Clinical Hospitality: Welcoming the Face of the Devastated Other

Donna Orange

New York, USA

Abstract

Three French philosophers of the late twentieth century devoted themselves to the discourse of hospitality: Emmanuel Lévinas, Jacques Derrida, and Paul Ricœur. Here we mine their insights for understanding of what some are calling an "ethical turn" in contemporary psychoanalysis. In particular, we consider the impossible tensions between needs and limits, responsibilities and resources, in general and in the clinical situation, and the resulting necessity for mourning. From Lévinas we hear the demand of infinite and asymmetric responsibility to the widow, the orphan and the stranger who arrives unexpectedly to interrupt our comfortable life. My response to the other — who speaks the "do not kill me" word — constitutes my subjectivity. Lévinas took up the Talmudic discussion of the story of Abraham, who welcomed the three Arab strangers into his open tent, not knowing they were angels. Lévinas considered the necessity to limit, in practical terms, the unlimited responsibility that the face of the other brings. Clinicians know well the asymmetry of responsibility, the complexities of therapeutic situations, and our own actual limits. From Derrida we have the impossibility, the necessity and the enigma of this very demand. He addressed the incompatibility between the laws of normal hospitality and the absolute law of Lévinasian hospitality, without borders. He leaves the clinician, however, with irresolvable conundrums. From Ricœur we have the challenge toward an ethics of hospitable translation. He pointed to the work of dialogic understanding as a work of memory and of mourning, a work that can never be good enough but for which we can still be grateful. This paper locates these ethical challenges within and around the clinician's daily work, using these philosophers as reminders of the vocational aspects of a profession too often mired in the pressures to diagnose and prescribe, to evade and to murder, to totalize and to finalize. The clinician's work of restoring human dignity is the work of hospitality that these three philosophers sought to describe. This is the work of psychotherapy as a human science.

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Waitara

Tokotoru tohunga matapaki Wīwī tōmuri mai o te rautau rua tekau i ngākau nui ki te matapaki i te kaupapa manaaki: Ko Emmanuel Lévinas, ko Jacques Derrida, ko Paul Ricœur. Ka hahua o rātou aroā mō tē mea e kīia nei he "huringa matatika" e ētahi kaitātari hinengaro o te wā. Tōtika te arohanga o te taukumenga i waenga i ngā wawata me ngā here, ngā mahi tōtika me ngā rauemi putuputu tae atu hoki ki ngā wā haumanu; tōna mutunga nei me tangi. Mai i a Lévinas ka rongo tātou i te whakahau kaitiaki mutunga kore me te whāioio tāwēwē ki te pouaru, te pani me te tauhou tae ohorere mai ki te whakapōrearea i ō tātou koiora maheni. Ko te whakautu ki tērā whaiaro ka whakaputa i te kupu "kaua au e patua" taku marautanga.. Ka kapoa ake e Lévinas te matapaki Iharaira o te korero mō Āperehama, nāna nei i pōhiri ngā Arapi tauhou tokotoru ki roto i tana pūroku kāhore nei i mōhio he ānahera rātou. Ka whakaaro a Lévinas i te tika kia herea, mēnā rā ka taea, te tuku noa atu i te tikanga whakaputahia mai e te kanohi o tētahi kē. E mōhio pai ana ngā kaimahi haumanu i te rerekē o ngā mahi kaitiaki, te uaua o ngā whaioranga pūāhua, me ō tātou ake here. Mai i a Derrida ka puta mai te tino taukore, te whakatau me te rerekētanga o tēnei tono. Ka aro ake ia ki te rangiruatanga i waenga i ngā tikanga manaaki me te tikanga manaaki a Lévinasian, tepe kore. Ka whakarērea mai e ia te kaimahi haumanu ki konā pōteretere haere noa iho ai. Mai i tā Ricœur ko te wero kia aro atu ki tētahi whakamāoritanga matatika manaaki. I tohu ia ki te mahi matapaki whakamātau he mahi whakamau whakaaro, whakamau tangi, ā, he mahi e kore nei e tae ki te taumata engari ma te aha ka noho whakamoemiti tonu tātou. Kei tēnei e noho ana ēnei wero matapaki huri noa i roto i waho o te mahi o ia rā a te kaihaumanu hei huringa atu ki ēnei tohunga whaikōrero hei whakamaumahara i te taha mahi mō tētahi rōpū kaimahi ōkawa e pokea rawahia ana e te mahi ki te whakatau mate ka whakatau rongoa ki te karo ki te kōhuru, ki te tapeke ki te whakaoti. Ko te mahi a te kaimahi haumanu ki te whakahoki rangatiratanga mai te mahi manaaki e whakaahuahia nei e ēnei tohunga tokoru. Koinei te mahi o te mahi hinengaro i te ao pūtaiao tangata.

