PSYCHOLOGY AND THE OTHER

Edited by

David Goodman

Mark Freeman

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To our brides, Katie Lynn (David) and Deborah (Mark)

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As an undergraduate student, I (David) double majored in psychology and theology. In my psychology courses, I was bedazzled by the seemingly exhaustive reach of empirical studies and theoretical frameworks. We have names and concepts for nearly everything. However, alongside being impressed with the conceptual and clinical technologies adorning the self with complex and ever more technical descriptions, I often felt an unease. I struggled to find the livedness of identity in the numeric and aggregate claims being made. It felt as though there were things that bled outside of the lines so carefully drawn in the psychological discipline. Our existence and the elusive phenomenon of selfhood—its simultaneous bigness and smallness—were difficult to find in the bolded words and correlational tables of textbooks and research articles. The assumptions, in their assured forms, couldn't hold, and the grit and excess of identity, life, and relationship led me into troubling questions about the discipline and a deep hunger for something more.

In my theology and philosophy courses, I experienced something quite different. The long heritage of dialogues, critical engagement, doctrines, political ideals, metaphysical questions, and ethical theories promoted a type of rich and kaleidoscopic intrigue with the human subject. There are bewildering paradoxes and contradictions in our attempts at understanding. This enticed and challenged me in profound ways. It challenged how I sat in my psychology courses and how I read the theories and research findings. The self—as it was often described in contemporary psychological literatures—was too flat, egocentric, and susceptible to facile categorization. Its existential, fleshly, and ethical significance felt anemically addressed. Philosophy

and theology, at least as they appeared to me, maintained a more sustained curiosity about such dimensions.

That said, I often felt a discomfort in my theology and philosophy courses as well, albeit for a different reason. At times, I struggled to know where these ideas engaged the world and where they actually responded to human need in daily life and in the midst of tremendous social ills. This was one of the reasons that I was continuously drawn back to psychology. It was more "hands-on" and widely seen as the socially sanctioned place where struggling persons could seek meaning and help. Psychology, particularly its clinical and counseling arms, was born out of a recognition that we live in a world with significant need. As a field, it has developed sophisticated frameworks, practices, and places (clinics, hospitals, and so forth) intended to provide a frontline response to suffering persons. At its best, a form of wisdom emerges from this type of lived response to the lives of others. The "wisdom of love," as Levinas reminds us, *should* be the origin point of rationality and the systems that we construct. There is something deeply enticing about a discipline whose mission is to hear and learn effective ways of caring for others. In touting these virtues in psychology, I do not mean to suggest that philosophers and theologians aren't interested in and impressively concerned with immediate individual and societal needs. But, in our present social order, psychology is uniquely positioned, situated, and resourced to attend to such things.

By the time I reached graduate school, my disciplinary allegiances were becoming increasingly porous. Though I was pursuing a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, training in neuropsychology placements, community mental health centers, VA hospitals, and teaching Psych 101 *ad nauseam*, I was continuing to study philosophy and theology on the side. My scholarship and clinical interests were divergent and lived on different planes, though it never truly felt as though this was the case. I found small enclaves of kindred individuals who would help me build some of the needed bridges and learn how to articulate some of what felt unformulated at the time. These were precious to me throughout my journey.

In 2009, I recall sitting in a Seattle café with one of my most cherished mentors, Philip Cushman, discussing my next steps and interests. He pointed out to me that I was going to philosophy, theology,

and psychoanalytic conferences each year and asked me if I was looking for something. I didn't fully have the sense of what he was implying and so I gave a vague and non-committal answer. He challenged me further by saying, "You need to create the conversation that you want to see take place." Excitedly, I thought that when I returned to Boston, I would bring a philosopher, theologian, and psychoanalyst over for dinner (sounds like the beginning of a bad joke). Phil shook his head and said, "No! You need to put together a conference." With this in mind and no significant expectations, I began looking for a venue and cobbling together the details. It was at this point that I quickly realized that I was not the only one who wanted to see this conversation take place. Indeed, in relatively short order, this venture transformed from a few meaningful exchanges with mentors and scholars to a conference with over 300 participants from across the globe. In 2011, the *Psychology and the Other* conference was born. In 2013, it convened for a second time and nearly doubled in size.

This volume is a product of the first conference meeting and holds a dear place in my heart in terms of what it represents. As a young scholar and clinician, it has given me great hope. The persons that have come together to form this conversation inspire in me a belief about where the discipline of psychology can go. Our limits, now, feel less limiting, our language less insular and fixed. I watch psychologists, theologians, and philosophers (along with those representing other disciplines) explore and enrich our ways of approaching human suffering and identity with an eye to how we ethically respond to others in this world. I hadn't known this could be possible.

I am forever grateful to each of the scholars, clinicians, students, and committee members who brought this into being. In what follows, I name some of these people and organizations, remaining fearful, as always, that I have omitted someone important.

I must begin with another dear mentor and friend, my co-editor for the present volume, Mark Freeman. Co-editing this volume with him has been an experience of a lifetime. His expansive brilliance, careful attention to the ways that theory and narrative nourish and live in one another, and beautiful ear for the writing process has made the construction of this volume an incredibly formative experience for me. Our conversations have been delightful and so full of life. Mark

exemplifies what it means to bring a profound ethical sensibility into editorial and writing projects. I will be forever grateful for his shepherding and encouragement throughout the creation of this book.

