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This article was originally published as:
Morrison, G. J. (2008). Humanism, education and spirituality: Approaching psychosis with levinas. *Australian EJournal of Theology,* (12).

Original article available here:
http://www.acu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/107528/Morrison_Education_and_Humanism.Levinas.pdf

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Humanism, Education and Spirituality: Approaching Psychosis with Levinas

Glenn Morrison

Forthcoming, *Australian EJournal of Theology* (Feb 2008)

ABSTRACT**:** The article investigates the recent turn towards Emmanuel Levinas' writings in the philosophy of Education. Engaging this turn, the article sets out to develop an ethical, personal and contemplative approach towards understanding and responding to psychosis. By imagining a Levinasian horizon for understanding the experience of psychosis in the Teaching-Learning environment, Levinas' thought gives hope to take on the work of justice and offer a gift of friendship especially when faced with students experiencing psychosis. The approach towards people suffering the moods and difficulties of psychosis, the article argues, parallels the very spiritual practice of contemplation.

INTRODUCTION TO HUMANISM

The education of the human person is essential for wholeness and well-being. Our quest for meaning and truth can follow a crooked path, but we might find some direction by aligning our education practice towards a horizon of goodness and spirituality. It is my argument that Levinas' ethical metaphysics and Christian spirituality can together produce a significant rupture and radical turnabout in the development of humanism's impact upon Education philosophy and practice. A contemplative and ethical stance reaching to the foundations of teaching and learning might give rise to a hospitable, generous, engaging and responsible environment. Yet, spirituality and ethics always asks more. We are called, ordered and, perhaps, even ordained, to invite that stranger in our midst. Accordingly, towards such an almost messianic ethical and spiritual horizon, there lies hope to envision a transforming readiness for Education to reflect on its approach towards mental illness. After all, just as, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18), so too,

we might find ourselves called and chosen (Matt 22:14) to have a sense of “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard …” (1 Cor 2:9; cf. Isa. 64:4), namely, a word of love, justice and friendship with those we might fear and forget.

One of the key theories of learning in the philosophy of Education, humanism takes a turn towards subjectivity, human freedom, ethics and self-discovery. Distinguishing itself by an ethical and metaphysical approach to learning,[1] it provides a context for the ideas and ideals of personhood and relations with others to mature in the foundations of teaching and learning. Humanism has been associated with ancient Greek thought (“the Sophists and Socrates”), Jewish and Christian theology (the attempt through the ages to unify faith and reason), the Renaissance (the ability of the human person), the Enlightenment (the scientific appeal to reason alone), Marxism (overcoming exploitation and self-alienation), Phenomenology and Existentialism (emphasising various modes of existence, consciousness and freedom of the human person), Pragmatism (the practical application of philosophy to the real world) and Psychology. Since 1970, the psychological turn has had a major impact on Education. Theories such as Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs, Carl Roger’s “client-centred therapy” and Knowles’ theory of andragogy have all had a major role for influencing adult learning. However, in recent times since the late twentieth century, there have been signs of a new phase of humanism, namely a second Enlightenment, in which ideas of otherness and even spirituality can play a useful part in the development of the philosophy of Education.[2]

The second Enlightenment, in our very complex time of postmodernity, has particularly set out not only to bring faith and reason together, but to stretch faith and reason towards a place and a time for what may seem impossible to emerge. This new age of dialogue between faith and reason has had important consequences for enhancing both continental thought and

theology. But this new movement, in its birth pangs today, is beginning to make an important influence upon Education. This is illustrated today by a growing number of Education scholars taking an interest in the continental thought and ethical metaphysics of Emmanuel Levinas. Sharon Todd is perhaps the most well known.[3] Another scholar, Michalinos Zembylas, has brought out a rather interesting context (as it exemplifies not only the Second Enlightenment's turn towards otherness, but also its turn toward spirituality and theology[4]) in which Levinas' thought and Christian spirituality might contribute to the philosophy of Education.[5] For the purposes of this article, I will engage the contributions of these two authors. Other major contributors include Kimberley Abunuwara, Gert Biesta, Ann Chinnery, Carl Anders Säftröm, Roger Simon and Aparna Mishra Tarc.[6] Before looking into Todd's and Zembylas' contributions, let us take some moments to engage one significant, traumatic event in the life of Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) as a key to exemplify his complex thought.

EMMANUEL LEVINAS

Levinas provides an autobiographical 'signature' in his last chapter of his work, *Difficult Freedom*.[7] He begins with a 'disparate inventory' of autobiographical facts mostly relating to his education and teaching career. Following this he provides a lone and terrible lament: "It [his life] is dominated by the presentiment and memory of the Nazi Horror".[8] Beginning with the shock and tragedy of his former teacher, Martin Heidegger, embracing Nazism in 1933 and lasting until the end of captivity in a stalag in Germany in 1945, Levinas' thought began to resist the temptation to find meaning and truth by way of the categories of Being, presence and objectivity.