Keywords: hospitality; clinical hospitality; Other; Lévinas; Derrida; Ricœur; ethics

> "To welcome the Other is to put in question my freedom." (Lévinas, 1961/1969, p. 85)

> "The welcoming of the Other is ipso facto the consciousness of my own injustice — the shame that freedom feels for itself." (ibid., p. 86)

> "a clearer and more sober estimate of our own limitations and possibilities … makes it possible for us genuinely to love our neighbor." (Bonhoeffer & Bethge, 1971, p. 276)

We never had guests in our family home. My mother, an orphan herself and overwhelmed by her ten children of whom I am the eldest, made it clear to all of us that we were not ever to bring other children into the house. I feel sure that, ashamed, she had no idea how to make them welcome in the chaos, nor had she much experience as a guest herself. I do

remember one exception, when I was six, and there were only five children. The parish priest came to dinner, and we children sat silently, while the adults talked. I, as usual, would have been seated between two toddlers, to cut up their food, also jumping up now and then to see to the baby's needs. Apart from this one instance, I had no opportunity to learn the spirit or skills of hospitality.

Nevertheless, as the playwright Tennessee Williams (Williams, 1953) evocatively said — I paraphrase for myself: throughout my life, I have depended on the kindness of strangers, and I am deeply grateful for the hospitable welcome you have extended to me, a wandering outsider among you.

Today, in the United States, I notice that we live in a culture where hospitality usually forms part of the expression "hospitality industry," as in "I work in the hospitality industry." Public discourse about immigration primarily concerns fences, incarceration, and deportation, not hospitality and welcome. The Emma Lazarus poem engraved on our Statue of Liberty at the entrance to the New York harbor, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses longing to breathe free", seems a distant memory of a spirit that we can barely recall. Thus my personal and family history joins with a cultural impoverishment. Today I want to retrieve this word of hospitality, whose relatives are compassion, generosity, kindness, and welcome, and humanism, a word that belongs in a rich interdisciplinary discourse: anthropological, literary, historical, theological, philosophical, and psychological, that is to say, in the human sciences. From my own readings in philosophy and psychoanalysis, with a few excursions, I want to join hospitality with the work of clinicians of every humanistic spirit, and to speak of clinical hospitality.

To structure this thinking about clinical hospitality, let us turn to the work of three twentieth century French philosophers, mining each for clinical inspiration. First, Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1995) provided his radical challenge to welcome the suffering other who arrives, unexpected and uninvited, at our door. Then came his younger colleague Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), who reminded us that the same word in the romance languages denotes host and guest. He brought us all the linguistic and conceptual ambiguity and complexity we clinicians confront in attempting to fulfil the ethical demand, and explained that the Lévinasian host becomes a guest in her own home, even a hostage. Finally follows the apparently gentler voice of hermeneut Paul Ricœur (1913-2005), also a friend of Lévinas, whose late work on translation spoke of linguistic hospitality, calling us to dialogue and mourning. Each of these invites a clinical reflection.

