

# RETORIK OCH TSUNAMI (2):

## REPRESENTING 'THE OTHER' IN TSUNAMI FUNDRAISING DISCOURSE: A LEVINASIAN INTERPRETATION<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I will analyze ads from the tsunami aid efforts in Sweden (2004-2005) in order to raise questions about the commodification of the other in the business of fundraising. In the ads, the distant other is at the centre but this distant other is also someone who is very close in terms of identification. From the perspective of several countries in Northern Europe, the tsunami in South East Asia in December of 2004 was a national tragedy, a proximate event not only in the sense of the extensive and graphic media coverage, but also in terms of Thailand and the beaches of Khao Lak and Phi Phi Island being some of the primary places for vacationing during Christmas and New Year-holidays. The representation of the other in the ads could easily be interpreted in levinasian terms and I will use some of these notions to understand if this commodification of the other is also mitigated and, in some way, resisted (in a 'levinasian' way) and, if so, how this is done in the context of the concrete representations. In any case, a levinasian interpretation of the other, in the ads or in any other business transaction, could be used to criticize the entire business of fundraising and this leads over to the final concern of the paper, namely to address the possibility

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented at the conference "Levinas, Ethics, Business", Centre for Philosophy and Political Economy, Leicester University, UK, October 27-29, 2005. A revised version of this paper under the title of "Resisting the Commodification of the Other: The "Busyness" of Levinas" will be published in a special issue on Levinas and ethics in *Business Ethics: A European Review*. At the same time as this paper on rhetoric and tsunami is published in the report series from KTH another study will appear: "Retorik och tsunami (1): "Den kungliga vanligheten" i talet vid tsunamikatastrofen – en nyordning i den kommunikativa monrakin?".

and meaning of associating business ethics with the perspective of Levinas, which is the focus of this conference. It will be argued that while the theory of Levinas may be very useful as a tool for a critical analysis of business practices, there is a risk of reifying the ethics of Levinas in any context that rests upon received versions of applied ethics. Also on the negative side, it may also be regarded, perhaps somewhat restrictive, that the ethics of the face as a normative moral theory of human social relations, is antithetic to many aspects of monetary exchange and also to other relevant dimensions of business practices.

The paper is divided into the following five parts: (1) First I will give a brief overview of the tsunami catastrophe from the perspective of Sweden, which in terms of the number of victims is the largest national tragedy since 1709 and the battle of Poltava (Vorsklo in contemporary Ukraine); (2) Tsunami relief efforts reached an unprecedented one billion Swedish crowns (c:a 80 million US dollars) in aid from Swedes, and this motivates a quick glance at the business of fundraising as an arena for the sophisticated commodification and mechanics of giving; (3) In the third section I will focus on some themes in the ads which can be linked to a levinasian interpretation, such as how the 'other' is represented and configured, and how 'help' is understood and operationalized. (4) In the next section I will use the same ads in an attempt perhaps to reconcile (or not) the representation of the other with a levinasian interpretation of the other, although I will be aware of the pitfalls of using the theory of Levinas as a tool in this very way. (5) In the final section I will use the example of voluntary giving, exemplified by the tsunami relief efforts, and the limits of application in ethics in order to argue against an easy match between the ethics of Levinas and the need of business ethics. I will talk of ethics as a business and, in contrast, talk about the urgency (the 'busyness') with which a reading of Levinas circumvents such imperatives.

I believe that both the empirical material (the ads) that will be shown at the presentation, as well as the business practices (fundraising) that will be exemplified, will prove interesting to many of the central concerns in business ethics and in media ethics. The realms of commercial media representation and 'gift planning products' respectively, will also prove to be resources for a levinasian interpretation. I will also be keen to hear your opinion about exploring the common grounds between Levinas and some themes in (economic) anthropology. It should be noted that the author have a background in

ethnographic media studies and communication studies with a turn towards analyzing moral and political discourse.

## (1) TSUNAMI

The 9.0 (on the Richter scale) earthquake outside the island of Sumatra on December 26, 2004 resulted in great disaster in many countries in South East Asia, both caused by the earthquake itself and by the great wave, the tsunami, which drowned the beaches of Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, India and other places in the region. Among the victims of the earthquake were people permanently living in the area, as well as Western tourists spending their holiday in the tropical sun. For the many residents, whole cities and villages were destroyed along with destruction of vital infrastructure and elimination of future means of living.

For the latter, the event took place during Christmas and New Year holidays. It has become increasingly popular to spend this leave abroad and the region has become widely known as a safe place away from the snow, coldness and darkness of the sub-polar region.

In the tsunami around 5 million people lost their homes, 280 000 were killed and of these were 544 from Sweden. For a small country such as Sweden this was a major disaster with a man loss comparable only to events such as the most recent epidemic, the Spanish fever after World War I and to the Estonia catastrophe in 1994. We need to go as far back as three hundred years ago, to 1709 and the battle of Poltava (Vorsklo) in Ukraine, where approximately 8000 men died during one day, to find a national catastrophe of similar magnitude.<sup>2</sup> In terms of the number of lives these are the most disastrous events since 1709, but in terms of traumatic impact there have of course been other incidents, e.g. the murder of Minister of State Olof Palme (1986) and the murder of Foreign Minister Anna Lindh (2003).

The earthquake and tsunami became significant media events (Dayan & Katz, 1994) with continuous live coverage. First of all, this event took place during a time of the year when television and other broadcast media are at the center of attention. The period between

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<sup>2</sup> Some historians claim that another event, the retreat of the Swedish army under King Carl XII from the Norwegian mountains during a winter was by far the most severe event.

Christmas and New Year is often regarded as a peak period of the annual agenda for the media, where favorite reruns fill the air together with brand new films, specially produced theater and drama, and other forms of entertainment. Secondly, the catastrophe has cynically been identified as an example of television at its 'best' where the pain of others (Sontag, 2004) are exposed for our view or our 'regard' and where publicity focus on the pain of victims (Peters, 2005, Chapter 3). What could be seen in the media coverage was how the paradise was turned into a tragedy and death of innocent people. From the perspective of the Western television consumer, the victims were most of all indigenous people but also in a more direct sense, people like us, blond haired and tanned. All of them were innocent victims of natural disaster. Horrifying images of death and the pain of orphans and of parents missing their children were mixed with visual footage of the materiality of disaster and interviews with local people who had lost their future business opportunities in the tourism industry. All this took place in an almost unreal tropical sunlight and was instantly transmitted to the domestic settings of Western television consumption. Suffering came close. Any one of us could have been there in the waves. This experiential proximity did affect empathy and a willingness of helping.

