

The guest and the ghost: for an ethics of hospitality

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Abstract

On the critical side of business ethics there is a fascinating field of research dedicated to embodied ethics: an ethics based on openness or what the Australian philosopher Rosalyn Diprose has called corporeal generosity (2002). In this field, the theme of hospitality, seen as openness to the guest, has not been addressed in detail. The present essay is a playful theoretical paper dealing with guests and ghosts, somewhat different bodies, Others who could bring embodied change to our organisations. Two reconsidered empirical cases, 'the naked manager' (2014) and the 'artist in the bank' (2017) are first used to deconstruct the idea of corporeal generosity. To introduce the idea of the guest, two similar fictions, a film by Pasolini (1968) and a book by Ali Smith (2005), are confronted. Jacques Derrida's lecture on hospitality (1997/2000) is then used to distinguish the other from the Other. The main goal of the essay is to sketch out what embodied ethics could look and feel like in our organisations, giving inspiration for people to practise it in their workplaces.

Keywords: Embodied ethics; Otherness; Playfulness; Sexuality; Death; Fiction

Introduction

While researching organisations like banks, consulting firms or accounting agencies, one cannot really speak of embodied organisations. Surely humans and their bodies work there but processes, rules, technologies, dress codes or the strict organisation of space make them disappear, as if their voices and bodies had weakened. I remember reading a contribution around 2012 called "I do not take my body to work" but I cannot remember where it was, probably a forgotten conference paper. This has now become reality. The development of artificial intelligence and robots dehumanize work: in some contexts, bodies are simply not needed anymore, and we are kindly asked to stay online. With the development of communication technologies and the recent lockdowns, there has been a further dematerialisation of work with on-line meetings or on-line shopping, with everyone adapting to even greater disembodiment. How is it then possible to talk about embodied ethics?

Embodied ethics emerged at the critical side of management studies around 2010: the idea was to put the body and senses at the core of debates about ethics, which could also bring more concrete politics into ethics. Critical scholars tackle difficult theories, from Spinoza to Levinas and back again, but also bring new theories into the field of business ethics, for example Bracha Ettinger

(Kenny & Fotaki, 2015) or Rosalyn Diprose (Hancock, 2008) (Pullen & Rhodes, 2014). The main problem however is that the field is highly theoretical, leaving the reader with the impression that embodied ethics remains a utopia in organisational life: ethical moments of recognition and joy are merely beautiful ideas that rarely happen in real life. In this context, the main goal of the present essay is to inspire its readers to practise embodied ethics in their everyday life, and more specifically at work.

Now why does that matter in the first place? We are nothing else than our bodies and if we want good relationships at work, we should be in contact with other bodies, not only colleagues but also clients or unknown persons. Work can produce good relations, solidarity, humour and even hope, even if we often hear about fear, toxic relations and bullying. In intellectual professions the body can be ignored: in American banks for example it can happen that employees enslave themselves, to an extreme point of illness and for no other reason than work itself (Michel, 2011). Michel's article shows how bodies are enslaved in modern times, without managers and without any visible terror. It also shows how in the end ethics happen through the body, thanks to the body and its suffering, hence the limits it imposes on work. My essay explains how the power of imagination linked to bodies' natural joy and openness can show us the way to a more meaningful work life, even in intellectual work or what has been called "bullshit jobs" (Graeber, 2018).

If corporate ethics is an impossibility (Bevan & Corvellec, 2007), it is because the organisation itself is an abstract entity only striving for its own survival. "An organisation is bereft of subjectivity. It cannot open itself toward and experience the infinite otherness of the Other; it is bloodless, insensible, incapable of consciousness or intention." (ibid). While striving for survival it tends to produce and reproduce the same, to normalize and homogenize, further closing down possibilities. Only humans, animals and their living bodies could open up organisations, criticize them and change them for the better.

Drawing on the broad field of business ethics, I will first demonstrate the necessity of embodied ethics and link it to hospitality as a value and to openness of bodies. Derrida's concept of hospitality has recently been used by authors in social science, namely in psychiatry (Uvais & Rahman, 2025) and in philosophy (Gallego-Ortiz, 2025), which can help management scholars to move away from the main acceptance of the term in their field: hospitality

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applied to the tourism industry. Linked to openness of bodies is Diprose's concept of corporeal generosity (2002), which I will deconstruct both theoretically and through two revisited empirical cases of bodies who see themselves as generous. The Danish case of the naked manager, a founding director of Zentropa who likes to walk around naked in the workplace (Sorensen & Villadsen, 2014) is compared to the French case of the artist working for J. P. Morgan and trying to change human relations inside the bank (Reinhold, 2017). Both cases show how corporeal generosity, if practised by one individual, can appear like vampirism, when the other is somehow consumed by subjective fantasies. Embodied ethics is a collective and conscious phenomenon and is linked to openness of bodies. This is why, in the next section, some organisational situations are imagined where openness of bodies could produce joyful encounters and hence ethical moments of humanity. Imagination is then taken one step further with the idea of the guest, the unknown person coming to stay in the organisation. The guest has three main characteristics: they are a questioning person, they have sexual power, and they are a travelling person, which links them to the ghost. Two fictions, a film by Pasolini (1968) and a novel by Ali Smith (2005), are analysed to show the specific power of guests. This is followed by an interlude with Derrida's idea of absolute hospitality, which can only be an ideal, but which is central to embodied ethics. Welcoming the other, the Other and others is at the core of ethics, even though it can be frightening because of ghosts and the risk of death.