Welcoming the Devastated Other: Emmanuel Lévinas

Lévinas, a Lithuanian Jew, never forgot that French nuns had hidden his wife and daughter while he endured five years in a Nazi labor camp. He knew what hospitality could be worth. Still, to describe his meaning, he returned in his Talmudic lectures to Abraham, the ancestor, not only of those belonging to the three monotheistic faiths, but of every fully human person. He wrote:

> Father of believers? Certainly. But above all the one who knew how to receive and feed men: the one whose tent was wide open on all sides. Through all these openings he looked out for passersby in order to receive them. The meal offered by Abraham? We know especially of one meal, the one he offered to the three angels — without suspecting their condition as angels…Abraham must have taken the three passersby for three Bedouins, for three nomads from the Negev Desert — three Arabs, in other words! He runs toward them. He calls them "your Lordships." The heirs of Abraham — men to whom their ancestor bequeathed a difficult tradition of duties toward the other man, which one is never done with, an order in which one is never free. In this order above all else, duty takes the form of obligation toward the body, the obligation of feeding and sheltering. So defined, the heirs of Abraham are of all nations: any man truly man is no doubt of the line of Abraham. (Lévinas, 1990, p. 99)

Here Lévinas refers, in a Talmudic and biblical context, to his philosophical and ethical claim that the other has an infinite claim on my protection and care, that, as he often said, there exists a "curvature of intersubjective space" (Lévinas, 1961/1969, p. 291) in which responsibility for the stranger transcends my need for comfort absolutely. "Abraham was the one whose tent remained open day and night, the one who fed his guests without asking who they were beforehand." (Chalier, 2002, p. 107)

Immediately, however, Lévinas went on to confront the difficulty in which the question about Abraham had arisen: the rabbi's son has hired some workers, and agreed to feed them. The rabbi says:

> My son, even if you prepared a meal for them equal to the one King Solomon served, you would not have fulfilled your obligation toward them, for they are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As long as they have not begun the work, go and specify: you are only entitled to bread and dry vegetables. (quoted in Lévinas, 1990, p. 94)

Commenting on this, Lévinas said that the text does not say "bread *of* dried vegetables … like the [bread] we ate during the war" (p. 100), i.e. when he was in captivity. He went on to comment that the rabbi is so frightened because he understands that his son has committed himself to infinite hospitality, to an infinite ethical obligation that will be well understood by these descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who know about the tent open on all sides. Lévinas went on to recall the words of a famous Lithuanian rabbi Israel Salanter: "The material needs of my neighbor are my spiritual needs" (quoted in Lévinas 1990, p. 99). So the father counsels his son immediately to set limits and conditions on his obligation: "What is truly human," Lévinas (ibid.) continued, "is beyond human strength" (p. 100) — but the subject of limits already arises in the Talmudic context.

In his philosophical work, Lévinas, a student of Heidegger and Lithuanian survivor of five years in Nazi labor camps, who lived and worked in France until he died in 1995, propounded one big philosophical idea, namely, that before everything comes "a radically

asymmetrical relation of infinite responsibility to the other person" (Simon, Critchley & Bernasconi, 2002, p. 6). In his great work, *Totality and Infinity* (Lévinas, 1961/1969), he contrasted what he called "totalizing" — treating others as something to be studied, categorized or comprehended — with responding to the suffering "visage" of the other.

This other, no alter-ego that resembles me, bursts the bounds of the phenomenology Lévinas had learned from Edmund Husserl and from Heidegger. As David Ross Fryer put it, "Husserl discovered the other ego as an other ego like myself, but Lévinas discovered the other person as also a radical other beyond my capability and capacity to know." (Fryer, 2007, p. 582) This irreducible "face" always transcends our concepts, representations, categories, and ideas. The human other presents me with an infinite demand for protection and care, just as the Talmudic rabbi understood his son's responsibility. Each face says: you shall not kill; you shall not allow me to die alone.

> The neighbor concerns me before all assumption, all commitment consented to or refused.... It is not because the neighbor would be recognized as belonging to the same genus as me that he concerns me. He is precisely other. The community with him begins in my obligation to him. The neighbor is a brother. (Lévinas, 1981, p. 87)

Every reduction — by systematizing, classifying, pointing, even describing — is, for Lévinas, violence, a violation, a form of murder.

The neighbor, instead, exposes me "to the summons of this responsibility as though placed under a blazing sun that eradicates every residue of mystery, every ulterior motive, every loosening of the thread that would allow evasion" (Lévinas, 1996, p. 104). My response must be hineni, me voici, welcome, haere mai: I am indeed my brother's keeper, and there is no escape.

