Title: Responsibility Matters: A Perspective for Public Good

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Abstract

A primary focus in this paper is to sketch out a paradigm of relational responsibility as an order constituted on a primary reference to the Other, rather than to the self, and touches on the implications for public policy.

The paper contributes a philosophical elaboration of responsibility from the premise that responsibility founds community. Responsibility is proposed as a relational 'other centred' ethic which has much to offer as a principle for responding to major challenges such as climate change, inequality, environmental degradation.

The notion of responsibility is not so much concerned with the allocation of blame for the degradations under our attention, as is often the tendency with responsibility, though it does have interest in restitutive concerns. Responsibility is proposed as a principle that may serve to support a shift away from dynamics of self-interested entitlement, some of which arise from particular articulations of rights-based ethical frameworks and associated conflicts over such rights. The neo-liberal individualized attribution of self responsibility is seen from this perspective to diminish collective responsibility.

Responsibility as an ethic for collective wellbeing is poorly developed in social policy, environmental and resource management, and in law. Principles of trusteeship, guardianship and stewardship as a mode of governance for earth's common goods offer some legal pathways to chart a course of recognizing interdependence among humans and between humans and all living entities.

The notion of responsibility proposed in this paper draws on philosophers such as Emmanual Levinas, and on quantum physicist and philosopher Karen Barad who finds laws of responsibility in matter. Much of this thinking is drawn from western philosophical work; however the paper includes reference to indigenous knowledge systems because of the privileging of obligation and guardianship there.

The interpretation here builds an account of responsibility as a paradigm shift away from sovereign individual self interest and to a relational ethic which takes account of the need for *prospective* responsibility – an intergenerational ethic, and a framework to address an increasingly uncertain climate future.

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> Responsibility grows in importance as the life of freedom discovers itself to be unjust (Levinas, 1987, p. 58)

This quotation from philosopher Emmanual Levinas indicates an interest in two markers of the liberal economy – freedom and justice.

Over recent decades, a notion of freedom – or liberty - has been strongly associated with the values and central concepts of the global market as conceived in neoliberal ideals most openly expressed in the Chicago School of economics. This more recent interpretation of economic principles derive from the tradition of liberalism developed from Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, and many others. Liberal principles are themselves a response to an oppressive feudal social order of exclusion. Over the centuries of its emergence political, economic and philosophical interpretations of liberal principles cross a wide spectrum, from monetary economics to movements for social and environmental justice (Hall, 1986). Philosophers and other disciplinary researchers have identified a core systemic dualism inherent in the liberal structures which have been described as the subject-object or master-slave binary based on assimilation of the other (Martin 2000).

In the neo-liberal economic framework individual choice is heightened to a doctrine of competitive individualism through which just rewards are purported to come through merit. Appeals to justice are drivers for change to correct unfair burden of cost and exclusion that are evident in the industrialized economies and such appeals may be made from advocates or critics of the paradigm.

Justice, in this paradigm may frequently be identified with human rights. Responsibility is treated with suspicion because of the neoliberal attribution of individualised responsibility with a very weak account of common good or public good. These considerations are now well grounded in the critique of globalization by authors from across the political and theoretical spectrum. There is no room to fully review this critique in this paper. Rather, this paper is an indirect critique of the neoliberal approach to responsibility and will examine responsibility as the foundation of community. It builds on a pre-eminently relational understanding of responsibility. In philosophical terms responsibility can be referred to as being-for-the-other, which is directly contrary to freedom and self-interest embedded in the onto-epistemological metaphysics of liberal traditions.

Consideration of being for-the-other offers an exposé of the relational condition and the ethical capacity of the human person. In this account individual responsibility is not *for* me and my self-interest; rather is explores the infinite responsibility we have for another – our neighbor, to those who are strangers, or to those beyond the range our immediate range of encounter. In this paper, it is proposed that responsibility extends to the biosphere – in recognition of human and planetary interdependence, and in response to the anthropogenic threat to ecosystems and the planet.