The necessity of embodied ethics

The emergence of business ethics as a distinct discipline in the 1980s was concomitant with the birth of stakeholder theory and the urge to integrate business and society (ten Bos, 1997). Business ethicists are persons who help managers to formulate ethical rules, possibly also creating tools that could measure levels of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and thus satisfy new standards of public morality for business activities. The reliance on "moral technologies" in business ethics has been described as a tactic to fight the melancholia and emptiness lurking at the core of organisations (ten Bos, 2003). In a more recent empirical enquiry, Eric Gautier clearly shows how CSR has been instrumentalised by big firms and simply added to corporate performance measures, making it totally opposed to workers' engagement for society or moral aspirations (Gautier, 2023). Ethics are probably more about actions and gestures than about written words or codes of conduct, which gives our bodies an important role. Spoken words and the copresence of workers are important for ethical moments to occur, for example in the care for coworkers (Antoni, Reinecke, & Fotaki, 2020).

Critical Management Studies (CMS) have been identified as a strategic ally for the development of the field of business ethics (Prasad & Mills, 2010). In organisations the ethical subject is always a political subject: the one who takes action to respond to an injustice. Indeed politics and ethics cannot be conceived of separately (McMurray, Pullen, & Rhodes, 2011). Refusing the dualism between reason and emotions in the theorisation of ethics (ten Bos & Willmott, 2001), scholars have reflected on the importance of the body and bodies, soon forging a fascinating field of research interested in embodied ethics (see special issue in *Organization* in 2015). These engaged scholars have introduced very useful theoretical tools, from Rosalyn Diprose (Hancock, 2008) (Pullen & Rhodes, 2014) or Baruch Spinoza (Thanem & Wallenberg, 2015) to Bracha Ettinger (Kenny & Fotaki, 2015). The focus on embodiment and physicality is often linked but not restricted to feminist thinkers: a harmony has indeed been identified between feminist ethics and business ethics (Borgerson, 2007). Concepts such as corporeal generosity, the matrixial, care, compassion or hospitality propose rethinking what ethics are about, not necessarily to relate them to everyday situations but rather to contrast them with more rationalist conceptions based on Rawls, Kant or Aristotle. In this paper I will focus embodied ethics linked to hospitality, with a special attention for real or imagined relations. Embodied ethics are linked to human vulnerability and incompleteness: it is something we must experience on our skin and in the folds making up our subjectivity.

Ethics is not something that rules or reason can teach us, as its link to theology perhaps also shows. Religious values sometimes guide our most personal actions, and hospitality, the way we receive a guest, is one of these values linked to simple humanity. Hospitality is not only to receive a guest, but also to make sure they are warm, comfortable, fed properly and in a general way relieved. The church and its various organisations have this tradition of hospitality, mainly through monasteries where it is possible to stay while traveling, where pilgrims or wanderers are still welcome today. Nevertheless, theologians are careful not to dispense with rules and principles in ethics and surprisingly they began to embody ethics much earlier than organisational scholars (Leahy, 1986). Perhaps the body's basic needs are so obvious to everyone that no rule is needed. We could also state in a very general way, that bodies bear their own truth, like blushing, being hurt or showing marks from work or practice of a music instrument, which makes care for another body quite easy and instinctive. Now the question is: which organisations really care for our bodies?

Scholars in embodied ethics insist on the openness of bodies. Openness varies across occupations and

personalities but broadly speaking, an open body is flexible, casual, fragile and sexual. Emotions and affects are not hidden and there is an interest in others' emotions and affects. There could be attraction, indifference or repulsion between bodies but in the end, as the famous Spinoza quote goes, "no one has yet determined what the body can do" (Thanem & Wallenberg, 2015: 20). The body remains open to experiences and possibilities, and in extreme sports, arts in general or classical music, we could say that it pushes itself to the nearly impossible.

In small businesses workers and managers are necessarily close to each other, relations can hence be embodied, but in corporations with many employees, complicated rules and processes, compliance officers and CSR departments, it is hard for bodies to be open and natural. They are in a way surrounded by and stuck into corporate language. As we will show below, Rosalyn Diprose's concept of corporeal generosity (2002), though it has been used to conceptualize the openness of bodies, is unable to inspire conscious human relations.