The relation to the other (autrui) creates what Lévinas called a "curvature of intersubjective space" (Lévinas & Nemo, 1985, p. 291). What can this mean? The ethical relation is not between equals, but is radically asymmetrical, that is, from "inside that relation, as it takes place, at this very moment, you place an obligation on me that makes you more than me, more than my equal" (Critchley, 2002, p. 14). Although we need law and justice and equal treatment ethics — as as a kind of support system for the unlimited ethical relation — the fundamental ethical relation of proximity to the devastated and dislocated neighbor is so radically tilted and irreversible as not to seem equal in any phenomenologically describable way.

My response to the face is simply "me voici," hineni (I am here for you), not "Here I am" as it is usually translated, but rather, as Paul Ricœur pointed out, "it's me here" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 338). It welcomes radically — that is, to the root of hospitality. The face of the other calls me, demands from me, even takes me hostage, persecutes me. My response is my refusal to be unmoved, or indifferent, to the face of the other, to the other's "useless suffering" (Bernasconi & Wood, 1988). What I am or need, or how I feel toward the other, is, for Lévinasian ethics, not in question.

Some aspects of Lévinasian ethics admittedly sound extreme, for example, substitution. Sometimes he seems to require that I be prepared to give my last ounce of bread so that

the other may have a chance to survive, or to volunteer to face the firing squad in your place. In fact, the longer I read him, the more I think he would say this is not a misinterpretation — I should always be ready, as Nelson Mandela was ready to stay in prison before accepting compromises that would keep his people subjugated, or Dietrich Bonhoeffer was prepared to remain in prison indefinitely rather than to say anything that would betray his fellow conspirators in the plot to assassinate Hitler. Working with severely traumatized patients, I sometimes notice that a background working attitude of empathic resonance or attunement, often playful in a Winnicottian sense, seems to break down. I find myself impelled to wish, and sometimes even to say, that I wish that I could take at least some of their torment onto myself, make it lessen at least for a while, to let them be less alone. What is this? Have I become a terminal masochist? Have I become a grandiose messianic figure in my own imagination? Should I quickly seek out another psychoanalysis — or is there also something to understand here about the nature of our work, about clinical hospitality?

Let us listen to the formulation in his essay entitled "Substitution" (Lévinas, Peperzak, Critchley, & Bernasconi, 1996): "It is through the condition of being a hostage that there can be pity, compassion, pardon, and proximity in the world — even the little there is, even the simple 'after you sir'" (p. 91). Responsibility for the other, said Lévinas, "is the essential structure of subjectivity" (Lévinas & Nemo, 1985, p. 95). In other words, according to Bernasconi (2002), he was not preaching sacrifice, but he did want to account for its possibility. If we were as essentially for-ourselves as Sartre (2001) and others have believed, Lévinasian ethics would not be possible. Neither heroic behavior — like that of those who had risked their lives to save Lévinas's wife and daughter, nor everyday "après vous, monsieur" hospitality and courtesy — would be possible. We would live in the Hobbsean, human life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short world of all against all or, at least, in the familiar "What's in it for me and my family?" world.

In Lévinas, ethical life transforms ego into a responsible "me". Only in the suffering of the other, and in my response, do I (a "moi", not an ego) come into being: "me voici," called into being by the other's naked and vulnerable face. The sovereign self, with its "place in the sun", always trying to have more, would be indifferent to the plight of the other. What minimal subjectivity remains to me, instead, comes about via my response to the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. Ricœur (1992), in his encounter with Lévinas, spoke of the "modesty of self constancy," so different from the "Stoic pride of rigid self consistency" (p. 168), and went on to ask, "Who am I, so inconstant, that notwithstanding you count on me?" (p. 168). I am reminded of Georges Bernanos, whose country priest without faith of his own speaks to the dying congregant:

> "Be at peace," I told her. And she had knelt to receive this peace. May she keep it forever. It will be I that give it her. Oh, miracle — thus to be able to give what we ourselves do not possess, sweet miracle of our empty hands! Hope which was shriveling in my heart flowered again in hers. (Bernanos & Morris, 1937, p. 180)

Again, in the instance of a gift, "the other can be said to dispossess me on occasion so that giving is not an act, but an ethical event whereby I lose my sense of mine in the face of

the other." (Critchley & Bernasconi, 2002, p. 240) Something happens to me in the face of the other's need so that my giving has the quality of participating, (though this would not be Lévinas's own formulation). My background role becomes habitual. Derrida (1999) later paraphrased this aspect of Lévinas: "the relation to the other is deference" (p. 46).

