

Deconstruction and the ethical relation in therapy

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

University of Technology, Sydney

August, 2010

Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of requirements of any other degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Table of Contents

Certificate of Authorship/Originality.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	v
Chapter 1: Deconstructing Therapy: a Synopsis of Previous Publications	1
Chapter 2: Deconstructing Theory: Towards an Ethical Therapy	58
Chapter 3: Ethical Therapy as Language of the Other	100
Chapter 4: The Ethical Play of Irreverence as Deconstruction in Therapy	138
Chapter 5: Levinas: Therapy as Discourse Ethics	166
Chapter 6: Intersecting Bion and Levinas: The Ethical Container in Psychoanalysis and Family Therapy.....	200
Chapter 7: Exploring Levinas: The Ethical Self in Family Therapy	227
Chapter 8: Integrative Family Therapy with Childhood Chronic Illness: An Ethics of Practice	246
Chapter 9: Integrating Family Therapy in Adolescent Depression: An Ethical Stance.....	277
Chapter 10: Summary and Reflections.....	311

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor, Professor Mark Tennant, who provided a welcoming place in the doctoral program at UTS and offered much needed guidance, encouragement and dialogue to help me complete the process. I also thank Professor Alison Lee at UTS for the liberating idea to let the thesis emerge in writing about the ethical relation.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues in the family therapy community who have encouraged and helped my professional writing along the way, beginning with Max Cornwell former editor of ANZJFT who invited my first publication.

The thesis demanded an advanced level of philosophical sophistication particularly for more theoretical chapters. I was fortunate to have dialogue with Rosalyn Diprose, Professor of Philosophy at UNSW about my interpretation of Levinas. I also presented chapter 3 at a philosophy conference in Sydney called *Derrida Today*, after which I had the opportunity to meet with Vicky Kirby, Associate Professor of Sociology at UNSW. These meetings provided valuable feedback about my interpretation of Derrida and Levinas and their relevance for therapy.

I would also like to thank my workplace and colleagues for providing support and generous study leave.

Last but not least my wife Elizabeth for her kind patience over several years.

Finally much of the thesis was written listening to the sacred cantatas of J.S. Bach, which provided ethereal inspiration at an entirely other level.

Abstract

This thesis explores the ethical relation in therapy in two parallel but connected themes or movements. The first deconstructs an epistemological breach between modern and postmodern paradigms in therapy that has divided practitioners over two decades. This sets modern, scientific or evidence-based knowledge against a postmodern therapy based on narrative, dialogic and relational forms of knowing. Drawing on the philosophy of Derrida and Levinas the thesis proposes the ethical relation as a third path or way of bringing the polarized theoretical positions of the modern/postmodern into dialogue with each other.

I call this ethical positioning towards modern and postmodern knowledge and theory *paramodern*, which means both beside *and* beyond at the same time. It moves the focus from fruitless debates about epistemology or whether knowledge is modern *or* postmodern, scientific or relational etc. to the issue of how it is *applied* in the ethical relation. Such a stance allows therapy practitioners to access a broad range of knowledge, models and techniques. It defines an ethical and integrative approach to therapy that is at once scientific, evidence-informed, practice-based *and* richly grounded in relational, dialogic and narrative perspectives. In the thesis this integrative ethical model is applied to various clinical issues like adolescent depression.

The second theme of the thesis draws on Levinas and Derrida's commentary on his ethical philosophy to ground the self, therapy and the therapeutic relationship in the ethical relation. It argues the ethical is central to the framing of therapy whatever the theory or approach. Both these themes are connected in the overall argument that to deconstruct *is* to be ethical and vice-versa.

The thesis draws on my experience as a practitioner, teacher and author in the field of family therapy over more than two decades. While a theoretical enquiry it is illustrated throughout by constructed examples of therapy practice. The main body of the thesis consists of eight chapters written for publication (chapters 2-9), six as articles in peer-reviewed family therapy/ psychology journals and two as book chapters. All of these have been published except for chapter 2 which is in the process of submission and chapter 3 which has been accepted for publication. Within this framework the introductory Chapter 1 provides a detailed synopsis of the author's previous publications with a commentary on their links to the thesis and describes how the thesis is presented and structured. The final chapter 10 summarizes and reflects on what the thesis has achieved.