Lisa Kieran

Seattle University

Existential-Phenomenological Psychology Master’s Student

Clinical Intern at Touchstone Behavioral Health, Ferndale WA

[kieranl@seattleu.edu](mailto:kieranl@seattleu.edu)

***Disoriented and Bewildered—Reading Levinas as Phenomenological Experience and its Invaluable Contribution to the Work of Therapy***

Levinas is widely described as difficult to read. He uses language in ways that challenge common grammar and sentence formation rules and in many cases his writing may leave readers with more questions than answers. So why study him? Is his philosophy merely a murky pond of obscure meanings, or could his mode of communication act to further communicate his message in *Totality and Infinity*? I’d like to suggest that Levinas’ style of communicating not only parallels his message but engages readers in an enactment with his philosophy which is not only rare but also deeply valuable. For not only does Levinas *talk* about the wonderful act of de-centering ourselves in order to meet the Other, but he generously gives us a first-hand opportunity with this disorientation through his style of writing. In this paper, I suggest that through this radical de-centering, we are given access to our very own lives with an honesty that penetrates deeper than any objective knowing. I invite readers to question what is to be learned from reading what merely confirms our own thinking and suggest the value of finding our way through honoring the fullness of all that we see and all that we do not know.