What can the working clinician make of all this? Where is *our* discourse of hospitality and welcome? Though only recently have words like compassion (Orange, 2006), kindness, and generosity (Corpt, 2009) found their way into psychoanalytic literature, if we look carefully, we can find their forebears. Sándor Ferenczi wrote to Freud (Ferenczi, 1949) about tact: "I merely think that one must from the outset place oneself in — feel oneself into — the patients' situation" (cf. also Poland, 1975). Ian Suttie (Suttie, 1935) wrote of tenderness, and Donald Winnicott (1975) of maternal care. Hospitable spirits have also existed in the other humanistic psychotherapies, with which I am less familiar.

Oddly, however, psychoanalytic reticence has combined with the worship of efficiency and cost-effectiveness to render invisible, and even disparaged, clinical warmth and unhurried welcome, but it remains an indispensible need. Imprisoned in 1943 and awaiting a trial that never came, pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote to his parents that he hoped to have a lawyer like a good physician, "who shouldn't give the impression that he has a great many things to do" (Bonhoeffer & Bethge, 1971, p. 88). What I used to call "emotional availability" (Orange, 1995) also names this attitude of being prepared for whatever openhearted empathic stretching the other may need of me.

Elizabeth Young-Bruehl redescribed empathy when she wrote of the work of the biographer: "The usual, indeed, the clichéd way of describing empathy as 'putting yourself in another's place' seems to me quite wrong," she wrote in her essay "The Biographer's Empathy With Her Subject": "Empathizing involves, rather, putting another person in yourself, becoming another person's habitat. But [she continued, crucially] this depends upon your ability to tell the difference between the subject and yourself." (Fox, 2011)

Empathy has nothing to do with merger: it requires separated otherness, in Lévinasian terms, or in Hans-Georg Gadamer's words, "It is the other who breaks my self-centeredness by giving me something to understand" (Gadamer, 1985, p. 9, my translation). With this Lévinasian caveat — clearly applicable beyond biographers — empathy or clinical hospitality might mean, as wholeheartedly as within me lies, making a space for the patient in my own homeless heart, so that the devastated other may have a developmental second chance.

The question of endless responsibility to and for the other, however, troubles us clinicians, as we can see from the Talmudic lectures that it troubled Lévinas too. Catherine Chalier (2002) wrote:

> In his Talmudic reading, Lévinas insists on the importance that Guemara [one component of the Talmud, also called Gemorra] grants to the contract which precedes the hiring of the worker and which, linked to the custom of the place, specifies the salary owed to him, the food that will be given to him, etc. In other words, the descendant of Abraham knows that there is no limit to his obligations towards the worker. The contract thus comes to limit my obligations toward the worker and not, as one might assume, to institute a minimum of obligation toward

> him. [This is a fine distinction!]. This means, very precisely, that obligations towards the other are infinite and do not depend on good will or choice. They precede freedom and consecrate the descendant of Abraham [every good human being] to an infinite service, to a responsibility that is greater than the commitments that have actively been taken on.... contracts and customs attempt in fact to introduce some limit to this initial or more exactly, immemorial, limitlessness. (p. 108)

In his philosophical writings, Lévinas addressed this problem by saying that as long as there are only two, the other's need transcends me utterly. My hospitality transforms me into a hostage (these two words have the same root in the romance languages). However, as soon as there are three or more, the question of justice arises. Then we need laws and contracts and agreements — all those structures that manage limits.

