

## Editorial

*Margot Solomon*

I value Foulkes' notion that we do not exist in isolation. Foulkes (1990) argues for the recognition that inner processes are not separate or independent from the context of the network of people in an individual's life. At the same time I am wary of trying to fit together that which cannot fit together. Matilda in *Mister Pip* (Jones, 2006) says, "Some areas of life are not meant to overlap" (p. 200). She is talking about the lack of fit between her love of the work of Dickens and her father, a Bougainvillian who had adapted himself to live in a white-man's world in Townsville. I often feel this lack of fit between Pākehā and Māori. If we want true connection between Māori and Pākehā, we must acknowledge differences; otherwise, we can fall into the trap of noticing only what confirms our cherished habitual ways of seeing and understanding our interpersonal world. We humans tend to simply not notice whatever might challenge our unconscious bias, like Simon and Garfunkel's boxer who "sees what he wants to see and disregards the rest."

Loewenthal (2006) enjoins us as psychotherapists to be mindful of an ethical imperative articulated by Levinas that calls us to recognise "the importance of accepting, without attempting to know, the Other's otherness" (p. 205). He speaks of the western focus on 'To be or not to be' (referring to Hamlet and to Heidegger) as the focus of Western society and essentially the wrong question, as it continually brings attention back to the self (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003). Levinas (cited in Peperzak, 1993) discriminates between autonomy and heteronomy. Simply put, autonomy puts oneself first while heteronomy puts the other first.

I relate this idea to NZAP's current attempt to address the bi-cultural aspect of our commitment as psychotherapists and as citizens of Aotearoa. We live in a nation that has made a commitment to being bi-cultural. My understanding is this means Pākehā need to put Māori first, to consider their needs above other needs — to recognise them in the first place. However that is problematic for a psychotherapy culture that has focused on autonomy.

From the perspective of "being" it is easy to justify thinking about individual needs. Many psychotherapists take on family roles of holding the painful emotions of parents. The otherness of the other is identified with, and the self is easily lost. This is a difficult (though perhaps common) combination to bring to the practice of psychotherapy, and involves a struggle: the self is put aside to focus on the other, and the attention on the other is an attempt to know the other (i.e. be the other, live through the other, take responsibility for

the other.) Meanwhile the self is envious, abandoned, needy, and stays hidden because of shame and guilt. This struggle means that for psychotherapists unless this issue is addressed there is a limit to what can be achieved in oneself in terms of ordinary happiness and unhappiness, but also in what one can achieve with patients. Levinas would say that this is putting the self before the other. Heteronomy does not necessitate abandoning oneself; it is more about accepting the other in their difference. Psychotherapy as I was taught and have taught to others, focuses on finding oneself, being oneself and learning to be at home with oneself. These values are common currency in NZ psychotherapy. We have chosen autonomy, and yet we are also choosing to face the uncomfortable challenge of being bi-cultural. Maybe the thinking of Levinas, Loewenthal and others can help us to find the capacity to be mobile in our perspective and more able to move out from the comfortable 'at-home' place.

I enjoy reading (and writing) that stretches and expands my understanding. I hope you will find the papers in this journal offer a stimulating read. There are nine papers: the peer-reviewed section has seven scholarly papers, and a second section brings two stories from the conference. We have a substantial meal of Freud: four of the nine papers reference him, two with a Lacanian flavour. Gustavo Restivo offers a case study illuminating the Lacanian style of psychotherapy, and Lucy Holmes uses Lacanian theory to think about the meaning for the patient of stealing. Two papers are from recent graduates (Monique Nyemecz and Lisa Zimmerman) from the AUT psychotherapy programme, based on their dissertations and co-written with their supervisors. Leon Tan has contributed a piece of research on online blogging as self therapy, and Teresa Von Sommaruga Howard has written a powerful analysis of the large group at the conference in Napier. Also from Napier (and in a separate section) we have two living stories from presenters. Finally Ingo Lambrecht and Andrew Shaw write about an art psychotherapy group and show how the process of the group creates healing for individual group members.

## References

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