In countries such as Aotearoa New Zealand Indigenous and western systems often sit uneasily together because of seemingly incommensurable world views. The liberal systemic emphasis on self-interest, individual freedom and choice stand in stark contrast with traditional indigenous priorities articulated as obligation, intergenerational relationship, reciprocity with community and spiritual wellbeing. This may be a rather reductive contrast; in real life the tension between individual expressions of life and the

responsibilities to live a life with others has universal and timeless expressions. However different cultural and systemic emphases are well documented. Public policy is often faced with working across such differences to achieve convergence, such as for the governance of water, and for addressing social disparities such as higher rates of Māori poverty, youth unemployment, adverse health and imprisonment. Seeking solutions requires creative and collaborative responses which need to be developed from recognition of the premises of different traditions. Much is already being done to develop workable collaboration, as for example the Sir Taihakurei Durie Report, *Converging Currents* (NZ Law Commission, 2006; Durie, E.T. *Will the Settlers Settle,* 1996; Hoskins, 2010).

This paper proposes that a responsibility orientation offers a prospect of alignment on matters of public policy and public interest that is more consistent with the orientation of indigenous knowledge systems. The venture into quantum physics gives a reference for responsibility that is drawn from the dynamics of matter – to suggest the notion that responsibility is inherent in the dynamics of all living matter and that this has a deeper genesis than a framework for human accountability. It gives weight to the accountability and relational dimensions of responsibility.

Public good and Responsibility
One way of focusing on public good is to focus on sustainability. The impetus of sustainability is to recognize the complex interactions between social, economic and environmental spheres, with an account of culture, to develop public policy that integrates these, to give expression to human interdependence between humans and with nature. We see the manifestation of the cross boundary character of sustainability in the growing interdisciplinarity interests in academic studies and in the quest to break the silos of the social and environmental studies.

Climate change is a pre-eminent challenge to dominant systems and ideas in which individual autonomy, freedom, and choice are embedded. Framed as a competitive meritocracy, liberal market ideology invites self promotion and self protection in a context where economic drivers externalize environmental impacts from accounts of productivity and profit and are largely unaccounted for as invisible subsidies. An economic model that does not account for environmental and social equity impacts is now put in question by the calamity of climate change. As we turn from the precepts of liberalism, we find that collaboration, integration and relational ethics are regarded as being at the heart of the transition to sustainability (Berkes, Colding and Folke, 2003).

We are at a crossroads. Will advocates of liberalism adapt the market to the requirements of sustainability or assimilate the critique of self-interest? The Brundtland impetus to integrate society and economy with the life supporting capacity of environment while ensuring capacity of future generations to meet their needs has introduced sustainability into global discourse. Pierre Calame's *Essay on Oeconomy* (2009) penetrates the implications of a global economy that is developed from recognition of the interdependence of humans with the biosphere. Critiques which offer solutions ask where does responsibility lie for making transitions to sustainable societies?

As we take account of IPCC research on climate change we have accumulating evidence of the damaging effects of human impact on the climate ecosystem. In many quarters, but not all, this is compelling a shift in world view of entitlement to including an account of human interdependence with each other and with nature. It is requiring an unprecedented orientation towards the future in new time scales. We are having to consider the means of life to future generations that is way beyond the immediate concerns of quarterly reporting

3

of profits. This is a strand of the institutionalized logic of corporate profitability regimes through which humanity is induced to see economic growth as serving individuals and the common good through competition between individuals to meet our immediate personal needs and interests.

An extended future orientation not only speaks of future generations of people; it requires us to have regard for the means of life, the state of the atmosphere, the viability of ecosystems, the prospects of food security. This is a form of responsibility quite different from an account of legal transgression or an individual account of behavior. It is beyond a notion of correcting past wrongs and takes a new trajectory to prospective responsibility.