So, can we simply say to the shattered sufferer who arrives that we offer only bread and vegetables? Forty-five minutes, and see you next week? No, of course not. Long ago a patient, brilliant but always hovering on the edges of madness, protested to me that everything about psychotherapy and psychoanalysis was arranged for the protection and convenience of the clinician, and had nothing to do with needs of patients. Only after I invited him to help me design something that might better meet his needs, and to try things out for a while — now I might say I opened at least two sides of my tent — did we settle into fairly conventional treatment for many years. Before then, we walked on the nearby beach, sat in coffee shops — anything to reduce his sense of weirdness.

However, because I have many patients, each with special needs of his or her own, and am a limited human being myself, ever more so each month and year, I must, like the rabbi's son, set contracts in advance for time, place and payment, and work out the rest as best and hospitably as possible in a spirit of welcome, a tent-open spirit. Otherwise they too may notice the closed-off spirit, and turn away in despair once more.

Our encounter with Jacques Derrida raises these complex questions in even sharper form.

The Ambiguity of Hospitality: Jacques Derrida

Derrida, who saw clearly what Lévinasian ethics would politically require — open borders, the tent open on all sides — also saw the impossibility. He grew up much exposed to anti-Semitism in Algeria, and thus knew exclusion well. His graveside oration "Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas" (Derrida, 1999) is published with a long and longing essay on hospitality, entitled "A Word of Welcome." He explained that welcoming the other with an open door means submitting oneself to the other, making oneself receptive and teachable.

Soon, however, the complications and ambiguities begin to emerge. If only we could simply open our door and heart to all in need as the Abrahamic "law of hospitality" commands. The conditional "*laws* of hospitality", however, always conflict with, indeed radically oppose, the unconditional law of hospitality. According to these conditional laws, you may come in only when invited; and you must behave well according to local

customs when you are inside. You must accept just what is provided, not asking for more. You must already speak, or quickly learn, the local language, and not expect yours to be learned or to be understood by your hosts. You must contribute to the local economy; and keep a low profile, disappearing into the local culture; and so on. Above all, you must not be other, or have needs that might call on the unconditional hospitality. The conditional hospitality is a system that maintains itself in a tenuous balance prior to the arrival of the uninvited foreigner, the Lévinasian widow, orphan and stranger.

Derrida, however, invites us to consider that both types of hospitality may be inextricably linked. In his inimitable style, he started by drawing our attention to the linguistic ambiguities, beginning with the use, in romance languages, of the same word for guest and host:

> we must be reminded of this implacable law of hospitality: the hôte who receives (the host), the one who welcomes the invited *hôte* (the guest), the welcoming hôte who considers himself the owner of the place, is in truth a *hôte* received in his own home. He receives the hospitality that he offers *in* his own home; he receives it *from* his own home which, in the end, does not belong to him. The *hôte* as host is a guest …The one who welcomes is first welcomed in his own home. The one who invites is invited by the one whom he invites. (Derrida, 1999, p. 41)

Let us consider this paradox in our everyday clinical work (we can also easily extend it into cultural pluralism). A suffering person, new or not, arrives to my welcome. Immediately the tables are turned. Nothing happens unless I surrender the leading role, and allow the patient to lead me, to teach me, take me hostage, to inhabit me (as Elizabeth-Young-Bruehl reformulated empathy). My welcome creates the possibility that the other may welcome me into her world of loss, confusion, devastation. The welcomer becomes the one who may be welcomed as a lost and wandering stranger. The home I thought I owned was only a way-station, a tent to be opened toward the other who then might in turn share something, some bread of suffering, with me. Derrida quoted Lévinas on the strange welcome of the home:

> The home that founds possession is not a possession in the same sense as the movable goods it can collect and keep. It is possessed because it already and henceforth is hospitable for its owner. This refers us to its essential interiority, and to the inhabitant that inhabits it before every inhabitant, the welcoming one par excellence, welcoming in itself. (Lévinas, 1961/1969, p. 157, quoted in Derrida, 1998, p. 43)

So the hospitable one is dispossessed not only of agentic subjectivity — subjectivity becomes subjection and receptivity — but also of possession in the sense that he is king of the castle. Likewise the hospitable clinician, the more "clinical wisdom" she accumulates, will live with an ever-diminished sense of control. Like my wise old mother-in-law, who told me she was "learning how to be ninety-eight", not-knowing and not-having will be good enough. It will keep the sides of the tent open for the hungry and strangers.