Going beyond the ontological phenomenology of Martin Heidegger through developing a unique vocabulary of highly complex terms and ideas, Levinas set out to think of Being "otherwise",[9] that is to find a sense of transcendence in Being in terms of justice, mercy, peace and the ethics of prayer. This suggests that beyond the egoistical life of Being, that is, being-for-oneself and for-one's-own-possibilities, is the very life of responsibility for the Other. However, such responsibility is infinite and exemplified by demanding states of expiation, humiliation and taking responsibility for the one who persecutes you. Indeed, Levinas' whole thought is a "difficult freedom" and a very liturgy of responsibility witnessing to and being commanded by the word of God in the face of the Other.[10] We can begin to appreciate that using Levinas' thought might very well signify impossibility. However, as we shall see now, his thought gives rise to finding a way to articulate a moral conscience, a sense of justice and locus for unknowability in Education. These new perspectives challenge and stretch the foundations of good teaching and learning practice.

TWO LEVINASIAN SCHOLARS IN EDUCATION: TODD AND ZEMBYLAS

Among the growing number of scholars beginning to utilise Levinas' philosophy for Education, Sharon Todd has, according to Katz,[11] been the first to publish a monograph on Levinas and Education, entitled, *Learning from the Other: Levinas, Psychoanalysis, and Ethical Possibilities in Education*. Katz comments that Todd's work seeks to connect Education with social justice, non-violence and moral development; as a result the major roles of the teacher are listening and attuning to the other.[12] In contrast, in an earlier writing, "Guilt, Suffering and Responsibility",[13] Todd investigates the pedagogical and ethical significance of students' experience of guilt. Let us begin our analysis of Todd's contribution with this article as it gives an existential and programmatic starting point to connect her applications of reading Levinas with her other writings. In "Guilt, Suffering and

Responsibility", Todd sets out to provide three phenomenological moments of guilt from Levinas' thought.

First, according to Todd, guilt is "… an inadequation of the self in responsibility".[14] From the very beginning of the relation with the other, the self is guilty as it faces an overwhelming demand of responsibility. Second, guilt is a belated response signifying that the other's cry and suffering is beyond the everyday experience of our senses. As a result the face of the Other absolutely surprises the self in its guilty situation of being late and doing too little for the Other. Todd relates the third phenomenal moment of guilt as "… the redoubling of suffering through the persecutory call of the other".[15] This suggests that the relation to the Other's suffering necessary entails a persecution for we are accused by the Other and even by our own conscience as it calls us into question. Consequently, the encounter with the Other pursues us towards the horizon of even encountering the Other's fear of death and loneliness, and further, ordering us to make a response.

We can appreciate that Todd's Levinasian reading of guilt necessitates a traumatic experience and begs the question of whether considering guilt in education actually has value.[16] For Todd, the value lies in "… introducing stories of suffering into our classroom … to allow students opportunities for articulating their own complex responses (which can cut across a range of emotions, such an empathy and outrage as well as guilt).[17] We can see that her article is quite programmatic in the use of Levinas. She identifies the importance of guilt and the necessary suffering (in another words, compassion) in its connection with "listening to the other".[18] We find here a means towards the fulfilment of good and challenging education practice, namely an ethic of listening. Here, Todd provides an interesting connection with an "ambiguous" reading of eros.

For Todd, "… the capacity to listen to the other and be moved by the other"[19] beyond our tendencies to reduce him or her to an object of knowledge and experience signifies a response to eros. Giving a reading of Levinas' ambiguous stance towards eros, Todd seems to capture Levinas' erotic laden language of ethical transcendence to reposition eros in education as an ethic of responsibility. Imagining the ethical possibility for eros, Todd allows its very ambiguity to communicate "love, generosity and affection" as "further openness and communication".[20] This provides a maternal context and a maternal ethic in education. A response to eros might very well give "birth to signification": to the opportunity for teachers to reflect more deeply on their relational and embodied responsibility to students.[21]

Although Todd does not indicate, her reflection on giving an ethical foundation to eros seems to parallel Levinas' Talmudic conception of mercy and the maternity of God: "*Rakhamim* [the Hebrew term for Mercy] is the relation of the uterus to the *other*, whose gestation takes place within it. *Rakhamim* is maternity itself. God as merciful is God defined by maternity."[22] Further, Levinas illuminates: "For the encounter with the face I still reserve another word: *miséricorde*, mercy, when one assumes responsibility for the suffering of the other. This appears naturally as the phenomenon of love."[23] The encounter with the Other speaks of a maternal condition of mercy. Far from the experience of erotic joy, such all-exacting alterity and love is difficult and painful. Perhaps this helps to explain why Todd provides a grave recasting of eros to give birth to a "profound sensitivity"[24] in education. In practical terms, this can be exemplified by Todd's view that when students struggle for meaning in regards to the educator's demand that they form a relationship to the curriculum, the teachers are called to bear forth "a non-violent element in the teaching-learning relationship".[25] Developing such a profound sensitivity to be mindful of students' trauma and

embarrassment (which Todd relates as "the trauma of wetting oneself in front of the class") signifies a hope that teachers can recognise the ethical significance of their role.[26] This seems to suggest that teachers, for example, could recognise the value of "making contact" with the students' emotions such as "being touched". Rather than creating hurt, the teacher can surprise the student with acts of goodness and encouragement that are touching (*contactus*) and, hence, make contact with the student's mind, heart and soul.[27] With this in mind, let us turn now to the contribution of Michalinos Zembylas.