The tsunami took place in a setting that best could be described as a post-national geography (Appadurai 2003), where national interests, as in other so called 'natural disasters, were merged with global concerns. From the perspective of Sweden, the event itself took place in a displaced 'national' territory where both economic and cultural interests remain strong through the presence of the tourism and retirement industry. Shortly after the event, commentators warned for the effects of a too large emphasis on the grief, loss and suffering in its national sense, and reminded that the current cultural and economic climate takes place in a 'new geography'. While national identification is one of the great assets of the nation state, the editorial continued, the event should not be regarded only as a national tragedy. This grief must not, it was argued, be provincially defined.<sup>3</sup> The provincially defined grief, however, must be one of the major candidates for explaining the unprecedented willingness of giving money for the victims. In just two days after the event, the Swedish branch of The Red Cross collected five times more money on the web than they usually do in one full year. The aid given by the Swedes for relief efforts is approaching 80 million US dollars. The special help collected from the audience by the Radio of Sweden amounted to 360 million Swedish Crowns and the

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<sup>3</sup> 'The new geography', editorial in *Dagens Nyheter* (Dec. 30 2004).

other fundraising actors together collected around 640 million. Among the givers were most of all private individuals but also authorities and private corporations. The international organization, Doctors without Borders, actually aborted their collection of money only a week after the tsunami, claiming that they could no longer use more resources for the tsunami relief efforts. Instead, they tried to direct the giver's generosity to other objects for collection. Other organizations soon followed their example. In the interpretive task of finding explanations for this huge mobilization in aid, there is a continuous tension between national interests and global (post-national) concerns, a tension that can also be followed in the subsequent analysis of the event.

Political commentators also talked about the opening of a 'window for compassion', which can be referred both to the window as a media event where suffering came close and determined a willingness of helping, but also the window in terms of a 'window of opportunity' during a developmental process. A 'window for compassion', according to this theory, opens up the senses and sensibilities for others, and takes the individual (momentarily) beyond the idiosyncratic interests towards a more empathetic, altruistic and compassionate attitude.<sup>4</sup> This psychological theory fills the function of providing for the confirmation of a default theory of the rational man as self-interested, and as the learning opportunity (the 'window') as a temporary break from this condition. The economic and promotional success of the fundraising for the tsunami victims can certainly be explained also by the theory of how windows of empathy open during an early part of the process where the individual is somewhat destabilized and in chock. Giving and generosity is, according to this theory, best exploited during this moment of vulnerability and temporary exile from the goals of self-interest.

Many questions can be asked: Who are the victims (Swedes and other tourists and/or the indigenous people)? Who can help? Who is helping and with what legitimacy? How and when can help be performed? How is the help guaranteed? What means and models of persuasion are used? The tsunami event raises many questions that link to important themes within several areas of study such as geography and international relations, studies of economy and the media. Geography and international relations raises questions concerning the tensions between global and national concerns in aid and relief, as well as issues having to do with the dynamics of power between North and South. This links also to the character of natural disasters as events that take place across the

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<sup>4</sup> 'A window for compassion and self critical questions', editorial in *Dagens Nyheter* (Dec. 31, 2004).

boundaries of a risk society where the paradigmatic ‘civilization’ in Beck’s seminal analysis is replaced by ‘nature hits back’. The economic themes have to do with the character of individual aid and fundraising and how such events are marketized and advertised. This links to themes in economic anthropology about the character of the gift in relation to money and commodities, which is called the morality of exchange. The tsunami can also be studied as a media event where some of these previous issues are brought up in order to understand the costs and benefits of publicizing the pain of others.

In this paper I will draw a little bit on all these frames of interpretation, but mainly take help from the framework of Levinasian analysis (see below). I will focus on a period consisting of twenty days following the tsunami event and use some material from the media coverage in Sweden in order to analyze how ‘the other’ was conceptualized and to pursue some of the other questions mentioned above. Most of all, I will focus on the advertising efforts soliciting help for the victims.

## (2) TSUNAMI AND THE BUSINESS OF FUNDRAISING

Collecting money for the purpose of helping others could, in economic terms, be regarded as a form of fundraising. Fundraising is an increasingly sophisticated form of business transaction covering a set of legal and economic aspects such as charity law, volunteering, tax effective giving, philanthropy, donations and bequest solicitation, fundraising and the Internet, fundraising and the cell phone, etc. Fundraising is also related to what is called ‘corporate social [or moral] responsibility’ (CSR or CMR) that is directed at presenting corporations as generous and responsible in that business voluntarily aims at integrating social and environmental factors in their activities, far beyond, so we are told, of what the law actually requires.

While the act of giving first of all is motivated by an individual’s willingness of sacrificing some part of his/her economic or temporal surplus in order to help others, it is also filled with innovative business models where this initial incentive is optimized with the help of several methods for collecting. Soliciting the good will of the giver is of course given the largest space in any kind of fundraising transaction where concrete or ultimate

goals are highlighted. But this activity takes place with the help of a continuous development of business models where the altruism and empathy and the human ability to create relations are operationalized in concrete transactional terms. Without questioning the general goodness of fundraising or the generosity of givers to the tsunami relief efforts per se, there is certainly a clash taking place where the giver's empathy for others meets the calculating rationality of the fundraiser in his or her effort of marketing or persuading a potential donor. The American interest organization Association of Fundraising Professionals and its Swedish equivalent, FRII (Frivilligorganisationernas insamlings...), provides professional support for fundraisers in search of approved and state of the arts methods for collecting money.

I will give just a few examples of contemporary practices of fundraising. One such method for collecting money is called the 'the face to face'-method. It is by all means a very old form of collecting money but in its most popular (and controversial) contemporary form it was reinvented by Greenpeace in Austria in 1995. In distinction from other face to face methods that only rely on the collection of coins and bills, this particular form of collection is only oriented at attracting donors who can give on a regular bases in a system of subscription through automatic deduction from bank accounts. This form for giving is related to marketing trends such as direct marketing, CRM and relation marketing as advanced by organizations such as Amway. In a presentation in the context of FRII, the virtues of the methods are listed as follows: it is a method that is cost effective in that expensive media campaigns are not needed in the same extent; the method aims at starting a relation which then can be an entry point into subsequent and contractual giving; the face to face method evokes (possibly) instant engagement in that potential donors are lightly provoked; the face to face method presents the members as belonging to an active organization where working on the streets is a major activity in contrast to a critical received version of voluntary organizations as consisting of people behind desks in offices; another benefit of the organization is said to be that even those people who are hard to reach actually can be reached by approaching them on the street.

In the US nomination of a candidate from the Democratic Party for the 2004 Presidential election, the Governor of Vermont, Howard Dean and his staff used sophisticated methods for donating money on the Internet. Etc.