The problem with corporeal generosity

Openness is often linked to characteristics considered as feminine, like empathy, compassion, understanding and care for the other, and as such it is a bit of a trap, suggesting that only maternal individuals can perform generosity, relying on their experience of the mother-infant relationship. It would in fact be easy to find arguments for a predominantly feminine embodied generosity, both in theory and practice, women often being those who perform care and listening in organisations. But let me take a closer look at Diprose's concept of corporeal generosity as it has been used to develop embodied ethics in organisation studies.

"A profoundly corporeal, pre-reflexive and thus aesthetic openness to the radical 'Other' involves a mode of *givenness* and therefore recognition" (Hancock, 2008: 1368); it is the very open nature of our bodies that connects us to other bodies before any conscious act of generosity. The term *givenness* in fact implies passivity, as in this other passage: "to be ethical is to *respond* to the other with generosity" (Pullen & Rhodes, 2014: 787). Indeed, it seems that we must wait for the other to be active and then accept his/her infiltration in our affective sphere, as if everything was happening at the level of particles. Corporeal generosity thus simply means to be open and ready to engage with others, to recognize them as humans. Still, it happens at an unconscious pre-reflexive level: there is "an affective dimension where bodies move and respond to other bodies whilst recognizing them as unassimilable" (Ibid: 788). As bodies move in this pre-personal dimension the paradox is that the other cannot be the other: we are merely bodies

without any clear subjectivity or even difference. We can sense the difficulty of thinking an ethic made only of affects where giving is in fact not really giving but simply being present. Furthermore, if bodies are unassimilable to each other, they are surely protected from manipulation or annihilation but at the same time, there are no great possibilities in the encounters with others. The sometimes-risky dimension of a sexual encounter is precisely what is thrilling about sex, and this thrill can also be present when very different bodies meet in a working context. When unknown persons arrive or new affects arise, it can create new situations and question the rules of the game in our organisations.

Corporeal generosity is also problematic in the context of the large corporation because some bodies are simply absent or disembodied and consequently do not respond while others, the present ones, will never get the physical recognition they need, no matter how much they give to the community. All bodies are not equally present, as "the present is a moment to be continually evaded as masculinities seek their own self-validation in the conquest of future externalities, for this is what it means to be a man." (Knights, 2014). In this article David Knights asks if disembodied masculinities undermine organisational ethics and his answer is clearly yes, which again links embodied ethics to a specific feminine behaviour, a capacity to be present here and now which seems harder for masculine beings.

Indeed, the theory of embodied generosity seems to put all bodies at the same level in an overflowing life force disrupting the self, which seems a very unlikely situation in organisational life, unless we think of a particularly joyful Christmas party where all members of the organisation would have forgotten about their professional identities. During Halloween celebrations people can also be open to the possibility of the other, even creating an uncanny space of hospitality (Kelly & Riach, 2018), but this also remains a seasonal exception, a bit like carnivals which offered possibilities for feelings to be relieved but in fact had the ultimate function of preserving social order. To gain political power the concept of embodied generosity needs to be connected to problems of disembodiment and inequality between bodies.

Going back to Rosalyn Diprose's text (2002) is useful because she also gives a political dimension to her concept, a dimension that is not so present in the papers analysed above. Generosity is openness to others and requires choice on the part of the giver. Magnanimity, another term for generosity, is giving to others beyond the call of duty: in this sense paying taxes cannot be considered generous. Noble desire, without calculation or

expectation of return, is the basis of generosity, like when you open your house to a guest. The problem is that we live in a society where the right of private property, individualism and utility dominate most interactions. Still, for Diprose, generosity is the primordial condition of personal, interpersonal and communal existence. Generosity is not the expenditure of one's possession but the dispossession of oneself. This quote from the introduction is important because it shows that generosity has some characteristics of the sacrifice or even the loss of self, which is perhaps what the authors cited above have identified as pre-personal, and which I will investigate through hospitality and openness to the guest. As we will see in the next section, bodies who practice a certain form of generosity are not always welcome in the organisation and they could even be harmful, both for themselves and for others.

Two outstanding and generous bodies?

We now turn to two reconsidered empirical cases, one of these taking place in a highly disembodied organisation. The story of the naked manager, a man imposing his nude body and physical solicitations on employees (Sorensen & Villadsen, 2014), can be contrasted with the story of an artful back-office employee in a very strict American investment bank in Paris. Like the naked manager, this person is unveiling herself to others through individual and collective art performances in her workplace. Even if she does not show her skin, she somehow imposes her body. Her action is a resistance to norms of invisibility and elegance and she herself describes artists as generous, meaning they give their time and energy to anonymous and sometimes reluctant spectators. Surely her subaltern position in the bank does not give her body the power of a manager's body: employees do not feel compelled to engage with her. In a sense her generosity is unexpected and disturbing, her body is unwanted in the disembodied organisation, creating a few situations of embarrassment. The art performances she did during lunch time with a group of contemporary dancers have been described in detail (Reinhold, 2017), but what is more interesting in the present paper are her everyday micro-performances at work: wearing noisy and colourful clothes where the norm is absolute discretion, stepping into the open-space with a loud hello, developing a creative tactic to get into the elevator and surprise colleagues, improvising a dance with the doorman. In general, her idea is to shake her colleagues who are numb and unwilling to relate to each other. Some persons do not even say hello to each other in the bank, which is considered insulting in France. Her acts of generosity are linked to openness as she unveils her artist identity and uses her body as a vehicle for political action in a very hostile and impersonal context. It is not as much about care and compassion as about provocation and this is something she has in common with the naked

manager. A female body that is not behaving as expected and somehow suggesting an untamed sexuality is not so far from the boss' undressing in front of an employee. In both cases a great discomfort is created in the workplace, which shows that open bodies are not necessarily wanted or trusted by others.