Responsibility for the uncertainty of the future is a new challenge to governance and science and education. While life has never been predictable we face an unprecedented uncertainty as to the viability of life on earth. Hans Jonas who wrote *The Imperative of Responsibility* (1975) recognized that technology gives humans the power to affect the future in unforeseen ways and that this brings the need for an ethics to safeguard against the impacts of harm and destructive forces.

Should the pursuit of knowledge be shackled by moral constraint? There are clarly examples where ethics guide research. However philosopher Isabelle Stanton recently spoke of the golden eggs produced by scientists and researchers – they are wonderful to produce but there is no responsibility for how they are used (Stanton, 2014. Discussion at the La Bergerie Forum on Responsibility).

Karen Barad opens one of her papers with the imaginative dialogue between the scientists Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr in 1941 discussing their research on atomic energy. Bohr asks 'Does one have a moral right to work on the practical exploitation of atomic energy?' (Barad, 2010, p. 242). He might have asked 'What is our *moral responsibility* in our work on the practical exploitation of atomic energy?

At a global scale one of the principles of the UN Climate negotiations is the concept of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities. It has proved to be a contentious idea because developing nations do not want to be compelled to restrain their development pathways without commitments and financial support from developed economies. It is also one of the principles embedded in the development of the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, with the addition of 'according to capability'.

This is a sketch of Responsibility writ large. I would like to turn towards a closer scrutiny of a philosophy of responsibility to indicate that this is not simply a new version of individual responsibility for oneself. Nor can it be restricted to a matter of choice, a voluntary decision to take responsibility. This is a reduced view of responsibility. The work I will refer to evokes both the accountability and responsive dimensions of responsibility is profoundly relational account of the human condition which recognizes interdependence and which is more clearly conveyed in the notion of respons-ability'

A Philosophical account of personhood as Other Centred

An ethics of responsibility *for the Other* poses a fundamental shift from the values of freedom, self -interest, agency and independence which are constitutive of the liberal humanist and industrial project (Hall, 1986). Emmanual Levinas's conception of the

relational condition of human life is in tension with the idea of the agency of the ontological subject. Levinas, as others have done, identifies a fundamental violence at work in the liberal system which can be brought down to the level of the idea of the sovereign individual in the Cartesian sense.

Clearly this is a challenging idea. While we can observe violence in an overt way – from the level of family violence to war, it is not so easy to recognize violence in every day self interest or even ignorance. Such a claim easily produces a defensive response and reflection on the many forms of compassion and solidarity that are at work in families and communities and endeavours for justice.

Levinas engages us in critique of a system that is capable of extremities such as the holocaust. He does not allow us to escape from the personal dimension of violence. He arrests our attention by claiming violence in the western or liberal concept of the subject, which can be hard to recognize in at the level of every day relationships. It needs to be said that violence, as suppression of the 'other' is not the only account of the human person. The more compelling and primordial quality of humanity is in the capacity for relationships, and in putting the 'other' before self interest. Levinas seeks a solution to violence by eliciting the relational capacities of humans and suggesting these can be brought into prominence at political and systemic levels.

The problematizing of the sovereign individual can be seen in the notion of a 'subject' the idea that both agency and subjection are jointly at work in human identity and performance. The violence identified here is at work in the development of identity and agency which constructs the other as an object. It is an act of assimilation which comes from the idea that identity can only be achieved through the exercise of mastery, and this betrays a human failure to recognize the other in their uniqueness, their difference, their alterity.

The radical departure from this account of human ontology is developed in the notion of a prior, antecedent relationality at the heart of human life. For Levinas this relational condition of life is recognized in a primal sense of obligation that is elicited by the need or vulnerability of the other person to which 'I' am called to respond. The condition of need in the other is referred to by Levinas as precariousness.