The fact that there is a professional practice called fundraising that uses complex techniques for collecting money is not in itself an indication that the activity of giving money for good causes is just a bogus. On the contrary, individual giving is generally a good thing, given that the donated help will be operationalized in a correct way in order to reach its destination where help can be performed in form of material giving or health care. This is also one of the objects of quality assurance in the practice of fundraising. The political economic context of individual giving is, however, best possible in a context where helping based on taxes are decreasing while giving is an activity that is often liberated from taxation. One can therefore say that the cultivation of individual giving does a job at downsizing social responsibility in the classical welfare forms. I will therefore say both that there is not intrinsic need of being suspicious against giving for good causes, as well as this giving is enabled and motivated by the systematic downsizing of public responsibility in other forms.

Fundraising is a business activity. This may appear as a contradiction in terms but is based both on the economic activity as such and on the use of innovative methods and management. The organizations for professional fundraisers openly share best practices for coping with what is called post-9/11 and post-tsunami (as well as post-Katrina and post-Wilma) fundraising strategies. Analyzing this form of business management is interesting for many reasons, not the least because, like in the case of the Greenpeace-version of the face to face method, human relations, empathy and the concern for the other is defined and operationalized in these money collecting strategies. Understanding how 'the other' is entering the scene as a concern is evidently interesting also from a levinasian perspective. When fundraising professionals talk of 'balancing the personal and the professional' we can see at work a theory and a practice of relating to the other with oneself as one important part of the equation, as well as the specific way that personal and professional resources are blended to reach an optimal constellation. To some extent, this is not very different from how participant observation and ideas of friendship are obvious themes in the methodology of ethnography, and those are also interesting candidates for a levinasian analysis. When professional fundraisers talk of 'gift planning products' it is their way of packaging giving into relative discrete business projects, each with their own logics, dynamics and motivation. The ethics of giving is also linked to a professional understanding of distributing help, often displayed in the concrete logistics of a scene for giving relief. As in other areas of business, there is also competition between donors and between fundraising organizations to attract their share



of the market. One tool for the persuasion of potential donors which play a role in this competitive framework is ‘informed giving’, where fundraisers stress the legitimacy of giving to this or that organization along with the specification of a guarantee that the help will ‘come through’. This skill is also promoted by an American authority of the mechanics of giving, XXX, who says ‘Give freely but give wisely’.

It is far beyond this presentation to go deeper into this fascinating blend of altruism and business. A more thorough analysis of fundraising would, however, need to relate to important themes in economic anthropology focusing on issues such as the symbolic representation of money and the moral evaluation of monetary exchange in order to explore the range of cultural meanings around monetary transactions (Parry & Bloch 1989). Influential economic theories, e.g. by Marx and Simmel in their respective ways, state that money act as a powerful agent of social and cultural transformation. Money is credited with intrinsic power and attributed as the agent of social change. They also note that money encapsulates a spirit of rationality, calculability and anonymity which potentially may both cause and stand in contrast to a spirit of community associated with *Gemeinschaft*. The historical observation that money is linked to the growth of individualism and to the decline of solidarity communities in which social bonds are dissolved (but can also strengthen), is a theory that may be typically Western in its outlook. In this context, the observation by Mauss (1990) that money permits possession at a distance provides a critical vantage point of analyzing the beneficiality (for whom?) of aid in a post-national context.

### (3) CONFIGURING THE OTHER IN TSUNAMI AID ADVERTISEMENTS

In this part of the presentation I will use advertisements from the fundraising organizations that are soliciting help for tsunami relief efforts in order to pursue a levinasian approach to business and business ethics in the following two chapters. As we have seen, so called ‘idealist’ organizations (or ‘third’ sector or non-profit) in their efforts aimed at helping others, sometimes get criticized for their activities as being ‘too commercial’, i.e. too much oriented towards profit at the cost of exploiting the subject for help. One such critical indication consists in understanding how the ‘other’ is conceptualized and understood.

Ways of understanding the other as an interactive party is a common analytic strategy in various approaches to communication and discourse, such as conversation analysis (recipient design), ethnography of communication (agency or the 'user'), reception analysis (implied reader) and critical theory (interpellation). A (post-)phenomenological approach (Levinas) focusing on the other in an inter-subjective relation is related to these analytical approaches, and proves useful for the analysis of various aspects of business practices such as, to name a few, the writing of business plans, negotiations, marketing and advertising, practices that are all involved in the activity of configuring the consumer. There are several ways of talking about the other in business practices, often within the framework of the logic of commodification where the consumer is conceived as a necessary link in a chain of profitable or sustainable business activities. In this sense commodification is an explicit reduction of the consumer in his/her role as a provider of something, most often in the role of providing money for objects or services. This is a sense of configuration in which the other comes through as a cold number in a chart of calculations. But there are also other, radically different, ways in which the other is addressed in business practices, and where he/she is elevated to heightened properties and where the commodifying aspects and the explicit reductionism of the financial logic is mitigated. In particular this take place in advertisements, where the consumer is associated with visions, dreams and the sparkling glory of celebrities and ideal states of being, thus attempting at lowering the potential for consumer exploitation in form of a reduction. In practice, these extreme positions for addressing the consumer is blended in various ways that cannot be dealt with here, but these positions prove useful for analytical purposes and for stating a communicative and ethical challenge that is encountering everyone who is advertising for fundraising, namely how can the matters of money and morality be combined. In the context of advertising 'the other' can be both the addressee/consumer of the advertisement (cf. above) and 'the other' who will be the receiver of help. So there are at least two versions of 'the other' to be accounted for and none of these can be represented in terms of the language of economic reductionism. Presumably, the fundraiser wants to come through as a responsible actor who cares for 'the other' in both these regards. Whether or not this is accomplished is of course both an empirical question and a question of perspective taken.

The advertisements soliciting aid for the tsunami victims appeared during a period of twenty days from December 28, 2004 to January 16, 2005 in the leading daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* (DN). The material consists of 43 ads, some of which are repeated two or three times, which makes the total of 54 individual items (which makes an average of almost 3 ads per day). The advertisements consist of a range of formats, mostly covering a full right hand page at the most salient position in the paper (p. 5 or 7), but some of which are also smaller and placed in less conspicuous settings.

The first advertisement [1], by 'Medecins Sans Frontiers' (Doctors Without Borders), appears two days after the earthquake and it covers half a page somewhere in the middle of the main section of the paper. This is the organization that was mentioned before who aborted their collecting campaign after a week because they could not accept more monetary aid. This ad is designed in black with white caption and in its structural simplicity it is a representative example also for the majority of the following full page ads.