The power in the artist's alternative embodiment lies in the relations she nevertheless manages to create with some colleagues, both men and women who accept playing with her and creating moments of joyfulness and proximity. The naked manager in the Danish film production company seems to create a different situation: his management style being totally impulsive and exaggeratedly embodied creates an impossibility for employees to resist. In fact, employees could ask themselves if they need to take off their clothes to be at the same level as the boss, to take a sauna or a swim with him to negotiate a pay raise, but this would surely be a trap, especially for women who would then risk appearing as openly sexual. He also goes around hugging employees to feel their energy, which can be considered as harassment nowadays, especially in the creative industries where the #MeToo movement started in 2017. As with the artist in the bank, his embodied generosity seems to have no positive effect, partly because it is stemming from one individual working on his difference to change others. Organisational life cannot be about imposing oneself on others.

The moments the artist still managed to create in the bank were humanly rich for participants. What was ethical in these moments was that bodies stepped out from their professional roles to simply recognize others as bodies, which means vulnerable and somewhat ridiculous humans. Even in a chic bank in one of the chicest squares in Paris, bodies are just bodies. Acts of embodied generosity must find a response in the organisation otherwise they will merely appear as sacrifices in the case of the artist in the bank (in the long run her artistic action costed her more deception than joy: in fact she never managed to get any strong aesthetic answers and the gift became a hurting sacrifice) or as aggression in the case of the naked manager. If artists are generous, they are also longing for recognition, and if that does not arrive, they often become angry and sad, a dreadful combination of feelings.

Depending on the kind of organisation they are working in, individuals will develop different tactics of generosity to reach out to their colleagues, but these tactics are grounded in individual convictions, which of course can be problematic if they appear as too personal. Organisational life means being able to keep the right distance from others: often bodies remain closed to look

good and simply in control, which can produce rigidity in intellectual work, banking or accounting for instance. As embodied ethics is about openness, individuals must be ready to break up their neat surfaces and accept their own and others' weaknesses and desires. Openness does not mean kindness or care, it is rather a benevolent attitude, an affirmative and straightforward attitude, uncompromising but also humble and curious. Having this attitude, it is possible to meet the other, the coworker, client or manager, in short, the other who is not me.

Both cases described above seem like vampirism, when the other is somehow consumed by our subjective fantasies. Both the naked manager and the artist in the bank are trying to integrate colleagues in their personal world, and as such they are not good examples of generosity. How do we open up to others without paying the cost of a sacrifice and without appearing as sexual maniacs? Openness and generosity need to be activated through our imagination; indeed, which situations could permit mutual recognition or joyful encounters (Thanem & Wallenberg, 2015)?

Imagining open bodies in our workplaces

It is hard to imagine joy at work, as our bureaucratic ethos has taught us that work and pleasure should be hermetically separated. Activities are carefully scheduled in time and space and work, especially intellectual work, seems to produce closed bodies. If work is often invading our personal life the opposite is rather rare: we generally do not listen to our affects at work, or if we do, we remain careful not to show them too much. But is it not with colleagues with whom we spend nearly as much time as with our families that we should socialise best and reinvent the world? Why is it that we are so eager to cut them away from our life? What are we trying to protect if not our private life and our perceived integrity?

Embodied generosity does not seem to be about resistance to the organisation, rather it is about staying true to the body and the senses and refusing desexualisation. Perhaps the concept should be linked to sexuality and desire to avoid being only about care and a tamed femininity. To be open would mean to perceive colleagues as sensual beings and develop new affects and relations at work. It would mean an affirmation of life and some daring behaviour, between provocation and improvisation, a thinking in terms of affective possibilities and not in terms of prohibition. This attitude should be conscious and collective, a gesture leading to a talk, a walk leading to dance. Practices of openness do not need to be extreme or radical: it could be to experiment with clothes, to dress up or down, to move differently, to invite a colleague to dance in the corridor, to introduce a meeting or end a

lunch with some music, to share a barbecue in the courtyard, to get rid of ugly corporate decoration or to have a yoga session in the garden. These experiments pretty much resemble simple childlike play, but they have a power linked to gesture: they interrupt intellectual work to put bodies in relation. It could also be to invite family or friends to visit the workplace or to bring personal objects to the office, some mugs, exotic masks or a child's drawing for instance. In an investment bank all this is unthinkable, but in more creative contexts it could even be welcomed. (It is important to mention here is that I am talking about contagious individual initiatives, not about managerial team building activities.)

