's interpretation, trust transforms the interpersonal into interdependence: a relationship of both power and vulnerability.

The metaphor Løgstrup uses to describe trust is therefore to “place something of one's own life in the hands of another person” (Løgstrup 1971: 17). It is intrinsically tied to self-surrender and vulnerability: one offers something of oneself to the other and can only anticipate an affirmative response. Therefore, he concludes, we shape one another's worlds “not by theories and views but by our very attitude toward [each other]. Herein lies the unarticulated and one might say anonymous demand that we take care of the life which trust has placed in our hands” (Løgstrup 1971: 19).

Løgstrup's philosophical combination of vulnerability and trust are powerfully contextualised by a member of the Buddhist community in Turku as he describes the reactions among the community members to the attempted arson:

The Vietnamese are sensitive people. Even after this event, most of us feel that we are heavily indebted to Finland: we suffered and Finland gave us a new future. We try to be exemplary citizens, never disturbing or creating negative publicity. But this is of course at times also problematic. The attack on the temple made us see that something had to change: we could not go on like this. We are not bad people, and our temple could become the pride of the entire region. We are not building it just for ourselves; it is a Lotus flower that we offer to make the world more colourful, a flower that would beautify Finland.... Anger and fear have no place in Buddhism, but we felt confused; confused but nevertheless calm. We have experienced it before, that nothing is permanent. Many of us have lost everything once before, when we fled. But for many community members, the temple is now their entire life's work. We have to protect it somehow. (IF mgt 2011/069)

In my interpretation, this reflection shows a continuous movement back and forth between accepting vulnerability, trusting one's fellow beings and claim-

ing the right to personal integrity and agency. The specific history of the community, the Buddhist worldview and its cultivation of detachment and calm combined with the dramatic crime committed towards the community adds further tension to the balancing act. Combining vulnerability and trust, and providing equal access to power for all parties in dialogue is not an easy task to accomplish in practice.

In conclusion, Buber, Levinas, and Løgstrup are united in the claim that human beings are essentially dialogical beings who stand in relationship to others and to the world. There is no singular I, to use Buber's phrase; our worldviews always include a counterpart in the form of an It or a Thou. The basis for understanding is thus found in the space of the between—the realm of the interpersonal—where relationships are built through dialogical processes of interpretation and where neither I nor the other can reign in sovereignty. The nature of this in-between and the status of the other in relation to the self are, nevertheless, perceived somewhat differently by each author—especially in relation to the ideas of reciprocity and power. For Buber, mutuality defines the relationship between dialogue partners while Levinas emphasises asymmetry and alterity. Løgstrup, on his part, describes the relationship as based on mutual vulnerability and trust.

All three nevertheless agree on the vital description of unabridged otherness—alterity—as an invaluable and compelling aspect of human relationships: difference is a prerequisite for dialogue. Furthermore, they agree on the description of dialogue as an ethical imperative. Therefore, I want to suggest the conclusion that responsibility rather than reciprocity serves as a key image for dialogue for all three philosophers. This is not a novel argument in relation to Levinas and Løgstrup, but, in line with Andrew Kelley (2004: 232), I explicitly propose it as a description also of Buber's thinking. The world is entrusted to the I in the encounter and, therefore, one is obliged to answer the call of the other by assuming responsibility, Buber states his ideas in language resembling that of Levinas and Løgstrup (Buber 2002: 52). While he indeed maintains that "relation is reciprocity," as quoted above, his descriptions of love offer a line of thinking that complements the well-known I-Thou discourse with a more radical and vulnerable image of interpersonal relations. "Love is responsibility of an I for a Thou," he claims (Buber 1970: 66). Therefore, the opposite of love is not hatred but indifference—and dialogue, consequently, can rightly be described as non-indifference to the face of the other.

Concluding Remarks

Is reciprocity a necessary condition for dialogue or does it represent naïve ignorance of the power relations that always set the ground for concrete and contextualised dialogues? Does reciprocity imply similarity and acceptance, or can it be reframed as a notion acknowledging difference and asymmetry while

still creating a shared space of interpersonal understanding? I think the case of the Buddhist temple incident in Turku as well as the philosophical analysis presented above show that such questions cannot be answered by a simple yes or no. As a commitment to justice and integrity, reciprocity may be indispensable dimensions of any dialogue situation. As a demand for agreement, uniformity, and spiritual unity, however, reciprocity can be dismissed on a number of compelling grounds. Returning to the arguments presented by Løgstrup, therefore, I argue that power and vulnerability coincide in the particular example discussed in this article. As a result, reciprocity turns into a complex and many-layered dimension of dialogue, necessarily located in the realm of the between and inherently tied to ethical considerations of responsibility.