The second example [2], by the 'Red Cross' appears another two days later with a full page ad in white with black caption. The ad is repeated in identical forms another two times and in a smaller version a third time.

Comparing the structure of these first two examples we can detect a simple pattern that is the recurring structure of the most representative ads for tsunami aid. The structure consists of the following five (sometimes six) parts.

(1) *Request for help.* The ad is almost always introduced by a short request for help ('Help us to help the stricken in South Asia' or 'Help the victims of the flood wave 020-213 213')

(2) *Text.* The text consists of discrete parts that explain, first of all, how people in the region have been affected by the earthquake and the tsunami, and how many these people are according to estimations. Secondly, these figures are emphasized by an assertion of the magnitude of the events which thus helps to motivate the solicitation for help. Thirdly, the organization declares that they are already in place and in full activity of coping with relief efforts and with the rebuilding of infrastructures and, importantly, with

the anticipatory work of coping with the advent what is called ‘the next step’ of the catastrophe, namely the risk for infections and an epidemic. In the third part examples are often given of the concrete work that is done (e.g. rebuilding water supply systems and sanitation, assist the wounded and homeless). Fourth, the plea for request is repeated where the reader of the ad is addressed as ‘you’ or ‘your help’.

(3) *Administration*. In the administrative section of the ad all relevant information is given as to how the help can be given, by phone, by website and by postal giro. Here is also the place for specifying the suggested business model, singular payment or regular payment. The specification of how help can be given by postal giro is always followed by the ubiquitous formulation ‘mark the gift’ or ‘mark the counterfoil (talon) ‘XXX’ where ‘XXX’ stands for ‘South Asia’ or ‘Victims of the flood wave’, i.e. the very same words that are given in the initial request (1).

(4) *Thanks*. The actual text of the ad is often (but not always) ended with a singular ‘Thanks!’ which works as a confirmation that a gift is given according to the initial request.

(5) *Logotype*. The final part of this structure is the logotype of the organization usually depicted at the bottom of the ad/page. The logotype consists per definition of a visual representation which is a symbolization of the organization along with the full name of the organization.

A third example [3] shows the sixth aspect of the structure which is not always present but is an attribute of organizations that are not as well known as The Red Cross. The organization Plan has its logotype at the bottom of the ad, and this logotype is juxtaposed to a short text that introduces the organization, its focus and working philosophy of aid. The sixth aspect of the structure is therefore the informative label.

(6) *Informative label*. The short presentation of the organization, along with its mission and philosophy of aid is also followed by a short description of how they focus on particular aspects of aid. A specification is also made which is of an administrative character, namely that the financing mostly takes place through sponsorships, i.e. regular payments as the preferred business model. Another example of an informative label is taken from

the The Children's Fund [4]. Here is specified, almost in exactly the same wordings as in the previous ad, but here it is also added that The Children's Fund is under the surveillance and control by a specific Foundation for Collection Control. This is one of the few organizations in this material that find it necessary to exemplify this form of surveillance. The background is that all non-profit organizations that have an account starting with the numbers 90 per definition are open for public control (and liberated from taxation) by the very same authority.

The last two ads in this material bring to the core that life and business will continue after the tsunami. The first of these [5] is from the travel agency *Fritidsresor*, one of the major providers of charter holidays to Thailand. The message of this ad is 'business as usual' through the request 'Travellers are more welcome than ever to Phuket'. At the bottom of the page is depicted the lowest price (SKr 6995) for a two week vacation in Thailand during the month of February. Less than a month after the catastrophe providers in the tourism industry is back in business. The person who features with a portrait in the ad is the information executive of the travel company, Lottie Knutsson, who became known during the first days of the tsunami as a person who gave very clear and correct information, in contrast, this was claimed, to the many 'excuses' and 'half-lies' that were presented by the official representatives in the government. In [6], a few days earlier, a similar kind of message is brought forward by the travel agency *Vingresor*. Back in business are also the *Swedish Association of Attorneys at Law* who in [7] informs the public about the conditions for legal assistance for the victims of the flood waves and how this help can be claimed. The message is that several legal firms will assist their legal assistance pro bono, and that applications for this free help can be addressed to the Association that will make an evaluation of the applicant's specific 'need' and 'suitability'.

Throughout, the ads communicate a simple message: they are (already) there, they will remain there, and they will keep the public informed. These are important aspects of building a trusting relationship with a group of givers that can be trust upon also for future help. This trust is certainly part of what is paid for by the help given, a help that not only is transformed into medicines, tents, food and cooking gear, but is also needed for the maintenance of the organization at the national level as well as at the places where help are distributed over a long period of time.

### *Who is 'the other'?*

In order to analyze the configuration of the other we need to study who the actors are. In [1] the actors are 'us', 'the stricken' and 'you'. The category of 'us' or 'we' is clearly referring to the personnel from the organization, also mentioned by their full organizational name ('Doctors Without Borders') and 'medical personnel'. The category of 'the stricken' are the subjects for the earthquake and they are referred to in several ways, as 'the stricken in South Asia', as 'one million people', as 'wounded and homeless'. The third category, the singular 'you', is obviously the one who is addressed by the ad, 'you' whose help is needed by 'us'. In contrast to the first category of actors, the second and third categories are different forms of 'others', the other that needs help and the other that is helping 'us' in order to help 'the stricken'. There is a logical relationship between the three categories, where the category of 'us' are the mediating party between helpers and the helped. The request for help is thus placed into a narrative chain of command, starting with 'us' as the initiator but geared towards establishing a link between 'you' and 'the stricken', mediated by 'us'. The first category is represented as the active party, already in place in the area and at present in full action of helping. In the second category there is no apparent distinction between categories of others that are 'stricken', the agency is anonymous and refers to a large plentitude of people. The third category is the implied addressee of the initial request ('Help us to help the stricken in South Asia!') and 'you' returns more explicitly in the repeated request ('We need your help!'). This is a request to the passive individual bystander to join forces with those who are already actively helping, it is thus described as a form of cooperation where we as addressees ('you') are offered the opportunity of sharing in a process of helping.

In [2] there is a similar inventory of category of actors. First, the category of 'us' or 'we' is also mentioned with the full organization name ('The Red Cross') or as 'personnel' or 'personnel from The Red Cross'. These are perhaps described as even more active and methodical as in the previous ad, at least more vivid examples are given of how and in what terms their action is operationalized, coping with the risk of future epidemics as well as rebuilding the necessary infrastructure show signs of experience from previous events of this kind and helps to establish a reputation of successful help. The second category is more dramatically described than in the previous ad, revealing bits and pieces of the catastrophe as experienced from the perspective of various actors, children,

parents, families, millions of people: ‘The flood waves have torn children out of the hands of their parents and the lives of millions of people is scattered’; ‘...and families separated’. The third category is implied as the subject of the initial request and is more explicitly mentioned in the repetition of the request in connection with the administrative details of the ad. The final ‘Thanks!’ is also addressed to the ‘you’ in shape of the reader or the giver of aid.