Levinas asks us to consider what it is that binds us to another, and to recognize a bond and a tie which indicate that we are primarily relational. This primordial bond with the other can be recognized in the impulse of conscience where our response to the need of another reveals we are tied together. It is easy to see this in the instinct to assist a person in need. At the public policy end of the scale we see it in the mounting appeal to address child poverty. At its heart this appeal relies on an appreciation of a shared responsibility for the condition in which children are growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand – indeed even beyond New Zealand. In this paper a theme in the Levinasian philosophy of responsibility is highlighted, a critique of freedom.

Freedom

Freedom is a central tenet of western liberal tradition is embedded in conceptions of the self, in economic theory and in social policy, and in the idea of personal responsibility. Indeed, the synonym for freedom is liberty, a derivation of the notation, liberalism. It is a

well articulated premise which is largely an unquestioned value and indeed is often a marker of the aspirations to development and liberation. Of course, freedom does have value. However, this Levinasian critique brings freedom under scrutiny as harbouring injustice. We see this in the citation:

> Responsibility grows in importance as the life of freedom discovers itself to be unjust (Levinas, 1987, p. 58).

Freedom from constraint is one of the premises of the social contract. It is a condition for autonomy and private property ownership. Freedom is a necessary aspect of agency which in a sense, releases us from the bonds of obligation.

So what is the injustice inherent in freedom? In this account, the exercise of freedom often requires a disengagement from the demands of relational obligation. It gives the possibility of avoiding responsibility in the pursuit of self interest. Clearly this reading points to a certain hostility towards the other which is at work in the system of self-other binary with objectification of the other. This challenging reading is well documented as a system of mastery from authors as diverse as Frederick Nietzsche (2003) and Bell Hooks (1999).

To avoid the 'triumph' of self assertion to achieve identity and agency, and turn away from the violence of assimilation Levinas asks:

> Can the Same welcome the Other …. by putting itself in question? (Levinas, 1996, p. 16)

The putting in question of 'myself', the sovereign self, is a questioning that is prior to choice and intention. It is not a conscious act of will; the claim that we are relational before we become individualized generates a fundamental unsettling of will, intention and consciousness, and of liberty. The Other, whom Levinas denotes as the Stranger and the Neighbour interpolates 'me' (the Same). The Other has a priority claim on me and in this claim, and in this moment or recognition, presents responsibility. Responsibility shapes the individual, not the other way around. The ethical quality is to welcome the other as Other, not to assimilate another within my understanding, rather to respect them as unknowable.

> The ethical I is subjectivity precisely insofar as it kneels before the other, sacrificing its own liberty to the more primordial call of the other. For me, the freedom of the subject is not the highest or primary value. … As soon as I acknowledge that it is 'I' who am responsible, I accept that my freedom is anteceded by an obligation to the other. (Levinas, 1986, p. 27)

This 'I' is under an assignation, a responsibility that sits only with me and cannot be evaded, or substituted by another. The obligation induced by the Other is an impossible demand, an infinite summons to respond that is beyond my capacity to fulfill. The impossibility of this demand exerts a constant unsettling influence. While the impossible demand of Levinas's ethics might be extreme and impractical it stresses an endless vigilance, which, in the reality of everyday life has has to be managed. Yet ethical responsibility in the human world must be demanding if its moral force is not simply to be reduced to norms and codes. A person may not meet the demand of the Other, but the trace of the demand, the disturbance of conscience cannot be erased.

Face-to-face with people and the planet

The presence of the Other, or an encounter with an Other is conveyed in the idea of the face-to-face relation. The face refers to the immediacy of encounter where the humanity of the other person invites responsiveness and responsibility. The demand of ethics is to respond so as not to objectify the Other.

Responsibility is performed in sensible, material actions befitting the nearness, proximity of 'my' neighbor and the height of the Other who is Strange – wholly Other. In mediating the face-to-face relation, my response in language is a mode of speaking which escapes the confines of ontology and the judgement of reason –the lively attentive response, gives significance to the Other and does not produce the Other as an object. Following the argument of Levinas in a very simplified account of the power of responsibility runs the risk not only of over simplification, it exposes the difficulty, near impossibility of taking a tradition of philosophy into a broader arena. However it is in such arena's that philosophy must be tested for its relevance.