Such a conclusion, I believe, also mirrors the changing faces of dialogue as described above. The post-secular discourse—including observations of an increased focus on individual spirituality, critical re-evaluations of power and representation as well as a heightened awareness of plurality as normality—reveals that it is necessary to stop thinking in dualistic categories in interreligious dialogue. The intricate balance between distance and unity, alterity and proximity, trust and vulnerability described in this article—and the responsibility connected to such balancing—can be regarded as the central axis around which this argument revolves. Therefore, I claim, there is a continuous need to explore the creative ruptures in the traditional dialogue canopy created by non-binary ways of approaching the subject.

The extraordinary character of the episode in Turku in the autumn of 2010 included both the forum where dialogue was initiated and the participants it attracted. Starting on Facebook, the dialogue soon spread to more traditional dialogue scenes, such as academic classrooms and printed newspapers. And even if neo-pagans and Muslims were the first to take part in the dialogue, the established voices of researchers, politicians and church officials soon joined in the conversation.

The new social media platform for dialogue brought revitalising and innovative aspects to the conversation, but they also reinforced stereotypes and routine jargons about different religious groups. On Facebook, Buddhism was repeatedly characterised as “a religion of peace that respects everyone” and Buddhists were described as “non-violent,” “loving and compassionate,” “hardworking and honest.” The declaration of solidarity posted by the Muslim Community of Turku was also met with several contemporary clichés about Islam in general. The moderator even felt compelled to remove some of the fiercest replies. “This is a site for solidarity with the Buddhists, not a forum for criticising other religions,” the convener stated as a comment to a discussion where peace-loving and discreet Buddhists are juxtaposed against* the “violent terrorists” and “fundamentalists” of other faiths. The convener clarifies this point further in the interview: in his opinion, several comments could be inter-

preted as implicitly hostile towards Muslims, but only one entry explicitly attacking Islam as a religion was actually removed. As an example, he points to a comment by a well-known local politician from the nationalist True Finns party: “As far as I understand, Buddhism is not a religion that fans the flames of war.” Knowing the general stereotypes of religions flourishing on the Internet and the critical approach of the True Finns to Muslims, the convener maintains that this comment can only be interpreted as criticising Islam rather than genuinely supporting the Buddhists in Turku (IF mgt 2011/078).

Hence, the Facebook forum succeeded in engaging new voices in the dialogue, thus challenging the established, institutionalised powers, but it failed to break down the power of cemented clichés. This suggests the conclusion that, in order to rethink the role of power and reciprocity in dialogue, as proposed in this article, it is vital to maintain a multi-layered understanding of power. As an aspect of dialogue, power relates to political and institutional representation (as proposed by Amir-Moazami) as well as to gendered and ethnic differences in individual access to power (as proposed by Grung).

Even if the new forum was not entirely free of traditional stereotypes and binary arguments, it can still be regarded as a genuinely new opening in relation to questions of power in interreligious dialogue in Finland. By entering the scene of social media, this discussion stepped out of the established routines of organised dialogues, acquiring a more participatory and experimental character. While escaping the reins of the traditional dialogue establishment, however, it simultaneously stepped into a conflict-ridden, tense and sometimes insincere space for interreligious confrontation. As demonstrated above, greater diversity in conversation partners and modes of expression does not automatically lead to greater nuance and increased awareness in the conversation itself; previous limitations to dialogue were not overcome but rather reproduced in a new situation.

The question arises, however: Are any other routes viable in the contemporary—globalised and mediatised—landscape of post-secular value negotiations? Looking to the future, it seems plausible that engaging new voices in the conversation will bring about a redistribution of power in interreligious dialogue. It remains to be seen if this will be a more equal and inclusive balance. Engaging new voices will not make the power differences between dialogue partners simply vanish. Therefore, reciprocity will continue to be characterised by a combination of vulnerability and power, as suggested by Løgstrup. Nevertheless, the growing plurality of voices, issues and opinions expressed in the diverse field of interreligious encounters will at least make such differences increasingly visible and, hopefully, also increasingly contested. In this future scenario, responsibility as the key image for interreligious dialogue becomes more relevant than ever.

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