### *How is the other represented?*

In [1], the other in terms of ‘the stricken’ is clearly different from the other in the form of ‘you’, the helper. ‘The stricken’ are the large number of victims that have been hit by the catastrophe, they are an anonymous plentitude that are wounded and homeless and they also run the risk of being hit by another future horror in the form of epidemics. All these characteristics helps describing them as many, as suffering and in urgent need of help due to forces without the reach of anyone’s command. The next category of the other is situated in a position radically different from the previous. Even though this is not explicitly mentioned, the rhetorical effect is that the category of ‘you’ has all the things (and possibly more) that the victims are lacking, that which also make them into victims. The category of ‘you’ has not been stricken, they are not in urgent danger of being hit by epidemics, they are neither wounded nor homeless. They are thus perfectly safe in their distant position, both in terms of geography and in terms of the degree of ‘strickenness’. There is thus a dramatic difference between these two categories of the other, each taking place in the opposite ends of a continuum between safe and unsafe. Another apparent juxtaposition is that the other in the form of victims is mentioned in an anonymous collective, while the category of the helper is addressed in singular as an individual ‘you’. The request for responsible action is then just not made in general but is directed at an individual person in his/her condition as having a surplus and being asked for help

In [2], as previously mentioned, the dramatic effect is increased by the provision of brief narratives of the events that took place as a result of the earthquake. Dramatic descriptions of how this affected children, parents and families, emphasize and make more concrete the kind of suffering that people experienced. The lives of millions of families are ruined in a material sense as well in a kinship sense. Also in this ad, there is a

dramatic difference between the two categories of the other, where the other in terms of 'you' is reminded of what he/she have not lost and how this reminder of non-loss works to motivate direct help to those who have made this loss. Graphic examples of what this loss and non-loss is consisting of is given: houses have been ruined, water system has collapsed, and electricity poles have been broken. The request for help implied in the first plea, is repeated in connection with the administrative details and is finally completed with the final 'Thanks!' which thus works to create an assumption that a deal is settled and that money have been given. The rhetorical effect of the final 'Thanks!' can also be understood as providing a slot for the addressee to be filled with some form of action, thus 'Thanks!' can also be regarded as a new request where the reader is doing what is expected by the macro structure of the ad.

*What kinds of emotions or rationality are called for?*

In both ads ([1] and [2]) there is a blend of emotionality as well as rationality. Emotionality is evoked both by the factual and the dramatic descriptions of the magnitude of the catastrophe. This is also an effect of the dramatic differentiation between the two forms of others, the unsafe victims and the safe bystanders, where emotionality is an effect of an assumed feeling of unjustified differences in life conditions due to a natural disaster that without any kind of discrimination hits innocent people. The explicit reference to flood waves, earthquake and its catastrophic effects are further dramatic examples of an experiential dimension that are exemplified by the brief narratives telling the story of how children were torn out of the hand of their parents, and how family members have become separated from each other. All these concrete examples along with the unexplainable indifference of natural forces helps to create emotions.

These emotions are then geared towards an act of giving which is certainly based on and motivated by an emotional willingness to assist by financial means, but the financial transaction also have rational properties. The rational action of giving is presented as the logical alternative for relevant action for a distant and passive (but compassionate) bystander. The act of giving is thus the outcome of a form of calculation that is suggested already in the ad, where the organization already have concluded that help is needed and in what form this could come. It is certainly not an option to assist in direct help, for instance by flying to the area and offer one's manpower, but it is rationalized



and reduced into the action of giving. The suggested rational act of giving is thus offered as the possible form of action following from a brief encounter with an emotional and unjustified difference. In [2] there is a dramatic juxtaposition between the magnitude and character of the catastrophe and the suggested kind of help: ‘The catastrophe is enormous and we therefore need a lot of money’. To some extent one can say that in this request a suggested and dramatic contract is offered between the need due to the catastrophe and the options for helping. The rationality of giving is also emphasized by the way that the work of the organization is depicted as ‘post-national’ (a term that is not used by them) [1], methodical, well organized, experienced, wisely anticipating the next step of possible epidemics. The rationality of giving is a consequence of the emotional impact that the catastrophe has given the passive bystander who is then shaken up from his/her state of passivity and exposed to the unfairness of natural disaster.

#### *Who is helping whom?*

The definition of ‘help’ is conceived of in two consecutive steps, first the help that the giver can provide to the organization, then the help that the organization is able to provide to those that suffers. In both ads formulations such as ‘Help us to help [1] and ‘You can help us to help’ figures. In [1] the header explicitly defines help as the mediated help via the organization. In [2] the rubric describes instant and unmediated help but is directly followed by a telephone number that is the administrative implication of indirect help. Direct help is so to say a catchword for directing help via the organization.

The first help is defined exclusively in financial terms, but the second step in the process of help is more vividly described in medical, constructional, infrastructural and sanitation terms. If the first step of the process of help consists of ‘a lot of money’, the second step consists of ‘medicine, tents and cooking gear’ as well as restoring ‘the vital networks of water supply and sanitation. The activity of mediation and transformation of money into concrete help is thus an important part of the logic of giving aid, and it emphasizes the importance of the organization coming through as a serious and experienced actor in its role of transforming money into concrete help.

The simple answer to the question why there is a need to differentiate between two kinds of help is simply that there would be no foundation for the helping organization without voluntary, individual and generous giving. In both these ads, help is suggested to be given

at the spur of the moment, but there is not specific indication, like in [3], that help preferably should be given on a successive basis in order to fulfill the goal of becoming a ‘reconstruction sponsor’ or, in the case of UNICEF, becoming a ‘world parent’.

In this brief analysis, I have used just a limited number of examples from the material in order to show a fairly typical image of how the other is configured and how help is organized. Certainly there are differences between different organizations as well as differences that take place during this period of twenty days, due to the events in South East Asia, new earthquakes in the area, the conclusion that no more financial help can be expected and the need to re-direct giving to other aid projects. A close reading of the ads during this period reveals several dynamic aspects that show that the ads are successively modified in order to cope with the development. Many other interpretive approaches than those mentioned above could also be taken, to name just a few: how places are named and how geographical areas are juxtaposed and/or converged; how the local procurement of help is organized; an inventory of the business models for help that are used; how different kinds of help (money vs. time and effort) are balanced; how the organizations legitimate themselves as authorized mediators of help; how ideology (for instance Christian, or ‘religiously and politically independent’) is represented; etc.