Michalinos Zembylas sets out to ground the idea of unknowability in education philosophy. By appealing to the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas in dialogue with the Christian theological and spiritual tradition of *via negativa*, he explains:

> Both Levinas's philsophy and *via negativa* attempt to assert what cannot be asserted, what is impossible to know. In *via negativa*, God cannot be "expressed" in any meaningful sense, because human intellect is finite; this ineffability is also a Levinasian understanding of the Other as an unknowable alterity … Of course in *via negativa*, the totally Other, that which is sublime beyond representation, is God. In this sense, it may be said that Levinas embraces a kind of *via negativa* towards the ethics of otherness; i.e. knowing the Other is impossible. … Both *via negativa* (especially St. John[28]) and Levinas emphasize the importance of the "passive" reception of God and the Other.[29]

Bringing both Levinas' thought and the Christian tradition of *via negativa* together in conversation, suggests that behind Zembylas' intention to ground a sense of unknowability in education, is the very desire to provide an entry for spiritual practice in the conversation. In Education terms, this signifies a "transformation" of the goals of educators to create a space

and time (a readiness) “for embracing unknowing”.[30] Going beyond the ontological thematisations of *via negativa* and hence its fall into the objective generalisations of the individual, Zembylas finds Levinas’ notion of infinity in the relation of responsibility for the Other, an opportunity to develop “a pedagogy of unknowing”.[31] He names his approach as witnessing (in contrast to either becoming a mere spectator or a cold critical inquirer) in the teaching-learning environment. Exhorting a teaching practice as a “witness” in which the ethical relation with the student Other is primary, Zembylas uses three Levinasian themes, namely, vigilance, humility and silence. Whilst associating theses themes with the tradition of *via negativa* to deepen their spiritual significance for Education, we begin to see an ethical, spiritual practice taking form.

The attitude of vigilance towards the Other is not only a patient waiting of being exposed to the Other’s unknowability, but it signifies a stance of humility or an ideal of holiness in which the self becomes “an Other” or in more manageable terms, the humble self gives truth a voice. Such a voice might also be articulated (but not always) by way of silence. As a result, we might hear transcendence (deeper, non-intentional or passive communication) in the depths of the Other’s silence.[32] Admittedly, whilst I have tried to extend and clarify Zembylas’ analysis here of the Levinasian ideas and themes of vigilance, humility and silence, we can note that a spiritual disposition towards teaching and learning is beginning to take shape.

Towards developing an ethical and spiritual “praxis of unknowing”,[33] Zembylas envisions a world of education in which the roles of teacher and student are reversed. Taking up a radical position, he argues that educators need to abandon their epistemological teaching base as “knowers”.[34] Zembylas sets a task for teachers, namely, to think otherwise than being a

knower as a means to develop a radically new orientation of teaching. Beyond the egoistic interest of knowledge and its temptation to totalise the other as a function of knowledge (for example stereotyping learners as surface or deep; or using such terms as "efficiency," "standards" and "quality control"), lies a "praxis of unknowing". [35]

Touching on the Levinasian ideas of sensitivity, the face and infinity, Zembylas offers an explanation of a praxis of unknowing: "Enacting unknowing in teaching and learning initiates relatedness, attentiveness, and generosity. Claiming a place for unknowing in educational settings offers hope in opening up to the Other. This kind of teaching and learning can happen only when knowledge is not the ultimate goal of education".[36] Zembylas begins to initiate a possibility for giving a context and a voice for Levinas' pure ethical thought. Accordingly, for example, once a feeling of "infinity" can be nurtured within the classroom, a possibility exists for students to cultivate "attitudes of 'seeking, desiring and questioning'".[37] Does this suggest that Zembylas priorities nurturing feeling, emotions and attitudes rather than knowledge in the teaching and learning environment? No doubt, such experiences and behaviours are essential for the conduct of good communication.

Developing such a "sense and sensibility" beyond the totality of knowledge reminds us that our infinite quest and search is not just for meaning and truth, but also for seeking the good. This suggests that a certain ethical and faith-ful respect must exist towards the student. Given that there is a whole world of unknowability in the relation with the student, the teacher is compelled to embrace otherness, which for Zembylas represents "… a curious element of redemption; in the lack of knowledge, the meaning of its absence is found".[38] Equally, not only is an ethical respect demanded, but one that overflows towards developing a spiritual practice of safeguarding "the gift of unknowing"[39] in the relation with the student.

EDUCATION AND PSYCHOSIS

Both Todd and Zembylas have found Levinas' complex philosophy to be of grave import for developing a humanistic philosophy of Education. Together they emphasise existential and phenomenological states and stances to negotiate a strategy for good education practice in teaching and learning. Todd's stress on listening to the Other and Zembylas' articulation of unknowability provide a basis for understanding the importance of communication by way of Levinasian reflections on guilt, eros (love, generosity, affection), vigilance, humility, silence and sensitivity. Looked at together, their reflections evoke a generous and engaging responsibility taking the form of hospitality and even the love of friendship.