Two close friends and colleagues were especially instrumental in the conference taking shape: Heather Macdonald and Brian Becker. We learned so much with one another as we ventured into uncharted territories. We frequently converted inexperience and naiveté into exciting opportunities for growth. And, when that didn't happen, we were there to scoop one another up and continue forward! I thank them both for helping me stay the course, ever mindful of the core sensibilities and passion that drove this project in the first place.

This vision, passion, playfulness, and drive was also fueled by a group of extraordinary students and colleagues that served as a rag-tag team that organized the conference from the ground up. The conference organizing committee, also known as the *Theoretical, Historical, and Philosophical Psychology Research Lab*, was comprised of Ben Arcangeli, Jacqueline Aug, Abigail Collins, Adeline Dettor, Samuel Gable, Katie Goodman, George Horton, David House, Steven Huett, Nadia Jennings, Whitney Jewett, Perah Kessman, Cacky Mellor, Danielle Moreno, and Kimm Topping. We agreed from the start that we wanted to develop an event that abided by a "philosophy of welcome." Their exceptional spirits and hard work brought this into being, and I am grateful for who they are and what they have done.

Along with Mark, I also express a special thanks to many members of the *Society for Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* (Division 24 of the American Psychological Association) for their participation in the conference as scholars and formative partners. In particular, we thank John Christopher, Philip Cushman, Kenneth Gergen, Blaine Fowers, Steve Harrist, Suzanne Kirschner, Jack Martin, Jeff Reber, Frank Richardson, Brent Slife, Jeffrey Sugarman, and Thomas Teo for their investment in this venture, their camaraderie, and their good will. Conversations with and among these individuals inspired a good deal of the conference's concerns regarding the field of psychology and how it might progress.

The conference steering committee also served in the formation both of the conference and of this volume. In this context, thanks goes to Peter August, Chris Adams, Jeffrey Bloechl, Phil Brownell,

Joshua Clegg, Alvin Dueck, Roger Frie, Sue Grand, Marsha Hewitt, Marie Hoffman, Neil Klein, Richard LaFleur, Lynne Layton, Donna Orange, Ann Pellegrini, Jeff Perrin, Martha Reineke, Eric Severson, Natalia Yangarber-Hicks, Jeffrey Sugarman, and Jan Wall for their wisdom and investment. Lynne Layton and Donna Orange both provided such wonderful mentorship in the years leading up to and following this event. I offer them a special thank you here.

It goes without saying that the authors of this volume deserve recognition as well. Their patience, thoughtfulness, and receptiveness to editorial input and dialogue have been refreshing and inspire in me a deep appreciation of the fact that even the construction of an edited volume can be saturated with curiosity and hunger for meaningful conversation. Mark and I are deeply appreciative of their openness and good work.

In terms of editorial support, we wish to thank our colleagues Brian Becker, Kimm Topping, Abigail Collins, and Samuel Gable, whose attention to detail and engagement in the minutia throughout the project helped us move along amidst very busy lives with many deadlines. Their help was priceless in this process. So too was the help and support of a number of people at Oxford University Press, including especially Molly Balikov, Abby Gross, and Suzanne Walker. We are grateful to them.

Without the care and support of several institutions and individuals, the conference and this volume would not have had the needed resources and space. Lesley University's hosting of the first two *Psychology and the Other* conferences was greatly appreciated, with particular thanks extended to Provost Selase Williams, Dean Catherine Koverola, and Elizabeth Chambers. The Danielsen Institute at Boston University partnered with us in the provision of CEUs for clinicians. Their heavy lifting and the many details associated with this was a tremendous gift to us. We wish to recognize Lauren Kehoe and George Stavros, in particular, for their generosity. We also want to recognize the College of the Holy Cross, Mark's academic home for the past three decades and a quite extraordinary source of support for the kind of work found herein. Special thanks go to the Philosophy Reading Group, the Department of Psychology, and the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College, now

under the wonderfully able leadership of Margaret Freije. Lastly, several individuals at Boston College have played a significant role in the ongoing development of the *Psychology and the Other* conversations and deserve mention here. Father James Burns, Dean of BC's Woods College of Advancing Studies, has been a long-standing ally and constantly works to find *Psychology and the Other* resources and opportunities within BC's institutional and academic structures. Richard Kearney and Jeffrey Bloechl have been instrumental in the process of inviting me into the vibrant intellectual and social life at BC. We thank both of them for their encouragement and for the many ways that they have paved the path that this conversation is currently taking.

Last, but certainly not least, I (David) feel tremendous gratitude for Katie Lynn, my bride as of last October. Her presence in this world constantly inspires me forward into the intense and unknown reaches of love, beauty, and truth while also teaching me the fundamentals of daily living as a friend, lover, and soulmate. She will forever be my Other—ever close and always calling me far beyond.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Why the Other?