#### (4) RESISTING THE COMMODIFICATION OF THE OTHER

What we have been doing so far leads up to the main question for this paper: Is the other referred to in the ads understandable in terms of the levinasian other? Can or should it be understood in such a way and if so, for what reasons? In this section we will pursue these questions about the possible theoretical ways of understanding the intersubjectivity and ethics of aid and thereby lean on the brief analysis from the previous chapter.

I will use themes in Levinas’ elaboration of the ethics of the Other as an interpretive/analytical tool, but this is not the place to repeat the basic theory of Levinas in any more detail, neither an attempt to find a perfect match between the practice of aid and a possible theoretical framework, although it is interesting to see how these configurations of the other are related. In this section, I will reproduce some brief properties of the levinasian theory of the Other and the relationship between the Other

and I (being, I believe, aware of some of the pitfalls of an edifying character conditioned by a short theoretical description), following Adriaan Peperzak in his introduction to Levinas, *To the Other* (1993:19-25).

In contrast to the transcendental activity of the autonomous subject, Levinas posits the encounter with the Other as ‘the irreducible moments of heteronomy’ (ibid 19). The classical phenomenological analysis of the self perceiving the subjective world is both a point of departure for Levinas as well as it is a central focus of his critique. While being an autonomous subject is a necessary condition not only for subjective consciousness but also for relationships, it is not a sufficient condition. Instead of regarding the reality as the unfolding of one basic and central instance called ‘the Same’, the irreducibility of the Otherness must be recognized. Levinas describes the movement from and also the tension between the states on ontological monism towards the pluralist conception of the relationship between self and Other as foundational. The Other is concretized in the basic everyday fact of seeing other people, especially the concrete face of another human being. Seeing another human being as the Other is not a matter of egocentric perception, neither it is a matter of recognition, or aesthetics, where observing the need, pleasure, or aesthetics are all aspects which are transformed into properties of the Same’s material or spiritual property. With the appearance of the Other the world of the subject breaks apart, it shatters into pieces and disrupts the horizon of the autonomous being. The Other is concretized as face or as speech which interrupts the illusory safety of being by making ‘a hole[in] it by disarranging my arrangements without ever permitting me to restore the previous order’ (ibid 20). Levinas insists that the appearance of the Other is not a matter of perception, emotion or cognition, it is something that is experiential, it is here and now and it is a matter of how it feels when the other regards me or talk to me (*Autrui me vise, Autrui me parle*). Although the relationship with the Other is a concrete encounter ‘any other is the revelation of the Other’ (20), which might be understood as any other human being having the option of being the Other. The Other is per definition someone who cannot be grasped, he/she comes from on high and is best understood in a state of indeterminacy or unrecognizability as a stranger. The Other issues a command and prohibition not to be killed, but to be cared for. The self, if in a relation to the Other, know him/herself to be obliged to follow this command and prohibition. Levinas changes the conventional priority of epistemological and ethical categories from the abstract to the concrete. In order to fulfill the command it is not a matter of coping with

finite needs, but with infinite desire, it is not a matter of satisfaction but an infinite task that will have no end. Levinas stresses also the importance of the hedonistic aspects of existence, the importance of a home in which to dwell, otherwise the human being is completely lost. He stresses the importance of love, enjoyment, which as well as the importance of being at home, are categories of hedonism. While Levinas do not deny that there are certain forms of totality that are both good and necessary, this is not his main analytical concern. He acknowledged this world of 'economy' (ibid 24) but looks beyond towards the ethical intersubjectivity as a supreme (but very basic) law from which all responsibility is derived. The offer included in 'Me voici' ('Here I am') is understood as offering time and energy for being with the Other. This results in a suffering for the I who is obliged to serve the Other as a kind of strange master. Peperzak succinctly summarizes the encounter: 'The absoluteness revealed by the other's visage causes an earthquake in my existence.' (25).

Far from being comprehensive, this short description identifies some of the main themes in Levinas theory of ethical intersubjectivity which can provide a starting point for the subsequent identification of some of these aspects in the ads from the tsunami fundraising efforts. What is of interest here is of course to relate Levinas notion of the Other to the various dimensions of the other that are displayed in the ads. We will work this through the following focal points: (1) Building relationships; (2) Suffering; (3) Emotionality and rationality; (4) The request and the command; (5) The world of economy; (6) The Other and the other.

#### *(1) Building relationships*

Clearly the establishing of relationships is of concern both to the theory and to the practice in the ads. In the ads, there are several relationships that are built up, between 'us' as mediator and distributor of aid and 'you'; between 'you' as helper and they as 'helped'; between all of these three in their logical relationship mediated by 'us'. Trust and seriousness play an important role in all these relationships. All these relations are called for in a time of crisis, caused by natural disaster, so it is not thought of as a default condition for inter-human relationships, more something that is mobilized in a state of emergency. Although, the aid providers declare that they both have historical experience and goals of sustaining aid into the future, this does not always affect the relationship

between 'you' and 'they' at a basic level. Building relationships in these ways are the means for collecting aid that can be distributed.

In the theory of Levinas, relationships are a basic aspect of 'the infrastructures of responsibility' (Forstorp, 2005). Regarding the relationship as a default condition invokes pluralism rather than monism as the condition for experiencing reality and social life. In this relationship the Other is and should be irreducible and understood in terms of a Stranger. Any other can become an Other as a result of a concrete encounter.

### *(2) Suffering*

The relationship that is built between the parties is of different kind. The category of 'us' in relation to 'you' is a contractual relationship based on rational calculation, also the relation of the aid workers to the 'stricken' is of a rational, skilled character including professional knowledge in medicine, plumbing, construction and safety. On the other hand, the category of 'you' in relation to 'they' is of an emotional kind. It is also indirect since the parties actually never meet but is always related to in a mediated way. 'They' are suffering from all kinds of implications in the wake of the earthquake and some of these sufferings are dramatically specified. In the argumentation for aid, we can also say that the 'you' is invited to momentarily share this suffering by being reminded of what others lack and what 'you' still has. Experiencing this unjustified fateful difference in life conditions is also a kind of suffering that the passive bystander is exposed to.

Regarding Others not only in a time of pain and crisis but more regularly, disrupts the seeming coherence of the subject's consciousness. This disrupting event where the horizon scatters is something valuable because it opens the possibility for a sense of vulnerability in which the Other comes through. It creates a hole in the world of order, it is, to quote Peperzak, causing 'an earthquake in my existence' and this is something good. To be shaken up from a world of self-sufficiency is something good.

