

In the third part of his book ('Implications for therapeutic practice'), Adams divides his sub-headings into: 'Working with: "age", "young(er) people"; "old(er) people"; "truth, narrative and the sense-of-self"; "beginnings and endings"; "embodiment"; "randomness and chance"; "adversity"; "the skills learning process"; "love"; and "freedom, responsibility and choice"'. We are not provided with categories such as 'infant', 'child', 'adolescent', 'young adult', 'mature adult', 'old age', etc. but make no mistake, every single one and many more of these life-transitions are covered, because the sense of self has to be established over and over again and is reflected through all of the above.

So, did the author achieve his ambition – is this a 'reader's' book, and if so, which readers is it for? It was certainly this reader's book, although I would have loved to have seen specific examples of the relation of some of the mighty ideas in it to practice. It is a churlish longing, though, because we were warned early on that part of our task as readers was to do our own relating – perhaps a sign of my lack of responsibility in wanting it all handed to me on a plate, and the criticism is not true to the comprehensiveness of this third section. My clients', my own, and my loved ones' lives at all their different stages were vividly present in the pages, with constant reminders of the existential givens and concerns we must live with – for instance that beginnings and endings are important in therapy because that is what life is made of – our natural condition is change: 'in existential therapy we do not work on change; we work on stopping stopping. We work on resistance to change' (p 182).

Anyone who finds change and transitions difficult or frightening (and I think that is all of us) will enjoy and learn from this tremendous book, and the possibility of viewing development as something which happens at a particular 'time' of life and in almost the same way for every person, regardless of culture, outlook, choices and history, will fade into the vastness.

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References

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Psychotherapy for the Other: Levinas and the Face-to-Face Relationship

Kevin C. Krycka, George Kunz and George G. Sayre (eds.) (2015).
Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press

The basic premise for the book is to find an answer to a question asked of one of the authors, George Kunz, by Emmanuel Levinas himself:

‘Why would a psychologist be interested in my philosophy?’. My own experience of Levinas is limited to a couple of chapters, and a talk at the 2017 SEA conference which, given my lack of experience, went slightly over my head. I felt that I had grasped the headlines of Levinas’ thinking but had no idea on what he based his belief in the face of the other as a calling. I approached the book with some interest and trepidation, especially since a friend, who is a keen Levinas fan, encouraged me.

The first four chapters of the book look specifically at theory before moving towards an application focus in the remaining ten chapters. In the theory section, the first chapter is a reprint of a paper by Halling and considers Levinas in relation to psychotherapy. It is followed by the book’s most philosophically challenging chapter, ‘Levinas, Psychology, and Language’, which examines talking as the most relevant focus for therapy. ‘Asymmetry in Psychotherapy’, written by the lead author, describes the preference for symmetry found in so many aspects of life, before we get to chapter four which compares authenticity and community in ‘Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas’.

Part two of the book looks at applications and, within that, some specific applications. Chapters Five and Six look at physical violence in ‘The Aftermath of Murder’ and ‘The Tragedy of Domestic Violence’. The seventh chapter, ‘Levinas in the Hood’, applies Levinas to race and inter-cultural tensions, a wide view linked in some ways to the eighth chapter, ‘Levinas and Psychoanalysis’, which positions Levinas in relation to psychopathology, psychology, psychotherapy and a ‘meaningful life’ (p 141) as distinct considerations. ‘Trauma as Violent Awakening’, the ninth chapter, inspects Levinas’ notion of trauma, and how the face of the other may be experienced and seen as disturbing. ‘Toward a Therapy for the Other’ focuses on the possible encouraging of the client to behave ethically towards the other, potentially recognizing that the de-centering offered by the therapist can be both the means and end of therapy.

The final four chapters offer a greater predominance of their respective case studies. The realization of the therapist that he or she may have missed something is explored in ‘Therapeutic Impasse and the Call to Keep Looking’. Levinas’ words are offered as a life raft in moments of struggle and helplessness. ‘The Face of the Other in Motherhood’ gives a first-hand account of how the face of the Other, an infant, speaks of the nature of responses in a developmental relationship, and how these can have wider applications in relation to the author’s work as a therapist. Chapter Thirteen, ‘When Therapy Wounds’, views therapy as located within its cultural context. The author, Trevor Slocum, uses Levinas to maintain a ‘responsible’ approach to the continued practice of therapy to help make homosexuals normal. Finally, ‘Weak Enough’ looks at the paradox in therapy and considers

that, for therapy to be useful, it requires an openness somewhat counter to the power embedded in the role of the therapist.