DAVID M. GOODMAN AND MARK FREEMAN

> The human I is not a unity closed upon itself, like the uniqueness of the atom, but rather an opening, that of responsibility, which is the true beginning of the human and of spirituality. In the call which the face of the other man addresses to me, I grasp in an immediate fashion the graces of love: spirituality, the lived experience of authentic humanity.
>
> —*Levinas and Robbins* (2001, p. 182)

> "I" am an existential exaggeration.
>
> —*Critchley* (2007, p. 62)

> Otherness is a horizon of selfhood.
>
> —*Kearney* (2002)

This book represents a concerted effort to think anew about some basic aspects of the human condition. Outside our own ego-driven borders is the wide and wild world, always exceeding us, calling us out of ourselves, spilling beyond the containers we bring to it. But it is too great, too vast, unpredictable, and messy for us to feel safe. We need contrivances, mediators, and screens to remodel experience into partial and more manageable schemes. One fundamental premise of this book is that there is something lost in this process of containment and management, both in ourselves and in the discipline

of psychology—namely, the world itself. For present purposes, we give to this world the simple name: *Other*. We are speaking here of the world of people and things, nature and art, goods and gods. These are never encountered wholly apart from our own conceptions and constructions; we are always already in the world, in relation. But this irrefutable fact should not detract from our recognition and appreciation of their otherness.

The world is abundant, and try as we might, we cannot ultimately suppress our experience of this abundance without great psychological, spiritual, and existential cost. We are not meant to relate merely to what our minds constitute, for in so doing we are relating to a world of our own making, authoring ready-made realities that jibe with our egos' needs and thresholds. That is, we are relating to a world not of *Others* but to one issuing from the sameness of our intrusive ego-centricity and the smallness of our limited capacities and limiting reductions. This is the world within which we frequently live. We need it to be more tolerable and simple than it is. And, we are impressively creative in our ability to form languages and meanings that cast experience in the mold of the knowable and manageable. This is a perennial observation that has come to us in many forms. Various religions, in particular, have related to us what John Calvin (1536/1989) famously wrote many years ago: "The human mind is, so to speak, a perpetual forge of idols."

Hence this decidedly contradictory state of affairs: Even as we yearn for that which exceeds our filters and screens—for instance, the full presence of the lover who will take us out of ourselves and thereby bring us back to ourselves on a deeper plane—we remain allergic to this very otherness and retreat backward, to the more comfortable confines of the familiar, the Same. Our minds, our wills, and our identities are a perpetual dance of these centrifugal and centripetal forces (Freeman, 2014), the need to live "toward the outside," to use Emmanuel Levinas's (1961/1969) phrase, existing alongside the "ennui" of egoism.

By all indications, this dance is a ubiquitous, even universal, one, part and parcel of the human condition. But what happens when these idol-making and experience-rending tendencies are paired with a social order, philosophical heritage, and economic system that reinforce the

centripetal forces of the ego? What happens when theological and philosophical "reminders" regarding the bounty of the world give way in the face of secularization, solipsistic ideologies, and the corrosively competitive pressures of late capitalism? What happens when it may in fact *be* most adaptive to remain closed up and insulated? In this context, the self does not merely construct idols to manage experience. The self becomes an idol of its own (Ford, 1999; Goodman, 2012). Or, as Freud (1930/1961) put the matter, "Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent." As Freud is quick to add, however, "those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times" (p. 92). Indeed.

It may be that we have told a story of ourselves—as modern subjects—that covers over the fullness of experience and that now requires us to live in constricted life-spaces, unable to truly attend to the abundance of the world around us. Christopher Lasch (1979) reminds us that we live in a "culture of narcissism" in which the fragility of our own egos requires a perpetual self-orienting protectiveness, even a kind of oblivion. This has left us not only experientially malnourished but also ethically depleted, deprived of those existential resources that serve to move us beyond the confines of the hungry ego. In a very real sense, we live in a world that reinforces the occlusion of experience itself, thereby exacerbating the aforementioned allergy to the Other.

For this, we pay dearly. The individualized, encapsulated self, which Foucault (1970) reminds us is a relatively new actor on history's stage, carries an untenable epistemological burden and debt. There is a gravity concentrated upon its enclosed identity that forms a type of pressurized mode of being that cannot flex and breathe. "To hoard the self," Abraham Joshua Heschel (1959) warned, "is to grow a colossal sense for the futility of living" (p. 132). More recently, Christian Wiman (2013) added, "Anxiety comes from the self as ultimate concern, from the fact that the self cannot bear this ultimate concern: It buckles and wavers under the strain, and eventually, inevitably, it breaks" (p. 93). As Heschel and Wiman both suggest, the cultural and, ultimately, personal prioritization of the self depletes the spaciousness and enriching possibilities of a being that lives more fully and fluidly in

relationship to a world of others, both human and nonhuman. Cohen (2002) writes that the self's aggrandizement in modern times has created a type of inverse effect on our identity. He states that "paradoxically, this grandiose enlargement of the self has never seemed so small. Alienation, estrangement, isolation, 'the lonely crowd,' anomie, loss of meaning, and now, the question of otherness, haunt the modern psyche and its brave new world" (p. 35). This hoarded self is suffocated in its internality—anxious, alienated, and lonely. One purpose of this volume is to help us imagine what it might mean to live Otherwise, in closer proximity to the world's abundance and realness.