### *(3) Emotionality and rationality*

As noted above, there are both properties of emotionality and rationality in these relationships. One can also say that the one (emotionality) leads over into the other (rationality), when the emotionality in suffering motivates rational financial action, not just empathy, tears and compassion. The latter emotional reactions are certainly both relevant and necessary, but for help being qualified as help in this context they have to be

exchanged into another kind of currency by means of a morality of exchange. The moral twist from emotionality to rationality is mediated by the category of 'us' who are both present in their role as broker and as executive in the context of help.

The relationship with the Other is not of a rational character, neither of a simple emotional character, but it is experiential, it is here and now, a sensation that cannot be reduced. This relationship consists of a command and its logical corollary is the obligation to be responsible in whatever way come forward. It is not a matter of a moral calculation in which one's own goodness is optimized by a specific form of attitude against another human being.

#### *(4) The request and the command*

The request for help in the initial position is repeated in the ads in a logical way. The first call [1] is a straight request, but the second request comes in the context of administration and finance. In the case of The Red Cross [2], the request is direct but already linked to an administrative context already at the initial position. The request for help is emphasized, either by capital letters or by underlining and is in one case followed by the punctuation of an imperative. The request links 'you' (the helper) with 'the stricken' (the helped), not in a direct sense but mediated by the organization. A request cannot thus be responded to in a direct way but only indirectly.

A command is a concrete and speechless request not for some material need but for an indeterminate desire. This is not mediated by others, but directly experienced by the self when regarding the Other in its state of extreme vulnerability. The most basic command is the prohibition against taking the life of the Other and thus the most basic obligation is not to violate this command. In a concrete sense, a command can certainly be enacted by concrete action, but these cannot and must not be pre-specified, because of two reasons: the risk of defining responsibility in terms of need rather than desire; and the risk of reinforcing the self as an effective helper.

#### *(5) The world of economy*

The safe is juxtaposed to the unsafe. The individual stands against the collective. Those who still have stand against those who experience a lack or absence of basic needs. Examples of the aspects of life that are lacking in the world of 'the stricken' are basic

things such as a home, water, sanitation, electricity, food, medicines, means of subsistence, etc. There is an implicit tension between these parties in terms of basic needs. In Levinas, the world of economy represents the hedonistic dimension of reality. He acknowledges enjoyment, love, having a home, having food, drink and safety in a social setting. But although the home and the world of economy (in the sense of 'oikos', a household) is an important thing to appreciate and which can never be reduced, it is never a sufficient condition for a responsible life. Life is only ethical if there are relationships, and these always go 'beyond' (Peperzak 1997). The presence for the Other, 'me voici', is always a necessary condition for the ethical life.

*(6) The Other and the other*

There are at least two versions of the other in the ads, the other as helper and the other as helped, while the category of 'us' does not appear to take a role of stranger but rather as an always present mediator. The relationship between these others is unequal and in need of correction. The other as helper has something that could alleviate the suffering of the other as needing help. The other as victim is described as suffering and the other as potential helper is called to be reminded that there is a suffering to be done in relation to the other party. The other as helper is an individual who can be mobilized as a responsible party, while the other as victim is the subject of these measures.

The Other in Levinas is 'the irreducible moments of heteronomy' (Peperzak, 1993:19) that can never be understood unless the indeterminate strangeness of the Other is preserved. The Other comes from high with his/her command and by means of this asymmetry the self is obliged to be responsible. This relation is asymmetrical and should so remain. It is not a matter of alleviating differences so that an initial asymmetry is replaced by a supposedly desired symmetry. Any other can be the Other but he or she (or 'it', cf. Benso) is always concretely encountered through face or speech.

Let us then return to our initial concern about commodification and the observation that in business discourse, commodification is a necessary aspect of the business logic, as well as the tendency towards reductionism in a process of commodification risks turning the consumer into an unwanted position. This, we observed at a general level, is mitigated by a resistance (or at least a balance) towards commodification, thus in order to alleviate the tendency towards reductionism by its opposite values. We hypothesized that the context

of advertising for help is a context in the both the other as helper and the other as helped should accordingly be mitigating against commodification.

What we have seen in the ads is a complex picture. Both, that there are at least two possible others, and that the relationship that are established between them displays properties both of commodification and the move towards mitigation. We could safely say that the relationship between 'us' and the two others both are of a professional and contractual character. Especially in relation to 'you' the relation is reduced to the terms of finance succinctly formulated in the ad from The Red Cross: 'The catastrophe is enormous and we therefore need a lot of money'. But also the relation between the mediator of help and the victims is formulated in terms that are reduced to discrete professional activities in the realm of plumbing and medicine, thus commodified as help that is specified and deliverable.

At the same time, both others can be understood as being elevated from a condition of being commodified, into an elevated form of relationship that takes on idealistic properties. These properties that are abstracted from concrete action are the result of the mediated, indirect relationship between helper and helped. There are thus indications of a resistance against the process of commodification, at least in the sense that the parties are idealistically portrayed in the dramatic categories of helper and helped and thus removed from the concrete field of action.

To stress, one could say that a form of elevated use of the other is used in order to establish a relationship that is more commodified, because, at least, this characterizes one aspect of the relatively complex sets of relationships involved. To put it a bit more critically, one can say that a sense of the other as Other (not to indicate any kind of equivalence) is actually used in order to persuasively act as a fundraiser for aid. Whether this could be regarded or not as form of exploitation or as a form of successful implementation, both of the Other and of the subject's sensitivity for the dimensions of otherness that Levinas brings forward, is a question that could be discussed. The normative question would be: Is it possible and advisable to use the Other in advertising?

## (5) THE BUSINESS OF ETHICS AND THE 'BUSYNESS' OF LEVINAS



In this presentation I have focused on the tsunami aid efforts in order to approach a genre for advertising and fundraising in which the other might play a role, as giver of help and as helped. I have used a very sketchy interpretation of Levinas alongside a similarly sketchy summary of the way the other is described in the ads. We found that there were no easy match between the two forms of configuration of the other, between Levinas and the ethical ads, but this was not to be expected. We found however, that there were some traits of an elevated understanding of the other, that is probably not due to a levinasian influence, but is more due to a general ethical concern for the other in a society which based on various ideological heritages, ranging from Judeo-Christian sources, to the modern version of social democracy and its more recent 'third way' version representative of an enlightened liberal democracy. This elevated notion of the other helped, in our terms, to mitigate the otherwise commodifying tendency of the other in a business transaction. This sketchy comparison raises further questions concerning the value of using the theories of Levinas as an interpretive framework in business ethics or, more generally, in applied ethics. And it is to this more general question that I will finally turn the attention.