We are now approaching a context in which the discussion of the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and Education can be taken a step further towards the horizon of people living with the moods and difficulties of psychosis. Sharon Todd herself is not averse to bringing psychoanalysis to bear on Education, as the title of her book indicates: *Learning from the Other: Levinas, Psycholanalysis, and Ethical Possibilities in Education.* However, whilst Todd is concerned with combining Levinas' ethical metaphysics with psychoanalysis to develop "an effective pedagogical theme for social justice",[40] my contention is that Levinas' ethical ideas can provide a vision for encountering people with psychosis in a teaching and learning environment. Towards such an aim, the Levinasian idea of "having a sense" (in its expression as love, justice and peace[41]), nurtures a very possibility to engage generously and responsibly with people experiencing the delusions and illusions of psychosis. In Levinasian terms, this signifies a stance of "otherwise than Being", that is to say, taking on the work of justice and peace through an agapic love for others.

The experience of psychosis is like a dark and consuming horror; the self looses its feeling of selfhood as the delusion brings about an altered, enthralling and terrifying state of existence. As a result, the person strives to confuse itself with the good and deny the possibility of death as a means to maintain its experience of terrifying and enthralling transcendence.[42] By the very possibility of "having a sense", an intention of love that has the quality of mystery/unknowability or "that which cannot be known or represented totally in consciousness", we allow for the teacher a vision to encounter the student with psychosis. Such a vision would not find rest in any stereotypical characterisation, but through desire of profound proximity. This suggests a hospitality of justice and a gift of friendship, in which the lost self of the student with psychosis might for a moment reveal it broken heart and shattered spirit (Psalm 34:18).

Bringing together Levinas' philosophy and Education can provide many opportunities to reflect on a multitude of contexts. Mental health will always be a prevailing challenge. It is my belief that with Levinas, we might find an ethical vision to develop a sense of relating with those with psychosis in the classroom, and thus a hope that, "At the very moment where all is lost all seems possible".[43] Perhaps this is the time to do the impossible. After all, our age of postmodernity testifies to a Second Enlightenment that at once challenges, confuses and gives hope to our very sense of being human and being responsible for others. Accordingly, let us begin by engaging Levinas' idea of "having a sense" within a practical horizon of approaching students with psychosis in a teaching and learning environment.

HAVING A SENSE AND APPROACHING PSYCHOSIS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Levinas seeks to overcome the difficulty of describing experience that defies objectivity and thematic consciousness by elaborating the notion of "having a sense".[44] Here he refers to the example of love. This has some similarities to a broader philosophical and theological tradition on "affective" or "connatural knowledge", which give primacy to love over conceptual or rational cognition.[45] He does not, of course, rely on the metaphysical or psychological framework that this tradition assumes. He writes:

> But "to have a sense" does not mean the same as "to represent." The act of love has a sense, but this does not mean that it includes a representation of the object loved together with a purely *subjective* feeling which has no sense and which accompanies the representation. The characteristic of the loved object is precisely to be given in a love intention, an intention which is irreducible to a purely theoretical representation.[46]

This passage, coming from Levinas' earliest writings, is remarkable, not only for his understanding of the affectivity involved in our knowledge of the Other, but also in its notable similarity to those strands of sapiential or mystical affectivity that are found in the scholastic tradition and in its current developments. For Levinas, however, this affectivity enters precisely into his descriptions of ethical consciousness, as it relates to the Other beyond any abstract form of representation. Experiences such as love cannot be contained, as it were, in egoistic or inner subjective consciousness. In love, consciousness transcends itself beyond the range of intellectual, moral or culturally conditioned objectification. In short, by distinguishing representation from "having a sense", Levinas indicates his concrete ethical concern to transcend purely theoretical analysis. But, none the less, Levinas' analysis

remains a pure ethics of otherness that needs other contexts for expression. Accordingly, having a sense necessitates a non-intentionality, or in Husserlian terms, a *noesis* (the act of consciousness itself, the *cogitatio*) without a *noema* (the objectifying act, the *cogitatum*).

In Teaching and Learning, a rupture between consciousness and the objectifying act might occur in the very moment of encounter between the teacher and the student experiencing the difficulty and stress of psychosis. Just as the experience of love makes a rupture between lovers so that their consciousness overflows with what cannot be contained (namely the mystery and beauty of the other), so the face-to-face experience of teacher and student may for an instance cause a rupture and trauma of responsibility as well as desire for hospitality. Behind our masks and roles, a face communicates fear and loneliness. Like the face of love, the face of the one with psychosis signifies a piercing, wounding and commanding word to journey into the person's life and offer welcome, generosity and hospitality. The hidden wounds on the Other's face commands attention and responsibility. Let us now envisage how Levinas' intriguing analysis of "having a sense" might take us further in our own reflection.

In a later development, Levinas will move more consistently beyond both Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerian fundamental ontology into the realm of alterity. His "having a sense" is set in contrast to any presumption of apprehending Being. The following dense passage illustrates this point:

> But the face, wholly open, can at the same time be in itself because it is in the trace of illeity. Illeity is the origin of the alterity of being in which the *in itself* of objectivity participates while also betraying it.