An additional purpose of this volume is to help us imagine what it might mean to *think* Otherwise—that is, to craft a discipline that more fully recognizes and embraces what is Other and more fully understands its powerfully constitutive role in human experience. In this respect, we see this volume as part of a growing effort to rethink, reimagine, and indeed revise the discipline itself. Not unlike ourselves, faced with abundant life and oftentimes shrinking in the face of its sheer presence, psychology has entered the bountiful terrain of human reality only to find its own willful designs. Previously, we acknowledged our apparent "need" for contrivances, mediators, and screens to remodel experience into partial and more manageable schemes. This has been true of the discipline of psychology as well. Indeed, it can plausibly be suggested that what we find in much of contemporary psychology is a kind of mirror image of the hoarded, depleted self described previously. This is so on both methodological and theoretical planes. In terms of the former, we need only consider the great welter of tools and techniques currently being employed in the discipline. These have their value, to be sure; they serve precisely to objectify experience, contain it, render it more manipulable, measureable, and useable. But in this very objectification and containment, they also serve to take us away from what is truly Other, beyond our own constricting schemes. And in terms of the latter, likewise, we find discrete, often highly technical, theoretical models, many of which are tethered to these same tools and techniques. These too have their value. But theoretical models of this sort often serve to occlude that which exceeds conceptual grasp, at least as customarily understood. We shall be addressing this situation in the pages to come.

We shall also be addressing, more pointedly, the very "status" of the self within contemporary psychology. By all indications, the self as a primary, atomic starting point in experience and theory is alive and well within the discipline. "Psychology, having come of age under the influence of Descartes and other champions of the *ego cogito*, the thinking 'I,' came to delimit its focus largely to what happened inside the self, within the enclosure of the skin." It thus became "essentially *ego-centric*" (Freeman, 2014, p. 1) in its own right. At the start of the 21st century, the situation has intensified. Self-help literatures tout the self's enterprising capacities to define itself and bring about happiness and success (Binkley, 2011; Rose, 1998). Expressive individualism reigns supreme in various psychological approaches, promoting individuation and autonomy as primary achievements that facilitate health and well-being (Cushman, 1995; Kirschner, 1996; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). Self-regulatory abilities, coping skills, adaptive attributes, and a variety of other characteristics point to a subject that is sufficiently capable of managing and even "thriving" in the world. This is the self found in much of what has come to be known as "Positive Psychology," among other places. Indeed, this self—or construct of the self—remains the foundational condition for the majority of psychological theories, practices, and, not least, "common sense" descriptions of experience.

Even contemporary shifts to neuroscience, evidence-based models, and medicalization bear this mark—locating identity, experience, and suffering within the confines of the sovereign individual. Owing to sources ranging from Descartes (and the *ego cogito*) all the way to evolutionary psychology (and the supposed primacy of the needy self, out to propagate at all costs), psychology has maintained a type of interiority that has permitted limited access to, and limited language for, the interchange of the world, the otherness of others, and that which is strange or foreign to identity. Psychological disorder, for instance, is frequently assumed to be an intrapsychic, neurochemical, biological, or behavioral process (Kirschner, 2012; see also Cushman, 2013; Layton, 2009). Our very frameworks are thus stationed at the site of these ego-centric coordinates. We are preoccupied with the self; we are preoccupied with ourselves.

What if our turn toward the *cogito* in psychology, along with other Western social disciplines, was, and continues to be, a mistake? What if the discipline of psychology has inherited and reinforced languages, methods, theoretical models, and therapeutic ideas that restrict the existential and ethical potential of individual and social life? And if this is so, how might we redirect our course—dislodging the primacy of the self—and steer closer to the complex abundance of lived experience and the concrete details of ordinary life?

Working on the premise that much of contemporary psychology remains ego-centric in its basic orientation, focused largely on the seemingly sovereign self, there has emerged in recent years an attempt to see in the idea of the Other a valuable counterweight to this emphasis, one that might in fact serve to reshape a portion of the discipline. In speaking of the Other in the pages to come, we refer mainly, although not exclusively, to the formative role of other people in human lives, especially the ethical demands they make upon us. Thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas figure prominently in this volume, seeing in the idea of the Other something of an antidote to the largely self-centered version of the human condition found throughout much of Western philosophical and psychological trajectories. In this tradition, "the primary sense of subjectivity is not a private universe, a sealed interiority, but an unparalleled attention, a response to what is outside, the most outside of which is the other human being" (Aronowicz, 1994, p. xxi). Others, we have noted, call us out of ourselves, and in so doing they frequently bring us back to what is most fundamental in our relation to the world—our sense of responsiveness and responsibility. In this respect, we find in the idea of the Other a vitally important vehicle for thinking anew about the human condition.

THE PSYCHOLOGY AND THE OTHER CONVERSATION: EXPANDING THE SPACE OF SELFHOOD

The emergence of academic interest in the Other is a complex story whose genealogy exceeds the possibilities of capture in these few

pages. Its growing prominence across multiple disciplines, such as psychoanalysis, anthropology, theology, religious studies, philosophy, and global studies, is a testament to particular historical, conceptual, and sociopolitical trends where the overextension of the self is being recognized as an ethical and social issue in significant need of attention (Butler, 2004). More recently, within particular corners of psychology, attention to the Other has become a vitally important part of the discipline's reconceptualization (Freeman, 2014; Goodman, 2012; Kunz, 1998; Orange, 2010, 2011; Rozmarin, 2007). Linked to several broad paradigm shifts—for instance, critiques of narcissism; attempts to think beyond hyper-individualistic therapeutic models and theories; the ascendancy of intersubjective, dialogical, and relational thinking in therapy and beyond—the concept of the Other is finding play in academic books and journals, at conferences, and in clinical training contexts.