There are two appendices, both worthy of attention. The first is a poem presented without introduction, and as such gives an unusual insight and the potential to experience the chapter differently from any other in the book. This is followed by a brief biographical look at Levinas. I am unsure as to why these are set apart; they are indeed unlike the chapters that precede them, but locating them outside of the main body simply raises the chances of them being missed. I believe this would be an error on the part of the reader.

I was particularly drawn to 'Levinas in the Hood', a chapter that looks specifically at Heather MacDonald's experience as a white psychologist going to the home of a seventeen-year-old pregnant black woman, Dedra, to make an assessment. Although only nine pages long, detailing a short, three-meeting relationship, it is packed with details and encouragement. Macdonald reports how she struggled to write formally, to put her clinical judgment into clinical language and ended up deferring to music, something she had spoken about at length with Dedra to try to bridge the undisputed gap. She was at pains to minimize 'the violence of the words and of the *Said*'. This follows not only her apprehension at the stereotyped white woman who tells a black woman what is wrong with her but also her accidentally arriving for her first meeting with a face covered in blood. Macdonald relates Levinas and Dedra in showing her how good intentions are not ethical, rather that it is dangerous to blunder into situations and provoke the other. Instead, we must 'listened into the world' (p 130). The idea of social justice feels pertinent in the world I find myself but I would disagree to some extent with the idea that 'social justice is not discovered in an abstract manner, rather, it is made in the relation between two people' (p 130). The chapter allows me to discover social justice, without the relation between two people, but through the experiencing of a lived concept in a way that so many therapy readings lack.

At times, the phrasing in the book is unrelatable in terms of its texture, but this is likely due to the fact that the authors are based and trained in North America. That the majority of the authors are psychologists is also a factor, such as Claire Steele LeBeau's assertion that 'understandably, most research focuses on what we can scientifically observe, predict, and control in the application of the therapeutic tools or techniques for specific diagnostic areas' (p 177). However, neither of this really impinges on the experience of reading their thoughts. Indeed, there is a real level of honesty as conveyed by the same author when she relates how she feels so moved by a client that she hugged him (before being rebuked by her supervisor).

I find myself wanting to write about practically every chapter; the least memorable, is perhaps, 'Face of the Other in Motherhood', and yet it was

still thought-provoking, just less applicable to anything I have experienced in the therapy room. The focus is on motherhood and its related issues, with a move away from trying to experience the baby as unique in preference to being a 'good mother' and the notion that 'it seems not enough to assume that humans in pain and suffering would benefit from a gentle presence – the tenderness and care that meets their unique needs' (p 194), speaks in a way that can benefit a new mother. My apathy towards the title's focus on motherhood speaks more about my own life stage and feelings, and my view of it as the weakest chapter illustrates the strength of the combined.

I cannot recommend this book enough to any psychotherapist, at any stage of their development. The balance between theory and application throughout is incisive, thought-provoking and well knitted together by the editors who have managed to avoid excessive repetition of Levinas' key concepts despite the fifteen separate authors. To end my review, I drift back to the introduction that states that 'therapists often tell us they remember their academic preparation with disappointment, sometimes with regret. A genuinely therapeutic attitude, they discover later, is developed by sitting receptively with clients more than sitting in class on theory and technique' (p 6). This book provides enough theory to allow for traditional learning while deepening our understanding, and challenging us, with specific and human case studies. I am glad I have read this book and experienced it in my therapeutic youth. Go on, treat yourself and buy it.

Ben Scanlan

Echoism: The Silenced Response to Narcissism

Donna Christina Savery (2018). London and New York: Routledge.

This review is for a large part a remake of my foreword to Donna Christina Savery's new book. As an excuse, I can give many arguments, not least the invitation from the Editor of this Journal to do so.

I was happy to write the foreword to Savery's book mainly for two reasons. First, the book is so different from most in this realm – many just add a new feature or give a slightly novel perspective on a phenomenon already much-treated in psychological literature. Second, she does not write as a member or representative of one specific school of thought, which is unusual. In both respects, courage is needed to speak with one's own voice! I felt attached not only to the book but also to its author, because I realized that we have something in common. We are 'go-betweens' between psychoanalysis and existential philosophy. The author's strong bond to the truth one finds in myths and dramas (which stems from her former career as a theatre director) also drew me in. My personal experience of searching for a combination of the essentials in psychoanalysis and existential philosophy