Movement and its sensuality are central. Collective spaces can be occupied and experimented with: walking in the corridors with high heels, dancing in the hall, sleeping on a couch in the open space, making a booklet in the photocopy room, doing some graffiti in the underground car park, planting flowers on the terrace, arriving at dusk or staying late to feel the atmosphere when no one is working. These actions are not necessarily aimed at the other, they are not about looking for recognition, they could be very selfish and devoid of meaning, but they clearly affirm the body in space. They are generous in the sense that the body is relaxed and naturally invites others into a sphere of wellbeing and sensuality. Sleeping is perhaps the best example of abandon and openness and the anti-world of organisation (Hancock, 2008). All these actions are conscious extensions of the body, both unproductive and pleasurable. They are focused on gestures rather than words, which gives us the possibility to "exercise our bodily capacities in concert with others (...) for our mutual and open-ended flourishing" (Thanem & Wallenberg, 2015: 248).

Bodily capacities clearly include sexuality. Work and sex do not have a good relationship, especially since the #MeToo movement, but they are related and both corporations and employees know that. Inviting someone into our embodied sphere (or bubble) also makes a sexual encounter possible and this is strictly prohibited at work, at least in "serious" occupations that necessarily exclude dirty bodies. All forms of sexuality would pollute perfect bodies groomed for intellectual work, but work is also something sexy and suggestive, especially if you like your work. Let us be honest: romances are very common at work, at least in France, and the word "sexy" is often used to describe inspiring presentations. Sexuality is at the core of humanity and openness of bodies thus presupposes acceptance of sexuality's chaotic and ambiguous presence.

This leads me to the idea of the guest, the person who is invited to a place, a home or an organisation to stay a

certain time. In fact, the artist in the bank invited her artist friends to make performances during lunchtime (it was once a trend for businesses to have artists in residence). Guests are not members of the organisation, but they are expected and sometimes highly desired. This is especially true in the disembodied organisation where not so much is happening, and most managers are travelling around the world to conquer new markets, some people are working from home and clients or service users are away. At universities we speak about guest researchers: they are people staying for a few months to whom we give an office, but they clearly have an ambiguous status. How long could a guest researcher stay and what is exactly their role?

The guest in fiction

Research in business ethics can benefit from creative approaches linked to arts or fiction. Speculative fiction (Sayers et al., 2021) can enable imaginative responses to current problems, as the ecological crisis, and provide a valuable resource for critical inquiry and theory-making. Using fiction can also bring enchantment to business ethics (Bell et al., 2021) and to introduce the guest it seems perfect, as “the mood of enchantment begins with surprise and is the pleasurable feeling of being charmed by the novel and as yet unprocessed encounter” (ibid: 256). Using fiction at this point of the paper means going one step further, from revisited empirical material to imagined organisational situations, and then from there to settings invented by artists. We will rely on what two authors have seen as meaningful situations to better understand our main issue: hospitality in ethics. The guest is both frightening and sexy, as we will see in the following analysis of a film and novel, which were chosen for their great artistic qualities and their similar plots. Both works were re-analysed for the purpose of this paper, linking them to the visiting artist and the issue of hospitality. To be someone’s guest implies to be invited and to behave politely and adapt to the house, home or organisation. It implies understanding the norms, the language and to participate in conversations and tasks. The client in a hotel is often called a guest, but a paying guest is not a visitor or a friend, as nothing special is expected from them. On the contrary, in a family a guest can be more or less integrated and what is expected is that they leave at some point.

Pier Paolo Pasolini’s film *Theorema* came out in 1968. It is a psychological drama taking place in a rich Milanese family: the father owns a factory, the mother is a housewife, and they have two teenagers, Odetta and Pietro. There is also a maid in the big bourgeois house. The film begins when a visitor is announced and comes to stay with them for some time. This uninvited and unexpected guest is in fact a kind of angel: played by

Terence Stamp, he is dressed in white and mostly sits and reads in the garden. He has very few words. He is a simple presence that the family quickly gets used to. In some strange way, each member of the family, even the maid, will fall in love with him. He is not asexual and Pasolini stages his arrival with one of his favourite actors: the curly and ever-happy Ninetto Davoli, here playing the postman. The visitor gives himself to all five members of the family, bringing them to some kind of personal truth. He becomes a key character in their lives, the start of a great change, until he announces, at the climax of the drama, that he will have to leave tomorrow. As in other Pasolini films, there are many religious themes: the miracle (the maid), the giving up of a leading role and possessions (the father), the purity of love (with the teenagers) but also the carnal temptation (with the mother). What interests me here is the fact that he is a guest, seemingly a total stranger to this family, and that he will end up transforming them all, until death or existential crisis. The family is an organisation of a special kind and there are also family businesses, but families tend to be rather closed organisations, where a guest needs to be invited and announce how long time they will stay. It is unusual nowadays to have a visitor without any clear function or mission but in *Theorema* this visitor is apparently highly desired. In fact, the general impression is that Pasolini is taking great pleasure in the destruction of the bourgeois family, not only because sex is prohibited or silenced but also because relations are false. The wife plays her role, as do the teenagers and the father, but they are all lying and suffering from their condition.