Among the many fundamental questions that have surfaced in the wake of this burgeoning interest and attention, we highlight the following: How can the idea of the Other serve as a vehicle for exploring—and reconceptualizing—classic psychological and philosophical issues ranging from identity and purpose to human frailty and suffering? In what ways can the idea of the Other serve to reorient inquiry toward aspects of the human condition—for instance, our responsibility to others and to the environment—that are often regarded as secondary, peripheral? How do psychology, philosophy, theology, and religious studies account for what we previously referred to as the allergy to otherness, both within ourselves and in academic life, and how might this allergy be addressed and alleviated? What challenges inhere in encountering the Other—vis-à-vis our receptivity and openness, our capacity to entertain the alien and stranger in our midst? How might we think about our possible yearning for, and love of, the Other, and how does this relate to the therapeutic process?

It was precisely with these kinds of questions in mind that in October 2011 the first "Psychology and the Other" conference was convened in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Attended by approximately 300 psychologists, psychoanalysts, nurses, psychiatrists, physicians, social workers, philosophers, theologians, historians, anthropologists, clergy, mental health counselors, and scholars in the field of religious studies,

this conference served to bring together, under a single intellectual roof, perspectives that had heretofore been largely isolated from one another. In a very real sense, it therefore served to inaugurate a multidisciplinary space for exploring this comparatively new set of ideas. Many of the participants in the conference subscribed to a core concern and hope that psychology, a discipline steeped in the traditions of modernity and unmoored from the philosophical and theological concerns that first birthed it, might benefit from dynamic conversation partners committed to rethinking its understanding of the self and the human condition more generally. The conference proved to be wonderfully successful, due to both the outstanding scholars involved and the spirit of shared enterprise.

It was also successful in generating extremely high-quality work. This volume is a product of that work and brings together exceptional pieces of scholarship that seek to redefine the "space of selfhood" (Freeman, 2010) in such a way as to open the conversation about human suffering, identity, and potential beyond, and otherwise than, the largely ego-centric, atomic spaces it currently occupies. At the heart of these essays is an attempt to use the language of the Other as a vehicle for rethinking aspects of psychological processes, especially within the therapeutic context. Along these lines, one purpose of this book is to be "translational"—that is, to show how the language of the Other may in fact be more fitting and appropriate than the ego-centric language frequently employed in psychological discourse. By reading anew the processes in question through the language of the Other, we may thus acquire a more experientially—and therapeutically—adequate rendition of these processes.

In highlighting the translational dimension of the volume, we note that the goal of these pieces is not to provide further critique of the sovereign, atomic, and monadic self. At this point, those critiques have been made in abundance across many academic disciplines. The perspectives represented in this volume go significantly beyond critique and promote a positive program—albeit one that upsets disciplinary boundaries and experiments with new lenses and conceptual frames for understanding the nature and purpose of psychological science. One very basic reason for this fundamental refiguring of scientific principles is, again, that the Other is frequently thought to

surpass whatever theoretical "containers" we might wish to employ. This is especially so in the case of what Jean-Luc Marion (e.g., 2002, 2008) has referred to as "saturated" phenomena—that is, phenomena that in their very excess, overwhelm and indeed overtake the constituting "I," thereby upending the project of scientific theory, at least as traditionally understood. What this suggests, to us at any rate, is the need to think *otherwise* about the theoretical project itself. In this context too, the purpose of the present volume goes significantly beyond critique and is in fact nothing less than revisioning and reconstructing the very foundations of psychological science. Just as in the context of therapy the therapist is him- or herself "called into question" by the overwhelming presence of the Other—the other person, different and irreducibly complex, vulnerable and in need—so too are we, more generally, as students of the Other, called into question by the phenomena we encounter in our work as researchers and scholars. So it is that the chapters that follow may be seen as exemplars of a new paradigm for (a portion of) the discipline of psychology.

At the heart of this new paradigm, and of much of the work in this volume, is the effort to fashion theories and practices that are both more *relational* in their basic orientation and more attuned to the *ethical* moment of psychological life (Gergen, 2011; Goodman, 2012; Slife, 2004). Bearing this dual focus in mind, this volume draws upon leading work in relational thought and practice, especially in that area of psychoanalysis designated explicitly as "relational psychoanalysis" (Aron & Starr, 2013; Mitchell & Aron, 1999, Rozmarin, 2007), as well as in continentally inspired psychology, philosophy, and religious studies, particularly in those areas of inquiry tied to the work of thinkers such as Levinas, Marion, Martin Buber, Soren Kierkegaard, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, Paul Ricoeur, and Franz Rosenzweig.

In referring to the relational, this volume highlights the idea that human reality, rather than being encapsulated and enclosed within the confines of the seemingly sovereign self, is a *being-with* reality. As Buber (1965) puts the matter, "The genuineness and adequacy of the self cannot stand the test in self-commerce, but only in communication with the whole of otherness" (p. 178). Consequently, "The question of what man is cannot be answered by a consideration of existence or of self-being as such, but only by a consideration of the

essential connexion of the human person and his relations with all being" (p. 180).

In referring to the ethical, the volume seeks to underscore the priority of the Other—most notably, the other person—in the very constitution of human subjectivity and selfhood. That is, we are not only *in relation to* the Other but also *called forth by* the Other in responsibility. As Levinas (1999a) reminds us, this calling-forth is, again, a calling-into-question as well: "It is precisely in that recalling of me to my responsibility by the face that summons me, that demands me, that requires me—it is in that calling into question—that the other is my neighbor" (p. 25). In this respect, it should be emphasized, "Responsibility here is not a cold juridical agency. It is all the gravity of the love of the neighbor" (1999b, p. 163). Herein lies another, quite radical aspect of the current project, one that will likely appear strange and contradictory to those entrenched in more customary ways of thinking about the discipline of psychology: The aim is to fashion a more *loving* science, one that finds an indissoluble connection between coming to know and coming to care.