> The God who passed is not the model of which the face would be an image. To be in the image of God does not mean to be an icon of God but to find oneself in his trace. The revealed God of our Judeo-Christian spirituality maintains all the infinity of his absence, which is the personal "order" itself. He shows himself only by his trace, as is said in Exodus 33. To go toward Him is not to follow this trace, which is not a sign; it is through this illeity, situated beyond the calculations and reciprocities of economy and of the world, that being has a sense. A sense which is not a finality.[47]

These words illustrate, first of all, Levinas' post-phenomenological inversion of Husserl's thought. Consciousness of "something" is inverted into an absolute passivity in the face of the Other. Second, it illustrates his departure from Heidegger. The subject is not defined by care for itself, and its finite thinking no longer simply refers to the infinite. For Levinas' ethical emphasis, the Other's approach inverts the ego. The finitude of being for-oneself is turned inside out toward the infinity of being for-the-other. Giving an enigmatic articulation of such infinity, Levinas brings to attention the connection between alterity and *illeity*.

Levinas describes alterity as the trace of *illeity*. The word *illeity* is a neologism derived from the French third person singular (*il*) and Latin (*ille*), meaning "that one". Levinas describes it as, "… the *he* [or "that one"] in the depth of the you".[48] This is one of Levinas' more complex and, indeed, complicated, notions because of its large and shifting range of connotations. The referential scope of *illeity* extends on occasion to God, the Infinite or "the third" (*le Tiers*) or even to what might be confused with the stirrings of the *there is* [*il y a*].[49] Eschewing precise definitions, Levinas is not always consistent, occupied as he is, for the most part, with the dyad of the self and the Other. His elaboration of the interrelationship

within the triad of the self, the Other and *illeity* receives less attention, which does not make for any simple clarification in this area.

As Levinas' thought progresses, his exposition becomes more idiosyncratic and exponentially more difficult to unravel. His idea of *illeity* might be best interpreted by comparing it with the unnameable Tetragrammaton (YHWH, יהוה). Just as the Hebrew words, *Adonai* (the Lord) or *Ha Shem* (the Name), are used in the reading of the Tetragrammaton, so what is "otherwise" to our experience (the face of God, Exodus 33:23) in which the Infinite passes transcribes the very signification of otherness.[50] Just as the Tetragrammaton is unpronounceable, so the *illeity* in the face of the Other is non-phenomenal; both remain an enigma that can never be re-presented by thought and thematised as an object.[51]

In the environment of approaching the student, Levinas' idea of *illeity* suggests that for the most part, the student's face remains a non-phenomenal phenomenon. In other words, the face of the student cannot be effectively reduced to our interpretations and judgments. The idea of *illeity* signifies a radical disposition of approaching the student with psychosis in a fashion "otherwise" than our usual experience. Akin to the openness required in spiritual experience (such as in the transcendence of contemplation), we might find a new sight and a new hearing of the Other. For example, when we allow the very reality of the psychosis to by-pass our senses, emotions and judgment, we can enter into a space and time (a readiness) to approach first the existence of the student, namely, for example, whether the student is enthusiastic, curious, open, friendly, upset, angry, aggressive or despondent. Hence, when we provide a stance in which allows for the absence of pre-judged feelings and objectifications of students with psychosis, we might be able to provide a richer and more perceptive approach. For example, if a student approaches us with delusional and disruptive

behaviour, a first step might best be provided to aim not at the reality (objectifying act) of the delusions (such as found in their reasoning and explanations), but to give priority to the very act of consciousness itself. This means attending to what lies hidden in the depths of the heart and mind such as issues of acceptance, loneliness and fear of death.

Rather than emphasising a psychoanalytical stance, I want to suggest a radical ethical stance of approaching the student with psychosis through developing a sense of "unknowing" or going beyond the temptation to follow our objectifying tendency of reducing the Other to interpretation and knowledge. This may well help to prevent prejudice and fear of the Other. But, more importantly, it may provide a deeper insight into the very dark, painful and terrifying world of psychosis. Therefore, for example, when we give the possibility of transcending our senses and feelings of seeing and hearing the psychosis, we allow for another sense to emerge, namely the possibility for compassion and heartfelt understanding. "Having a heart" to temper one's approach may just be enough to go a little further to develop responsible tactics and strategies as a means to approach the student experiencing the dark moods of psychosis. We might, then, begin to approach the denuding trace of psychosis in the face.

Consequently, we can begin to appreciate Levinas' connection of the face with the trace of *illeity*. He also connects the idea of "in itself": "Illeity is the origin of the alterity of being in which the *in itself* of objectivity participates while also betraying it".[52] The face can be in itself, in a fragile objectivity, because of the trace of *illeity*. However, the *in itself* of objectivity betrays alterity by arresting the movement of openness to the Other, due to the tendency to abstract and thematise. There is a recurrent tension within the self between ethical and self-referential behaviour. In the teaching and learning setting, this helps to

emphasise the reality of the psychosis sets out to prevent ethical responses; it produces "a fragile objectivity", a strangeness and absurdity that shocks and surprises to the point of leaving us numb to respond. Hence, we face a certain ambiguity in the face of the Other as it both communicates a confusion between commanding us to respond and to not respond. However, for the most part, looking at Levinas' development of the idea of "in itself", there is a sense that beyond the possible confusion with the fragility and darkness of the "in itself" (the *il y a* or "there is"), there lies the realm of the good.