Let me now turn to a more recent work: Ali Smith’s novel *The Accidental*, published in 2005. The plot could be influenced by *Theorema*: a guest arrives in a family’s house pretending her car has broken down. There are two teenagers in the summer rental house in Norfolk, a boy called Magnus and a girl called Astrid. Amber, the guest, is an ageless woman, described as fit, beautiful and smart. The mother Eve is a writer, and the stepfather Michael is a university teacher having inappropriate relations with his students. In fact, when Amber arrives Eve suspects her of being a former affair of Michael. The style is quite deconstructed, each part of the book giving a different point of view, showing the flow of consciousness of often confused characters. The general impression is poetic and enigmatic, in the vein of Virginia Woolf. We do not know what Amber is looking for, where she comes from and when she will leave. Each member of the family likes her, some of them also in a sexual way. The son, who she calls St Magnus, has his first sexual encounter with her, which ends up with them making love in the church or in the bushes during that hot summer. Astrid, the daughter, strolls around in the countryside with her, taking pictures and reflecting on life. Michael is also attracted but upset

when he realizes he will not have sex with her. Only Eve seems more distant and finally, she is also the one who throws out Amber. When Amber leaves, summer is probably over, and we imagine that she will have to sleep in her car. Amber gives the impression of having no plans and nowhere to stay, which makes her more a potential parasite than a guest. There is something destructive and threatening in her, probably the fact that she is trying to redeem herself from a near-fatal car accident, in which she accidentally killed a little child. But this is not sure, it is what Eve says. Amber thus has all the characteristics of a mysterious guest who could also become a frightening ghost popping up from someone's past. As in *Theorema* she brings a period of joy to a nuclear family but ends up emptying their home in London of all their belongings, leaving a message for them on the answering machine that they should face up to their past. She is like a mirror for them, perhaps just their bad conscience. The family is then partly destroyed, not only by the theft of their belongings but also by the fact that the mother Eve is leaving for a long trip.

Both fictions show how a stranger comes into a family, eats at their table and questions the rules, the habits and even the way close people love each other or have ceased to love each other. The stranger in these fictions has a power to question not only relations and balance but also the origin of these relations. The stranger-guest is not expected; they always abuse the hosts, going a bit too far and taking advantage of the spaces and the attention of the hosts. The arrival of such an abusive guest can change the hosts irremediably, like in *Theorema* where they all end up in an existential crisis. In *The Accidental* the angel becomes a thief, asking the family members to be honest with their past, as though she was some kind of judge or God herself. Both angels in these stories seem to have a diabolic mission and both use seduction to reach their goal. Being in a family and soothing all its members gives them a position of outsider that can be very attractive both for themselves and for others, but in the end, they destroy the family or disorganise it to the point of implosion. If the family is an organisation, then all organisations would need to have such a questioning guest from time to time. Such persons - angels, strangers, ghosts - also re-sexualize the organisation and even if they often bring a frightening truth, they come with innocent love and high levels of desire. To further enquire about guests, let us now turn to a lecture about hospitality.

Interlude with Jacques Derrida

In a lecture about hospitality (1997/2000), Jacques Derrida expounds his ideas about the figure of the guest seen as a foreigner, taking inspiration from ancient Greece. In many of Plato's dialogues, he states, it is the foreigner (*xenos*) who questions. Still, the foreigner fears he will be

treated as mad, perhaps like all people asking questions in a language they have not mastered. Socrates plays the foreigner he is not, the disturbing man of question. He declares that he is "foreign" to the language of the courts; as such he is *like* a foreigner. This could be a trick of philosophy, and by extension of political activists or artists: to ask stupid and very basic questions. Nevertheless, says Derrida, there are some rights for foreigners in Athens, which means they can ask for hospitality and stay for some time. The host's first question to the foreigner is: what is your name?

This is not the case for the absolute Other, the barbarian, who cannot even have a name or a family name. According to Derrida, "absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner, but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names" (page 25).

What is interesting here is that the other becomes the Others, them, many guests, perhaps a whole family with many cousins or a horde of animals. The pact of reciprocity he is talking about is probably linked to the foreigner's function in the house and the duration of their stay. It is hard to imagine a situation of absolute hospitality: welcoming a total stranger without asking them anything in return, not even their name: it seems that this could only happen in fictions. Even if we have the means to do that, we would be afraid of the ghosts they bring, the traumas, the dreams, the unknown desires, the diseases perhaps. Some families are more open than others but if they have strangers staying for longer periods, it is mostly to earn money or to have work done. The absolute Other thus remains an ideal. In the film and novel we analysed previously this ideal Other was staged and we could feel the great pleasure Pasolini and Smith had in destructing the falsehood of the family.