This connection is perhaps most visible in the context of therapy, where one is frequently attuned and responsive to the wounds of the Other. But it is also visible—or *potentially* visible—in psychological research, or at least those forms of it that are truly attentive to the "separateness and differentness," as Iris Murdoch (1970) has put it, of other people. For, "The more the separateness and differentness of other people is realized, and the fact seen that another man [or woman] has needs and wishes as demanding as one's own, the harder it becomes to treat a person as a thing" (p. 64). The ethical dimension is thus *built-in*, we might say, to the very process of beholding the otherness of the Other. In addition, it is, for Murdoch as for Levinas, intimately tied to love. Marion's (2007) work on "the erotic phenomenon" is pertinent in this context as well. To be called into question by the Other is at one and the same time to be drawn forth in the movement of *eros*, understood here as what might be termed *the passion of compassion*. Following from these premises, we thus arrive at a quite remarkable idea: Psychological science as relational science must be founded and grounded ethically in the transformative power of love.

Let us turn now to the manner in which this vision of psychology is instantiated in the chapters that follow. In order to give a clearer sense of the intellectual landscape of the volume and the broad areas of inquiry around which the volume is organized, we turn now to its contents. The book is organized into three sections. The first, titled *Thinking Otherwise About the Human Condition,* deals with foundational philosophical concerns and serves to provide an introduction to the project of "thinking Otherwise." Even in this first section, clinical issues are addressed; in this sense, the philosophy will never be far from the psychology. But it is here that we encounter most explicitly some of the philosophical fundamentals tied to the idea of the Other.

The second section, titled *Healing Through Relation,* seeks to bring these fundamental philosophical concerns to bear on the therapeutic situation, especially as it is conceptualized and practiced in the context of relational psychoanalysis. In our view, this section represents a true fusion of the philosophical and the psychological, and in this respect it can serve as a model of how the idea of the Other may usefully be brought to bear on psychological issues. One unique characteristic of this section is that each chapter is followed by a commentary by an individual working in a wholly different discipline.

The third section of the book, titled *Voices in the Field of the Other,* looks further in the direction of particulars—that is, concrete psychological sites and situations in which the Other figures prominently. One might think of this last section as the "case study" section. It is perhaps here that the theoretical and practical power of thinking Otherwise is most visibly demonstrated.

The authors of the chapters that follow exemplify scholarly and clinical approaches to the development of a more Other-directed science, a science whose coordinates extend past an ego-centric nucleus and allow the others, both human and non-, to redress impoverished depictions of selfhood and indeed of the human condition more generally. Richard Kearney (2002) writes,

> To truly embrace the other as our stranger is to accept a certain decentring of the ego which opens the self to the novel, the incongruous and the unexpected. Once our defence mechanisms against alterity are

> thus suspended we either fall into psychotic breakdown or rise to a poetics of new imagines and an ethics of new practices. (p. 77)

This volume is host to authors whose work represents the movement toward such a poetics and ethics through the promotion of a more "ex-centric" psychology (Freeman, 2014), one that is simultaneously more expansive and outward-looking and more faithful to the realities of human experience. In it, we find the emergence of a new paradigm for the discipline, one that in a very real and significant sense seeks to transform not only the language of psychological understanding but also our very sense of who and what we most fundamentally are.

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PART I

Thinking Otherwise About the Human Condition

CHAPTER 2

Time and Lament: Levinas and the Impossible Possibility of Therapy

ERIC R. SEVERSON

A number of tensions arise from the alignment of the work of Emmanuel Levinas with the practices of psychoanalysis and therapy. Levinas's discussions of the relation between the other and the self are so meticulous and thorough that nearly every possible feature of the encounter with the other person is scrutinized. The practice of therapy, despite wide diversity in application, follows certain common patterns of interaction. The encounter with the other, often qualified "patient" (or even "client") occurs within a controlled and defined environment deemed most conducive for productive analysis, therapy, or both. In this chapter, I do not challenge the value or importance of psychotherapy, which strikes me as deeply essential for healthy human healing and living. What I consider is whether or not the therapy session facilitates the encounter with the other in her or his alterity, in the manner advocated by Levinas.

The spatial and temporal parameters of therapy appear to stack the deck against the encounter with alterity; the other whom I counsel has already conformed to my time, my agenda, my billing schedule, and my style of therapy. The encounter with the other, in the sense advocated by the later works of Levinas, appears to run in the opposite direction. The other unsettles my agenda, particularly my *time*, and shames my impulse to define and confine the parameters of the encounter. The

wisdom of Levinas is helpful in therapy, but does the structure of therapy preclude the possibility of encountering the other in this context? I suggest that if the Levinasian encounter with the other is possible in therapy, it must be on the other side of a series of daunting obstacles that work to reduce therapy to a merely transactional encounter.[1] My central thesis is that therapy is an impossible possibility: that the genuine encounter with the other occurs in therapy only extraordinarily and improbably, and despite the obstacles inherent to this discipline. This chapter describes in detail various issues related to alterity and therapy, and ultimately offers some tentative suggestions for opening therapy to an encounter that is properly labeled "impossible."