*The imperative of application in applied ethics*

The application of ethics in the realm of health, environment, media, business and other ranges of implementation is often claimed to be a relatively disinterested impersonal method for the analysis of relevant real life problems. Ethical experts are expected to 'illuminate', 'explain', 'treat' or in any other instrumental way contribute to alleviating moral discomfort by making an analysis of problems as well as identifying possible measures for action and their consequences. The analysis is made by recourse to pre-specified norms for moral analysis and argumentation. In approaching situated problems applied ethicists are less interested in analyzing the locally produced character of problems, than in executing an analysis from the position of a paradigmatic 'view from nowhere'. Applied ethics as an intellectual practice is a strange conglomerate of conflicting concerns: the practices of abstraction vs. real life problems; normative elitist analysis vs. the advocacy of participant's perspectives; clinical application of analysis and argumentation vs. accounting for locally produced moral discourse. A closer analysis of applied ethics may yield the veiled practices of moralization inherent in its approach.

*The uneasy relation of Levinas to business*

Is it possible and advisable to relate levinasian ethics and business ethics? And, for what reasons is this done? How is Levinas used in such endeavors, as an analytical theory and/or as a normative theory?

There is an uneasy relation between the thought of Levinas and applied ethics that begs many questions. From the perspective of Levinas, applied ethics and its imperative of application can be regarded as an example of the 'totalizing' attempts in philosophy and social science that he is criticizing. Levinas criticizes all 'total' philosophies that aim to 'illuminate', 'explain' or 'treat'. There is also an uneasy relation between Levinas and business. Could we think of any other social practice, except for abuse, violence and war, better exemplifying the reduction of the other to the same, than in the processes where social relationships are reified and commodified? Unconditional respect for the Other meets greed and exploitation. The realm of business (and business ethics) seems, at first glance, to be an unlikely context for considering the ethical reasoning of Levinas. On further reflection, however, there seems to be several opportunities for pursuing this line of thought. Any business activity is a configuration of the consumer, an interpellation and a way of understanding the other. Sometimes the other is constructed as a blend of instrumental reduction and 'heightened' Other. The subtle intricacies of any business negotiation involve both symmetrical and asymmetrical intersubjectivities. Sometimes in marketing and advertising, the Other is literally invoked and its commodification is resisted, maybe for instrumental as well as for ethical purposes.

What would be the outcome of relating Levinas to business ethics, would it be a program for transforming business ethics (and business practices) into a normative program? Would not a levinasian theory in the hands of clever art directors and copy editors be one of the worst possible scenarios of exploiting the deep seated character of goodness and good ideas? Would it not be an infernal thing? What would happen if the ideas of Levinas came to influence the world of business and business ethics? What would be the effects for business and the effects for ethics?

### *The problem of reification of Ethics in Levinas*

I will also mention the need to stay clear of an easy reification of 'Ethics' in Levinas. This concern echoes the nietzschean distinction between morality and Morality (Nietzsche, 1966) where morality is opposed to 'the science of morals'. I would not regard a neat summary of the theory of Levinas (but that is perhaps what I did above) as a basis for a similarly neat interpretive tool, as congenial to the levinasian project, but I would regard that as a totalizing attempt at domesticating a theory beyond its reasonable limits.

### *The business of ethics and the 'busyness' of Levinas*

Fundraising can be regarded as an ethical and financial activity where resources are collected and transformed into help. It is a form of business that is in the business of ethics and that make ethics its business. It takes place in the branch of responsibility. We have noted that this is becoming increasingly sophisticated in terms of the business models used. Can helping Others constitute a business idea!? Can respecting the Other be merged with a certain (beneficial) exploitation of the Other? Whether or not this is a good thing can be discussed with help of some reflections from the Swedish example. In the example of the tsunami aid efforts we thus have to approach some possible explanations for the unprecedented dimensions of the aid given by the Swedes.

Why did the Swedes give so much? In the first couple of days following the tsunami, Doctors Without Borders collected around 4 million SKr. This can be compared to the first couple of days following the earthquake in Pakistan in October 2005, when the collected amount reached ca 50 000 SKr after the same time period. The fact that there were Swedes involved in the first incident, but not in the second (at least not in a large degree) must be part of the explanation.

Why did the Swedes give so much money? Evidently because many Swedes were among the victims, they were blond, tanned and totally innocent visitors (as if it was possible to achieve a higher level of innocence by being a visitor?). They were not just any Swedes, but they who could afford the trip for the whole family and could afford to stay away during the peak season. An important element of identification thus helps to explain why the Swedes find it easier to help when the victims are blond and not only dark. We have

also mentioned the time of the event, Christmas a time for being with family and giving each other gifts. Giving to other Swedes in an urgent situation is thus a relevant continuation of the annual Christian cult of giving and spending for others.

We need to mention the attention by the media where images of disaster constituted an important media event during a time when television anyway is a major pastime for many people. The news was horrible but it was the kind of gore that TV values highly. The regular agenda was broken to give room for special news reports. There were solemn music and the King gave an unannounced speech. To compare, it would not be thinkable that the agenda was broken in October by announcing that now we will shift from the Champions League to the disaster in Pakistan. The media are the means for directing gifts.

There is also a need to take account of the organizational dynamics of the aid programs. There is a need for them to support their organizations, and the help given do not only get transformed into medicines and plumbing, but is also going to organizational costs and overheads. Critically, we can note that the fundraising organizations take over some of the responsibility from the welfare state. The alleged 'unpolitical' concern for the other replaces the political responsibility. This comes very handy for that power which is the process of dismantling the welfare state into a neo-liberal contractual and individualist society, which is the case in Sweden although this is enacted by the social democrats. Costly welfare, rather than costly defense budgets, makes welfare into a question of individual responsibility and taxation-liberated 90-accounts rather than fair distribution by political means. To stress the point, individual giving also far away is also something that supports the dismantling of social security at home.

We should not, however, be totally discouraged by understanding this generous giving, although in terms of the global power divide, aid helps to conserve rather than dissolve hierarchies of power. Aid is one of the few alternatives for helping that is around, and given that there is a serious willingness of helping this must be regarded as a good thing. It is perhaps one of the few alternatives to the governmental goal of giving 1% of the annual budget to foreign aid. People want to give aid and this is both basic and indisputable. The victims and their needs have been seen on television and there is empathy to alleviate discomfort but also sincere willingness of offering from a surplus to others.

Finally, I would just draw attention to the peculiar distinction between 'business' vs 'busyness' that occur already in the title of this presentation. By 'business' I refer to the calculating rationality of exchange and by 'busyness' I refer to the levinasian urgency of being 'here I am' for the Other.

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