The guest, even if they are well received, is first of all a foreigner, and he must remain a foreigner. Hospitality remains conditional. Derrida senses that it is sometimes hard to distinguish between a guest and a parasite and that a law is needed. What that law could look like is linked to blood or territory or maybe lapse of time. Here we surely think about asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, human beings fleeing wars and catastrophes, when an entire country becomes the home we are talking about, like in 2022 for Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion, like in 1948 for Palestinians and the list could be extended... But the guest could also be an artist, a person going through some kind of existential crisis who needs a new context, or a person escaping their own family who

has betrayed or simply neglected them. Many women unfortunately need to flee their families because of domestic violence. Poor workers often have difficulties paying for a rented appartement. There are many difficult situations and wandering souls, even in Europe.

Up until recently, European countries have liked to see themselves as welcoming countries, but the question remains: how much do they ask from foreigners? Furthermore, is it possible for a foreigner to become a citizen at a certain point? Transposed to the organisation: is it possible for the guest researcher to become a full member of the university at some point? What does that change? Do they lose their power of disturbance? The guest being the annoying person who asks the difficult questions, it could be that the organisation does not want to integrate them. It could also be that they, being wanderers, want to keep to their own research agenda.

Talking about Oedipus coming back from travels and being called a wanderer who is not native but still asking for shelter and hospitality, the sentence in Derrida's text is: "this foreign guest appears like a ghost" (page 37). Indeed, Oedipus is not a real foreigner, he is coming back after many years of travelling, in the conditions we have heard about, having killed his father and slept with his mother. This foreign guest hence appears like a frightening ghost.

The words *guest* and *ghost* seem to have a common etymology, for example in Swedish *gäst* (guest) and *gäst* (old fashioned word for ghost) there are only two dots difference, a closeness in sounds that we also hear in English. Given Derrida's obsession with words and etymology, this is not trivial, and it also echoes both fiction works we presented above, where the unexpected guest was a threat to the family. When a guest is coming, there is always the possibility that they will either be a ghost or bring ghosts with them. Still if we practice absolute hospitality, we must be ready to let in the Other and all following creatures.

From what we have seen up until now in this paper, we can conclude that the guest, sometimes also a ghost, has three main characteristics: they are a questioning person, have sexual power and are a travelling person. All this is hard to imagine in the disembodied organisation that values rules, professional relations and well-defined functions. Only travelling is perhaps accepted and valued in our modern organisations. If we consider that embodied ethics are about hospitality, the organisation must be more open to unknown guests, at the risk of diseases, terrorism or simple folly. Resistance always has a cost, as Alessia Contu (2008) so brilliantly demonstrated, and it is the same with ethics: if ethics are to be practiced

for real, at least at the level of human relations, members of the organisation must be prepared to bear some costs.

Welcoming the unknown Other (discussion)

The other can be anyone who is not me, including children, family, lovers and friends and at work all persons we are in relation with: clients, co-workers, managers, students, cleaners, assistants, consultants, foreigners, robots (?), artificial intelligence (?), animals (?). The other begins somewhere where the "me" ends, and at the same time I am nothing without others defining and challenging me. The Other is something else: often called the absolute Other, we are talking about a total stranger, an unknown person who cannot even have a name as we have seen with Jacques Derrida, and perhaps most importantly who does not speak our language, at least not fully. This barbarian is a kind of ideal for an ethics of hospitality: if we can welcome the Other (in our minds at least) then we should be ready to welcome others in a good way, hence behave ethically, with hospitality and tolerance, with curiosity and desire. Diprose writes about noble desire, meaning desire with good intentions, a desire that is somehow above basic sexual instincts. Sexuality surely has dark sides, but it cannot be erased from our lives. As sexuality links us to all others (and not only to our biological family) it is along with friendship or passion, at the core of ethics.

Besides, both the visitor in Pasolini's film and Amber in *The Accidental* remain mysterious characters, their main function being to reveal the other characters. But we must also remember that we could be in the guest's or the ghost's role, searching for something that is hard to define and provoking strong reactions in others' subjectivities. As a guest researcher in three Scandinavian universities, I had a great freedom, and I really liked this position, even if it was sometimes hard to push my research agenda. I had my own funding and was given an office, often shared with others or with boxes of books or odd leftover furniture. Sometimes, even if my name was present on the door or on the internet site, I felt like a ghost, a person who would never integrate, but still a slight threat for the others, both disturbing and seductive. To be a guest at people's houses is different and I never liked it too much, perhaps because sleeping over is showing your vulnerability, your pyjamas and your snoring. Depending on the culture and the families, a guest is more or less welcome and in some families the saying goes that they begin to stink after three days (!), which is a really short period, especially if there is enough space in a house for several people to stay, in particular if you compare this short period to descriptions in Russian novels where guests stayed for several months, at least in families who had big estates. In three days, you don't even have the time to understand the host's habits or exchange anything

meaningful with her, and if you are a ghost, you cannot accomplish anything.