If we are to follow the motif of hospitality, as communication in the offer of water and food, or shelter, we can extend it to consider the conditions on which hospitality can be practiced. Human connection with light and sound are concentrated in the face. The vitality of the face and of communication are accomplished through air – in the breath. Food and water as sustenance for the body is taken through the mouth. The face in Levinas brings ethics to the level of material practice and response. The face is where the symbolic (language, art) and the material are in co-production.

Can we extend the motif of hospitality to give us a practical ethics of responsibility across the human and non-human? To offer water and food needs to go beyond the enjoyment that Levinas suggests. It might take us to the supermarket, but beyond that it takes us to land and agricultural production and to access to food. To provide grain and meat implicates us in agriculture and the sustainability of land management and the risk of exploitative or unprecautionary industrial agriculture.

Do we want to offer GM food? To offer clean water are we obliged to be involved with safeguarding waterways? Does the offer of fish imply the need to be embedded in systems of custodianship for rivers and ocean ecosystems and fish habitats? We do not necessarily need to find a Levinasian answer to whether responsibility offers a transformative ethic towards other humans as well as to the precarious state of ecosystems. The interest is perhaps a scholarly one that arises from a philosophical interest in this particular notion of responsibility.

Justice

The relevance of the proposition of responsibility as sketched for public policy is to offer a paradigm shift in the way sociality is ordered and referenced. As suggested, our social and economic systems include a range of premises including individual self interest and freedom – and in turn the systems to produce this kind of individual also reproduce these values. The glimpse at responsibility as foundational to the public sphere is intended to disrupt ontological systems at the subjective and social levels. Responsibility highlighted at the personal level needs to be considered in the context of an elaboration of justice

In Levinas's account, ethics gives birth to justice, and gives rise to a sociality that emerges from relational responsibility. This prospect is vastly different from the premise that sociality is founded of a war of all against all with institutions that are designed to protect self-interest and independence with attendant values of freedom and private property

(Grinlinton and Taylor, 2011). The summons to responsibility bends the orientation of sociality to justice.

Principles of ethics that underlie responsible citizenship and justice mean keeping alive the capacity for judgment and questioning in public and political arenas. This means the situations of vulnerability and harm are exposed, and remedies pursued. Child poverty, the exclusion of indigenous peoples, the plight of refugees, the exploitation of workers, the pollution of rivers, over-exploitation of fisheries, the climate disaster are all examples of injustice and the imperative of public advocacy which must be kept alive.

This raises a seeming contradiction in the Levinasian critique of freedom. Freedom to dissent, to advocate is the condition of justice. His real interest is to ensure against totality – an enclosed system that does not allow for dissent. In a democracy such as New Zealand a totalizing political or economic order seems a far from National Socialism. Yet systems of exclusion are active – as history post the Treaty of Waitangi shows.

There is provision for contestability, but it is embedded in systems of exclusion. The effort to solve child poverty is having to be argued for from principles of the economic cost of poverty, rather than from a political commitment to inclusion (Infometrics, 2012). Similarly with the condition of rivers. Water quality standards are set low because of cost of restoration is prohibitive (Turning the Tide on Water Pollution 2014). The principle driving policy here is not one of ecosystem integrity, but of economic cost in a context of an overall growth and debt reduction strategy (2013). The hegemony of economic imperatives seems contrary to a system for prioritizing justice and ecological integrity.

On the other hand, various forms of private and public actions for justice are another way of describing the cultivation of responsibility. They imply a response of welcome as an event in the social order which expresses 'justice'. A social order which is vigilant in remedying injustice is envisaged as hospitable to the 'other'. In other words welcome and social inclusion are in co-production. Responsibility becomes recognized and provided for in the social order, while also being in tension with it. This is an agonistic social order in which the responsibility of justice requires infinite vigilance.