FROM SPACE TO TIME

There are many ways to read and utilize the work of Levinas in the fields that concern themselves with mental health, human relationships, psychological healing, and therapy. Levinas's writings abound with insightful and groundbreaking assessments of alterity, the self–other relationship, and a host of other themes relevant to the field of psychoanalysis. Levinas's mid-century work, including his first major book, *Totality and Infinity* (1961/1969), is thoroughly consumed by a reconsideration of the self–other relation. Levinas suggests that throughout its history, Western philosophy has allowed the other person to be incorporated into the more primary understanding of the self. Levinas calls this process "totalizing": The other person has been encountered in the modes of appropriation, acquisition, and violence. Alterity, the otherness of the other, has been domesticated by an epistemology that starts and ends with the self. Levinas uses primarily *spatial* metaphors to articulate his critique in the 1950s and 1960s, relying on the polarities of interiority and exteriority, totality and infinity, and deploying metaphors of infinite distance and height. Foreign to my "dwelling," the other person resides in another *land*, "a land not of our birth" (p. 34). The other dwells on another "shore" (p. 64), a place Levinas refers to as "a yonder" (p. 33). Levinas refers to this distance as infinite, so extreme that no voyage can traverse the distance: "No journey, no change in climate or of scenery could satisfy the desire bent toward"

this "elsewhere" or "the other" (p. 33). The other person is "not wholly in my site" (p. 39). These are the images with which Levinas opens *Totality and Infinity*. This is a book about infinitude, but the infinitude is first cast as a feature of distance.

Levinas begins a profound shift in his language and imagery after 1961. Almost immediately, he begins a transition away from the spatial metaphors of *Totality and Infinity* toward a new register in which to articulate the encounter with the other in her or his alterity. The transition is stimulated by certain problems with earlier configurations, specifically the vulnerability of spatial language to being reincorporated into a Hegelian synthesis of the same. In other words, the concepts of interiority and exteriority require a sweeping, birds-eye view of the relationship. To consider the meaning of what is inside and outside requires that one assume a third position that incorporates both the totality and the infinity in the same panorama. The language of lands, shores, and infinite distance positions the reader above the relation between the self and the other. The omniscience and universalism of this perspective draws closer to Hegel than Levinas may wish, a point not lost on Jacques Derrida in his critiques of Levinas in the 1960s (e.g., Derrida, 1967/1978). How can one think of the distance between two points, even as infinite, without the neutrality of a vantage point from on high? In his examinations of Hegel, Levinas critiques the "synoptic gaze that encompasses" (Levinas, 1961/1969, p. 53). But is not the posture of the philosopher, or psychoanalyst, who considers the same and the other according to the metaphor of distance, not forced to adopt just such a "synoptic" gaze?

There are indications that already within the pages of *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas has begun to shift his language back to the register of time and temporality that was so critical to his earlier works, particularly the twin publications of 1947: *Existence and Existents* (1947/2001) and *Time and the Other* (1947/1987). Still, the spatial language that thrives in the model for the self–other relation in *Totality and Infinity* has troubling consequences in several arenas. Most obviously, Levinas (1961/1969) famously treats the feminine as a component of interiority, as the requisite support and dwelling for the masculine encounter with the other. Levinas seeks a relation that can provide both genesis and rejuvenation for the self, a passive and supportive relation that

makes possible the rigorous encounter with the other person. At this juncture, he uses the analogy of a woman to fill this role. The feminine figure both provides the safe "uterine existence" (p. 147) that precedes any relation with the rest of the world and, with "quiet footsteps" (p. 156), attends to the home. This move traps the feminine within the home, the dwelling, the *present* of the self. For Levinas, something needs to make possible the capacity of the self to encounter the other. It is the wife, the woman, who provides the nourishment for this encounter. But she is also therefore denied the alterity granted to the stranger, who Levinas inflects as the masculine other.

In *Totality and Infinity*, the feminine creates the condition for ethics, the possibility of the encounter with exteriority. Before there is ethics, there must be the welcoming and hospitable domicile. Jeffrey Bloechl (2000), summarizing Levinas's approach to gender in the text, writes, "Woman, says Levinas, welcomes me; she meets me at my level, and on my terms" (p. 199). The relation with alterity so vividly apparent in the face of the son presupposes a relation with the feminine other, whose existence is required for the son to be. However, the desires, needs, and terms of the woman who greets me appear to be literally effaced:

> Everything that the feminine other does for me by way of rendering my world an inhabitable place is due to neither her possible intentions nor the specific acts she may or may not commit, but her presence alone. The familiarity of the world is a direct expression simply of the fact that I am not alone in it. (p. 199)

The woman is consigned to the spatial parameters of a house, a domicile, and this move denies her the full extent of the ethical relation. A further problem with this model warrants mentioning, and it is a problem that has intriguing implications for therapy. *Totality and Infinity* first positions the ego in original enjoyment and insularity, and then Levinas narrates the opening of the interior subject to the infinite, which happens in the encounter with the face. The analogy of the dwelling reinforces this narrative structure: I am born and nourished in the feminine interiority of the dwelling, the precondition of my enjoyment, and make forays into the world of experience. The real event, the ethical event in the life of the ego, is the encounter

with the face. This encounter is the apex of the narrative of the ego. *Totality and Infinity* itself follows this basic plotline. Levinas scholar Diane Perpich (2008) sees in the transition between 1961 and 1974 an abandonment of this narrative structure. Her thesis offers an assessment of this transition, and it appears to support the suspicion that Levinas's final moves complete the utter abandonment of the Western, ego-centric accounting of time. She summarizes,