Who is the Other for organisations? Even if it is an ideal, we must try to imagine them. It could be a totally crazy consultant, a left-wing academic or a religious leader. Imagine if a Hare Krishna woman, dressed in orange robes, all of a sudden decided to visit your organisation. What would you do? How would you speak? If this dancing orange being opens the door to your office while you are sitting trying to write an academic paper, what do you say? Do you offer her a cup of tea? Do you bring her to the 3 o'clock meeting? Do you ask her for her life story? Most probably you will just ask what she is looking for and try to lead her out of the building, more or less gently depending on your mood. But what if things develop like in Pasolini's film, what if you fall in love with her? What if she dances elegantly and even your colleagues want to follow her?

Again, this is fiction, but there are surely crazy stories out there in small and big organisations, that people like to tell and retell each other. There are these moments of total disorganisation that can redefine human relations, like when an artist is doing a performance in a corporate context or perhaps when a coworkers' sickness is unveiled. Sometimes it is the client, or the ideal client, who plays the role of stimulating Other (Anderson-Gough et. al., 2000). Some would say that the Other is the reason of organising. The military, for example, are organised around the idea of the Other: what are soldiers doing if not waiting for the enemy, the barbarian who wants to destroy our civilisation?

The three aspects we sketched out for the Other are closely related. They are a disturbing person, sometimes asking awkward questions and sometimes just disturbing with their different presence, with an intensity in their being that cannot go unnoticed. Linked to that is their sexual power: they are not afraid of sexuality and sexual encounters, but at the same time they do not make a great fuss of it: it is part of life, that's all. The visitor in Pasolini's film has sex with the mother, but unlike her, it does not seem to affect him too much. They are a travelling person, meaning they feel at home everywhere and nowhere, and this is perhaps what links them most to the ghost. Perhaps the Other does not know exactly who they are, and this could be a result of their deconstruction process: they are a person escaping from their own subjectivity, which is frightening for all people trying to make sense of life in more superficial ways, simply making money or having a career for example. Organisational life cannot face the Other, and this is mostly linked to their sexual power, but in situations where bodies are open and

benevolent, we could at least try to approach them and ask them about their name.

The organisations we mentioned or analysed in this paper are many: the church, the army, universities, an investment bank, a film production company, and families, which were approached through fiction. These organisations are impossible to compare but they are all the outcome of an organisational process aiming at some kind of efficiency. In these contexts, the Other and others are surely disturbing. Still, for ethical relations to occur, it is our belief that we should be more open to guests and ghosts, strangers and different bodies who are able to bring change to our organisations. Given the closure of most organisations nowadays, guests should not wait for an invitation, rather they should just pop up and dare to stay for longer periods. If we are ready to listen to them and let them act at the margin of our organisations, they will surely bring some kind of truth, which will redefine human relations. The guest's body is not fully present, as it could leave at any time, and it is certainly not generous. Rather it is dubious and trembling, attracting others to play outside and experiment with their lives. Hospitality and openness to guests should be considered as a core value not only for families, but also for organisations. Regarding hospitality in general, given that in the end we are all guests on this earth, private property and its boundaries should always remain relative, which would naturally let in guests and ghosts.

Coda about ghosts

Derrida is also known for his hauntology and was part of an intriguing film in black and white (*Ghost Dance*, Ken McMullen, 1983) where he plays himself and states that ghosts also appear through our technologies, phone and fax for example. In the film we see him answering the phone and commenting about the fact that ghosts also exist and travel through our technologies, which is also touched upon in a special issue about ghosts in organisations (Hunter & Baxter, 2021). With the presence of ghosts, homes and organisations sometimes become unfamiliar: this is due to haunting and the fact that repressed violence sometimes emerges. A ghost can be both benevolent, helping you to take an important decision and evil, someone killed coming back to take revenge for example. Ghosts can suddenly teleport you to the past as they reconfigure time. Unlike guests they are supernatural creatures, outsiders linking us to other worlds.

The ghost exists at the boundary of worlds and is linked to death. Scholars have shown how consciousness of our own death is linked to the practise of ethics: "we believe that facing up to death may paradoxically free us from unthinking obedience to norms and enable us to seek

more fulfilling forms of work and relations within organisations” (Reedy & Learmonth, 2011). They propose a redirection of ethics in response to an awareness of death, and this is perhaps what guests and their following ghosts, showing us the frailty of life and organisational life, can help us to do, provided we are ready to listen to them.

The absolute Other could also be death, this phenomenon that we will never fully understand but that makes us fully human. Death is the Other you are always escaping and ignoring, like a black hole of emptiness and darkness, like melancholia itself. Death is also a liberation and just feeling it, like some ghost relating to you, can make you feel more alive. It is when we relate to and resist death and ghosts that we are truly alive, intensively embodied and hence open for ethical questioning.

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