Later, in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas develops the idea of *in itself* by employing the German terms, *an sich* and *in sich*, in reference to the self-recurrent character of the self, in its authentic desire to remain on the hither side of the moral responsibility which exceeds all calculation.[53] For Levinas, the *in itself* of the self can be fully realised only in the life of disinterestedness. Levinas allows that, "… the face, wholly open, can at the same time be in itself because it is in the trace of illeity".[54] This is a helpful clarification in that the trace helps to clarify that the trace of *illeity* in the Other's face disturbs the self's consciousness to the point where the self becomes aware of that truth that it is more fully itself when it is for-the-other. This is a more ethical and metaphysical view of the *in itself*. It may well provide a challenging guide for the teacher towards an approach of disinterestedness or responsibility for the student evidencing psychosis. The student's behaviour, by disturbing our conscience, might provoke a sense of otherness. This confirms that the teacher's possible encounter with the depths of his or her own consciousness and conscience is just as eventful as the student's experience of psychosis.

Levinas' later writings[55] confirm that the trace of *illeity* is both unrepresentable and non-thematisable. In terms of the longer passage cited above, I would suggest that through the

idea of *illeity* Levinas seeks to resolve the impossibility of Being "having a sense". For the trace of *illeity* awakens a sense of compassion and goodness in Being, but without permitting such compassion and goodness to be reduced to an objectification or any representable image such as empathy (the experience or knowledge of another's experience). Levinas states later in *Otherwise than Being* that the trace of *illeity* is not a sign. He means rather that, the self itself becomes a sign, testifying to having been provoked into responsibility by *illeity*.[56] We may then ask whether teachers are called and even ordered to be signs and opportunities for the student to find goodness, generosity, hospitality and justice.

According to Levinas, *illeity* is "situated beyond the calculations and reciprocities of economy and of the world".[57] This indicates a non-phenomenal link between the ethical self, the Other and *illeity*: the ethical self signals responsibility for the Other without disclosing and proving anything about the trace of *illeity*. The self can do this because it has a sense in Being which implies no finality. The non-finality is necessary because the trace of *illeity* has imposed on the self a life of bearing testimony, but in a way that is absolutely detached from comprehending the meaning and invoking – or controlling – it as an ongoing, conscious presence.[58] What is implied here is the indirect way (beyond essence) of the manner in which having a sense of goodness directs the teacher, for example, to be responsible, and to be a sign of alliance with the student affected by psychosis.

In the resulting disinterestedness the synchrony of Being and peace takes form.[59] As consciousness goes towards something other, there occurs a proximity with "the third" – in a pacific relationship of justice with others. The following passage condenses these themes:

> … it is on the basis of proximity that being takes on its just meaning. In the indirect ways of illeity, in the anarchical provocation which ordains me to the other, is imposed the way which leads to thematisation and becoming conscious. Becoming conscious is motivated by the presence of the third alongside the neighbour approached. The third is also approached; and the relationship between the neighbour and the third cannot be indifferent to me when I approach. There must be justice among incomparable ones. … In this disinterestedness – when, as a responsibility for the other, it is also a responsibility for the third – the justice that compares, assembles, and conceives, the synchrony of being and peace, takes form.[60]

To summarise: so far, I have shown how Levinas' having a sense (non-thematisable consciousness) is related to being in Being through the trace of *illeity*. I have further argued that having a sense in Being means that the self becomes an unthematisable sign of goodness and compassion. For the self cannot reduce the Other to a presence in consciousness because it exceeds all thought and language. There is, however, a way for Being to take on a just meaning, without implying that alterity is a function of Being. It is only through the indirect ways of *illeity* that Being must be understood. In other words, although the "otherwise than Being" (alterity) is outside the ontological order, it is understood, nonetheless, as in Being.[61] The ideas of "in Being" and "beyond Being" are not separable, even if ambiguity is an inevitable outcome. If justice is to come to expression, some thematisation and intentional form of consciousness are required. Accordingly, we are now in a position to suggest that once an ethical, compassionate stance towards the existence of the student with psychosis is maintained, we can appropriately begin to make critical judgments and engage in a genuine dialogue of concern and responsibility (proximity) with the student and others like health professionals.