> *Totality and Infinity* engaged in an extended narrative that purported to show how a separated and atheist ego could nonetheless come to be commanded by and responsible for the other. If the ego had not been separate, if it were but a dependent moment of the ethical relation, its becoming ethical would be an unremarkable achievement. [. . .] In *Totality and Infinity* the narrative form (in conflict, at times, with its content) leads one to expect an answer to the skeptic. You are responsible whether you know it or not, says this text; but the narrative form implies that one could in fact be *brought* to know, that a narrative could be produced that would show the ego to itself in the right light, despite its own attempt to position responsibility outside cognition and intentionality. (p. 118)

The final major phase in Levinas's philosophical development begins in the mid-1960s and culminates in the 1974 publication of *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974/1998; hereafter *Otherwise Than Being*). Although only 13 years separate the publications of Levinas's two major works, substantial changes take place in the tone and themes of his second book. *Otherwise Than Being* introduces new and more radical metaphors to describe the strident nature of responsibility for the other. In Chapter 4, which Levinas calls the book's "centerpiece," he rejects the narrative structure that Perpich (2008) identifies as critical to the structure of his own argument in *Totality and Infinity*. Here, Levinas declares that responsibility is not some option for the ego to measure and consider alongside other options. Responsibility arises *before* the ego has its footing, on the "hither side" of the establishment of any self-identity.[2]

The problem with the narrative structure of *Totality and Infinity*, it seems to me, is that it still locates the ego as a protagonist in the

drama of coming-to-responsibility. There is an evangelistic urgency, a concerted effort to convert the skeptic to radical responsibility. In this effort, Levinas (1961/1969), perhaps in spite of himself, sometimes credits the ego with the "freedom of consciousness" (p. 114) that he comes to critique in later works (p. 114). Whether this is the remnant of a stylistic effort to convince readers or a fundamental piece to the arguments of *Totality and Infinity* is debatable. Perpich (2008) appears to be on track, however, in her assessment of the text's latent "protagonist" and the (probably unintended) impression that radical responsibility is *optional.* Such a conclusion insinuates that the time of the self, not the time of the other, remains primary. In his later work, Levinas appears to be increasingly aware of this danger, and he invokes new and startling metaphors to address the problem.

The remarkable new expression of Levinas's philosophy that is evident in *Otherwise Than Being* does not retreat from the radical articulations of alterity expressed 13 years earlier but instead escalates their intensity. The images and metaphors are mostly new, and many of those used earlier have been abandoned. For instance, spatial metaphors are strikingly reduced or eliminated. Moreover, Levinas almost completely avoids the language of exteriority and interiority and shies away from the language of distance, height, and asymmetry. The metaphors of time return, but now they are reconfigured and inflected heavily with new vigor and new themes, including images and language imported from his growing respect for the Babylonian Talmud. Scholarship after Levinas has not paid sufficient attention to what is abandoned between 1961 and 1974, nor the significance of the new and altered themes that are taken up. I have labored extensively on this transition and traced a number of developments and their significance (Severson, 2013, pp. 179–227). For this chapter, I shift quickly to their significance for thinking about Levinas together with the practice of therapy.

NEW THEMES

The word *diachrony* does not appear anywhere in Levinas's work until the mid-1960s. He borrows the word from linguistics, although he

means something quite different than is meant by scholars of language.[3] Levinas invokes diachrony repeatedly in *Otherwise Than Being*; it is the cornerstone of his new articulation of the relation with the other. I encounter the other in diachrony because the other is never present to me as synchrony. The other person is not a feature of my present, of my "now," but always before me. This returns Levinas to themes he began working on in the 1940s but virtually abandoned, probably to focus on the then immensely important project of differentiating his work from that of Heidegger. But he returns in the 1970s to declare that the time of the other and the time of the self are never synchronized. The other is infinitely *prior* to the self. I appear on the scene always too *late*, always tardy, always hearing the echo of the event that I have missed.

The call of the other is *anarchy*, a summons that precedes any architecture of the self, any story, any assembly or configuration, however ancient (Levinas, 1974/1998). The events of discovery, the moments when I become aware of my debt and my existence as "for the other," are trivial. The most important component of my dawning awareness is the simple fact that I am too late; I am already cast in the drama of diachronic time of the other. My role is to be my brother's keeper, but the question asked by Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" already misunderstands the situation. To ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" is already to "suppose that the ego is concerned only with itself" (p. 117).

The call of the other, which reaches me in the stupor of half-awareness, summons me to vigilance. But I am never quick enough. The call of the other, the call of the suffering other, is ancient, reverberating from time immemorial. It is not just that I was a moment too late to meet the other in a common, metaphysical "present," like a camera that snaps a photo just after the action has occurred. The other's time is inaccessible to me; I gather the traces of alterity from what falls to me as the present. Levinas suggests that the spoken word arrives to me as a *Said*, as the ossified remains of a *Saying* that is now evident only as a trace.[4] To attend to the other is to listen for the *Saying* that the *Said* renders almost inaccessible. I awaken to a world where my very identity reverberates with the echoing call of suffering from the other; I gather myself only to find that I am already a character in a plot that is not my