Linguistic Hospitality: Paul Ricœur

A third philosopher, this one from the Christian tradition but also long incarcerated during the Second World War, turned his attention, in his later years, to problems of translation. Paul Ricœur, whose contrast between the hermeneutics of suspicion and the hermeneutics of faith or trust (Ricœur, 1970) I have used elsewhere (Orange, 2011), brings a generous and hospitable hermeneutic to the problem of translation. It has always seemed to me that translation and therapeutics are kindred forms of work, and my intuition finds philosophical articulation in his *On Translation* (Ricœur, 2006). According to an old proverb in at least French and Italian, to translate is to betray, "Traduire, c'est trahir" or "Traduttore, traditore". In other words, when I translate your words into my own meaning, even within the same language, I have already betrayed you. This commonplace shows up in almost every book review of a translation, especially when it involves poetry. Any one of us familiar with more than one language, or who does any clinical work, understands the truth of this proverb, and Ricœur gives it its due.

But he does more. He points out that the violence of translation goes both ways. Not only do I do violence to an Italian text when I try to put it into English, or to a patient's words or gestures when I try to read them through my own contexts, but the Italian speaker, as I feel it, pounds nails into my head by forcing me to think and feel and verbalize otherwise, as does my patient. Some psychoanalytic theories would claim that the patient intends to do this — to let me or make me feel his suffering — I am not so sure. Instead, it seems to me, we are back in the territory marked out by Lévinas and Derrida, where we are both devastated strangers walking uninvited into each other's house, disrupting each other's sense of being at home. Now we can imagine how unsurprisingly so many clinical misunderstandings and impasses — some call them enactments — emerge.

But translation attempts to bring linguistic and personal worlds together — and with great difficulty, sometimes succeeds. To find our way, Ricœur advocates what he has called "linguistic hospitality" (Ricœur, 2006). What does this strange idea involve? It first requires us to reject the Chomskian suggestion of a basic universal underlying language (Chomsky, 1968), and to embrace instead, the idea of genuine otherness, of real plurality. We cannot drill down into our language — into own unconsciousness, if you will — to find the other. The other — with his or her language, culture, history and all that this means to her or him — is truly other.

Rejecting Chomsky's universalizing, and accepting true plurality, also means embracing complexity (Coburn, 2009; Galatzer-Levy, 2002), and giving up any search for context-free simplicity. We should expect the languages into and from which we translate, like human life generally, to be "unruly and imprecise" (Taylor, 2011, p. 2). Ricœur (2006) wrote:

> As regards the perfect language … besides the fact that no one has *written it down*, the difference between the supposed artificial language and the natural languages with their idiosyncrasy, their peculiarities, proves to be insurmountable, as there is no fulfillment of the preliminary condition of an exhaustive enumeration of simple ideas and of a unique universal procedure of derivation. (p. 33)

So the translator, like the clinician, needs to abandon the search for simplicity, as well for the perfect translation (or the analyzable patient!), and to begin to look for the meanings of fidelity and trust. Both the translator's reader, and the therapist's patient arrive at our door needing hospitality, needing our faithful care. Without apparently thinking of clinicians, James Taylor (2004) wrote of our task: "Without recourse to a third, artificial language, the translator must work, patiently and carefully, from within the resources offered by her own language in her attempt to accommodate the foreign language" (p. 4). Without recourse to our theoretical shoptalk, we must work from the resources offered by our personal experience to open our tent to the stranger. Often, as Davoine and Gaudilliere (2004) reminded us, these resources will usually come from our traumatic past.

In other words, the work of hospitable clinical translation, or what I am calling clinical hospitality will normally involve what Ricœur named "work of remembering" and "work of mourning". The translator/clinician constantly faces her own limitations, created by the incapacity of her language to understand and express what the other wants and needs to say. My first Italian teacher, asked by a student how one says something in Italian, responded, "You don't. An Italian wouldn't say that". Then we were faced with a kind of mourning for the loss of our own idiom, and a resistance to accepting the limitations of both languages. I am neither allowed to force my idiom on the other, nor to feel that mine is superior. On the contrary, I must mourn my loss of my beloved at-homeness in my own language, open the flaps of my tent, and invite the Italian to explain to me what she might say in such a situation.