We can offer some possible further clarification. In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas states that proximity, the very refusal of presence, converts "into my presence as present, that is, as a hostage delivered over as a gift to the other".[62] This would seem to suggest that the gift has to be betrayed by presence in order to be given. However, despite the betrayal or the inevitability of thematisation and consciousness, the gift contains within it the trace of the passing of *illeity*. But there is a further complication. What delivers the gift over to presence and thematisation is the interruption of "the third party" or "the absent Other" (who is also a neighbour of the Other).[63]

There are three aspects of "the third" as Levinas understands it. First, "the third" is concretely manifested in suffering and the cry for justice.[64] Second, "the third" imposes limits upon the extent to which self is responsible. Although responsibility is never mitigated, the self cannot ever fulfil its responsibilities. Lastly, "the third" is the very fact of consciousness for it demands that the self measure and know its cry for justice.[65] As a result, "the third" gives rise to a dialectical relationship between justice and totality, even if the totality must be finally transcended.[66]

Engaging the context of approaching psychosis in teaching and learning, we may transpose Levinas' idea of "the third" to the absent Other (other Others), namely the family and friends of the student, the peers and other teachers, and health providers such as counsellors, mental health nurses and psychologists. The suffering and cry for justice is an archetypal experience that underlies the fragility and vulnerability of our human existence. When there is justice, there is the possibility for peace and hope. The Teacher-Student relation signifies a cry for justice and a response of compassion. Even though the teacher might never fulfil her or his

responsibilities, an ethical response of justice will always remain. Approaching a student with psychosis seems just as demanding as the necessary requirements for a life of contemplation. Levinas' thought demonstrates a profoundly "prayerful" response to the Other as a means to both safeguard and to have a sense of sacredness, dignity and humanity.

CONCLUSION: INVITING THE STRANGER, APPROACHING PSYCHOSIS

Through behaving "otherwise" by way of prayer and compassion, we might envision "the impossible" of establishing justice and peace through responsibility for students suffering the moods and difficulties of psychosis. With this in mind and in view of Levinas' emerging analysis of "having a sense", I would suggest the following threefold ethical and prayerful approach:

1. Develop an ethical sense and prayerful stance of compassion, hospitality and generosity.
2. Focus on the student's subjective existence e.g. feelings, emotions, intentions and attitudes.
3. Risk a dialectical relationship between being subjectively compassionate (the act of personhood) and being objectively inquiring (the act of speech) in the hope of creating peace, making just judgments and responsible decisions.

The approach here emphasises that teaching in difficult and challenging situations demands a response comparable to love and even a spiritual life of contemplation. Imagining the ethical possibility for eros and engaging unknowability, Sharon Todd and Michalinos Zembylas have respectively provided some ground and direction to offer some reflections on approaching psychosis in teaching and learning. The growing contribution of Education scholars taking up

Levinas' writings brings hope to continuing the tradition of humanism. Amongst this hope is a learning environment that is hospitable, generous, engaging and responsible. Further, we might even discover here an inchoate horizon for dialogue between Education scholars, philosophers and theologians.

Emmanuel Levinas' life was dominated by the presentiment and memory of the Shoah. He endeavoured to give meaning to his experience of trauma and horror through his writings. His life in itself is a testimony of hope against useless suffering. His philosophy bears witness to inviting the stranger as friend. We can well regard his writings as demanding enough to warrant such an approach. After all, are not true friends the ones with whom we can more easily bear forth love, compassion and sacrifice! I really do not know the "answer" of how to approach people with psychosis, but I can imagine a possibility amongst the impossibility of creating a truly heartfelt response to a student with psychosis. The possibility begins in developing a sense of how to listen to the Other and how to approach the unknowable in him or her. This leads us towards a world of ambiguities and traces in which we find the student's face (existence) fading, absenting, restricting or resisting itself in relationship. None the less, the more we partake in the depths of humanity and the good, the more we have an opportunity to respond generously with determination, perseverance, prayer and hope.

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[1] In contrast to humanism, other key theories of learning are constructivism, the social learning orientation, cognitive theories and behaviourism. Constructivism focuses on the role of experience and the foundations of knowing to build or construct new knowledge, and hence seeks an engaging and interactive experience for learning. The social learning orientation, on the other hand, prioritises observation of others as a method for self-regulating and self-directing the process of learning. Further, cognitive theories emphasise meaning and

the internal mental processes of memory and sense perception to develop models for learning. Finally, behaviourism observes behaviour and the environment as a means to condition or reinforce the learning process towards improving performance and outcomes. See S. B. Merriam and R.S. Caffarella, *Learning in Adulthood* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 248-266; and Ralph Blunden, ed., *Teaching and Learning in Vocational Education and Training* (Katoomba NSW: Social Science Press, 1997), 113-116, 122-127, 148-154.

[2] See "Humanism" in Tom Honderich, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 375-376; and Blunden, *Teaching and Learning*, 122-127.

[3] Sharon Todd, *Learning from the Other: Levinas, Psychoanalysis and Ethical Possibilities in Education* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

[4] See John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (eds.), *God, The Gift and Postmodernism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[5] Michalinos Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing: Witnessing Unknowability in Teaching and Learning", *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 24 (2005), 139-160.

[6] Kimberley Abunuwara, "Drawing on Levinas to Redefine Education: Making the Unknowable the New Priority," *Education* 119:1 (1999), 147-150; Gert Beista, "Learning from Levinas: A Response", *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 22 (2003), 61-68; Ann Chinnery, "Aesthetics of Surrender: Levinas and the Disruption of Agency in Moral Education", *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 22 (2003), 5-17; Carl Anders Säftröm, "Teaching Otherwise", *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 22 (2003), 19-29; Roger Simon, "Innocence without Naivete, Uprightness Without Stupidity: The Pedagogical *Kavannah* of Emmanuel Levinas", *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 22 (2003), 45-59; and Apana Mishra Tarc, "Education as Humanism of the Other", *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* 37:6 (2005), 833-849.