Similarly, sometimes I believe I have understood my patient's experience (I think I have done the work of remembering) — even when it seems to resemble mine — and he or she reacts to my response with withdrawal, anger or even subtle deflation. Then I must mourn my foreignness, and notice my resistance to acceptance of not knowing, and embrace our shared search. This means, again, opening the tent flaps, so that the other — however unfamiliar and unwashed by my standards, may begin to teach me. But the seductive hope for the common language — perhaps this appears in contemporary psychoanalysis in our constant talk of "the third" — is a hard resistance to overcome, even by "linguistic hospitality". In Ricœur's (2006) words:

> the dream of the perfect translation amounts to the wish that translation would gain, gain without losing. It is this very same gain without loss that we must mourn until we reach an acceptance of the impassable difference of the peculiar and the foreign. (p. 9)

Ricœur made it clear, I think, that not only the patient, but also the hospitable clinician, must engage in the works of remembrance and mourning. He also outlined the rewards, however, in terms we rarely find in the clinical literature:

> [It] is this mourning for the [perfect] translation that produces the happiness associated with translating. The happiness associated with translating is a gain when, tied to the loss of the linguistic absolute, it acknowledges the difference

> between adequacy and equivalence, equivalence without adequacy. There is its happiness. When the translator acknowledges and assumes the irreducibility of the pair, the peculiar and the foreign, he finds his reward in the recognition of the impassible status of the dialogicality of the act of translating as the reasonable horizon of the desire to translate. In spite of the agonistics that make a drama of the translator's task, he can find his happiness in what I would like to call *linguistic hospitality*. (Ricœur, 2006, p. 10)

For me this statement eloquently states the worth of a moderate conception of the translator's and the clinician's vocation. When we open our tent flaps to the suffering other, without too many preconceptions about what will come in or what will be given or taken, we can take some satisfaction in being used, in surrendering to the otherness of the other. We need not worry about doing it perfectly, understanding perfectly, or any of that. Thomas Ogden's masterful essay on Fairbairn (Ogden, 2010) reminds me of Ricœur's point.

Winnicott would have spoken of good-enough hospitality, and I believe Ricœur would have understood him.

Concluding Thoughts

We began with a Lévinasian story of Abraham, who kept his tent open on all sides, though the later rabbis understood that no one could really do this. We went on to Derrida's story of the inevitable complexity of hospitality, in which the tables are so quickly turned, as we clinicians know so well. Finally we have begun a Ricœur-inspired reflection on the double challenge, and the double work of linguistic hospitality. Each of these philosophers deserves much more reflection, but I commend them to your reading, and hope to continue my own.

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Donna Orange Educated in both philosophy and clinical psychology, Donna Orange teaches at the Institute for Psychoanalytic Psychology of the Self and Relational Psychoanalysis, Milano and Roma, Italy, the Institute for the Psychoanalytic Study of Subjectivity, New York; and on the New York University's Postdoctoral Psychoanalytic Program, Relational Track, New York in the USA. She is author of *Emotional Understanding: Studies in Psychoanalytic Psychology* (Guilford Press, 1995); *Thinking for Clinicians: Philosophical Resources for Contemporary Psychoanalysis and the Humanistic Psychotherapies* (Routledge, 2009); and *The Suffering Stranger: Hermeneutics for Everyday Clinical Practice* (Routledge, 2011). With George Atwood and Robert Stolorow she has written *Working Intersubjectively: Contextualism in Psychoanalytic Practice* (Routledge, 2001); and *Worlds of Experience: Interweaving Philosophical and Clinical Dimensions in Psychoanalysis* (Basic Books, 2002). With Roger Frie, she coedited *Beyond Postmodernism: Extending the Reach of Clinical Theory* (Routledge, 2009). She teaches study groups in philosophy and psychoanalysis, and cares for her patients on Manhattan's Upper West Side, New York, USA. Contact details: donna.orange@gmail.com