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[7] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, translated by Seán Hand (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 291-295.

[8] Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, 291.

[9] See Levinas' major work, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1999).

[10] Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, xiv.

[11] Claire Elise Katz, "Teaching the other: Levinas, Rousseau, and the Question of Education" *Philosophy Today* (Summer, 2005), 204.

[12] Katz, "Teaching the other", 204-205.

[13] Sharon Todd, "Guilt, Suffering and Responsibility", *The Journal of the Philosophy of Education* 35:4 (2001), 597-614.

[14] Todd, "Guilt, Suffering and Responsibility", 607.

[15] Todd, "Guilt, Suffering and Responsibility", 608.

[16] Todd, "Guilt, Suffering and Responsibility", 607-608.

[17] Todd, "Guilt, Suffering and Responsibility", 610.

[18] Todd, "Guilt, Suffering and Responsibility", 609.

[19] Sharon Todd, "A Fine Risk to be Run? The Ambiguity of Eros and Teacher Responsibility", *Studies in Philosophy of Education* 22 (2003), 41.

[20] Todd, "A Fine Risk to be Run?", 41.

[21] Todd, "A Fine Risk to be Run?", 41-42.

[22] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, translated and with an introduction by Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 183.

[23] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Is It Righteous To Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, edited by Jill Robbins (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 145-146.

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[24] See Sharon Todd, "Introduction: Levinas and Education: The Question of Implication", *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 22 (2003), 1.

[25] Sharon Todd, "'Bringing more than I contain': ethics, curriculum and the pedagogical demand for altered egos", *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 33:4 (2001), 439.

[26] Todd, "'Bringing more than I contain'", 448.

[27] Willard Gaylin, "Feeling Touched (and Hurt)" in *Feelings: Our Vital Signs* (London: Harper & Row, 1979), 167-194.

[28] A reference to the spiritual writings of St. John of the Cross (1542-1591).

[29] Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing", 146.

[30] Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing", 158.

[31] Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing", 151.

[32] Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing", 151-154.

[33] Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing", 155.

[34] Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing", 155.

[35] Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing", 155.

[36] Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing", 156.

[37] Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing", 157.

[38] Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing", 157-158.

[39] Zembylas, "A Pedagogy of Unknowing", 158.

[40] See Katz, "Teaching the Other", 200.

[41] For a discussion of Levinas' idea of "having a sense", see Emmanuel Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, translated by André Orianne, Second Edition (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 44-45 and Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 64.

[42] For a discussion of psychosis, see my forthcoming article, “Phenomenology, Theology and Psychosis: Towards Compassion”, *The Heythrop Journal* (July, 2007).

[43] Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, translated by A. Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 92.

[44] Horner has also discussed Levinas’ idea of “having a sense”. She points out that Levinas overcomes the difficulties of Husserl’s idea of intentionality through developing the idea of “having a sense”. See Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift*, 49.

[45] See, for example, Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 122-123. Lonergan writes, “Our love reveals to us values we had not appreciated, values of prayer and worship, or repentance and belief. But if we would know what is going on within us, if we would learn to integrate it with the rest of our living, we have to inquire, investigate, seek counsel. So it is that in religious matters love precedes knowledge and, as that love is God’s gift, the very beginning of faith is due to God’s grace”.

[46] Emmanuel Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, translated by André Orianne, Second Edition (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 44-45.

[47] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 64.

[48] Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 165.

[49] In regard to the notion of “the Third”, Levinas also refers to it as justice, the other Other, the absent Other and the neighbour. Levinas writes: “The subject is inspired by the Infinite, which, as *illeity*, does not appear, is not present, has always already past, is neither theme, telos nor interlocutor.” See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 148. Further, Alphonso Lingis in his Foreword to *Otherwise than Being* states: “Illeity, this movement of infinition, Levinas names God”. See Alphonso Lingis, “Foreword,” in Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, xxxix. In view of Levinas statement, the notion of *illeity* is an extremely ambiguous one. Does it refer to God, the Infinite or in fact to the anonymous stirrings of the *there is*? After all,

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Levinas names *illeity* as that very order from the Infinite in the face of the Other that slips into my like a thief in the night. See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*. 150 and Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 166.

[50] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 147.

[51] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 12.

[52] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 64.

[53] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 108.

[54] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 64.

[55] See, for example, Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 150, 162.

[56] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 49, 144-151.

[57] Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 64.

[58] See Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 49. Levinas writes: "The subject of saying does not give signs, it becomes a sign, turns into an allegiance".

[59] See Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 123.

[60] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 16. The passage is also found in Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 122-123.

[61] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 16.

[62] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 151.

[63] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 150, 157.

[64] See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 39 and Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158.

[65] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 158.

[66] See Edith Wyschogrod, *Emmanuel Levinas, The Problem of Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 108.