Analogies with Indigenous Societal Ethics

Levinasian thinking of a pre-conscious relationality and responsibility marks an evolution in western metaphysics that can be readily identified in indigenous cultures, and indeed in other traditional societies. In contrast to the western philosophical tradition where identity is anchored in the Cartesian dualistic system and achieved through the self-other relation, indigenous identity arises from land and ancestral genealogical relations (Royal and Martin, 2010).

This thought on responsibility and relational ethics is moving towards what is already understood in the indigenous worldview of Te Ao Māori. Te Kawehau Hoskins reflects 'Indigenous peoples continue to remember and articulate a discourse of responsibility and obligation to others and to natural environments' (Hoskins, Martin and Humphries, 2011, p. 23). She identifies the persistence of this orientation emerging from the knowledge that people arise or are constituted in relation to the world – in all its material, spiritual and cosmic dimensions (Hoskins 2010).

> Māori for example see themselves as part of a familial web in which humans are junior siblings to other species beings and forms of life. People therefore

don't understand themselves as exercising knowledge over the natural world but as existing always already *inside* or *as* relationships. (Hoskins, Martin and Humphries, 2011, p.23)

On an indigenous worldview the human world, known as the world of light is but one of many dimensions of an interconnected cosmology. The world of ancestors and genealogical connections thread their way through multiple dimensions of this cosmology to an originating burst of energy. Kinship between all life forms (of which humans are but one manifestation) and across these dimensions is shared through the notion of hau, breath or wind. (Salmond 2012)

Ethics, Knowledge and Quantum Considerations

This paper now takes a moment to examine the dynamics and disturbances of quantum mechanics to bring a different dimension to relationality and responsibility.

Barad, following the Danish quantum physicist Niels Bohr, proposes that particles can behave like particles or waves depending on how they are measured (Barad, 2010). For example, wave or particle phenomena emerge from their intra-actions with the measuring apparatus. This implies there is no pre-existing measurable identity. Rather, matter is in an infinite process of formation, dissolution and reformation. In this account identity – now phenomena – arises from intra-actions between different energy forms in contact with each other. Such intra-actions extend to the dynamics of observation and measurement where the form of measurement influences, or even determines the observed phenomena. While phenomena may appear distinct, it is also 'entangled'. It is indivisible from the histories from which it emerged. Phenomena that has now been attributed identifiable properties is now understood to have properties that come from their process of emergence.

Barad uses the term 'diffraction' to explain that matter, or different life forms come from histories of interaction, disturbance, dispersion. Thus identities/phenomena, are relational, they do not exist as fully differentiated discrete entities. The difference we observe is simply an expression of differentiation with an underlying entanglement. Barad refers to these as 'intra-actions' to distinguish such ideas from conventional notions of interactions.

Intra-action is similar to the concept of cleavage in embryology (Beach 2010). It is a division that is also a multiplication in which the constituent parts are continuous with the new formations, yet the basis for differentiation and distinct function. They are both differentiated and indivisible, each emerging part with a responsibility to the whole.

A conversation with an indigenous elder reveals intra-activity in nature in this case in the phenomena of water. While walking along a river in his tribal area we were observing the impacts of bulldozers being used to remove all the trees from the adjacent land, leaving the ground barren and exposed and denuding the river of its protective 'skin' and shade. Many environmentalists deem the willow trees to be invasive and damaging to the river ecosystem. The cooling effects of the trees on the dynamics of water and sedimentation had not been accounted for. Erosion was evident along the banks, the destruction of native seedlings and the signs of algal blooms from water exposed to the sun. Our host proclaimed 'water has consciousness'. Then he said 'Water has intelligence. The behavior of the river will change to respond to the light and heat and loss of root systems.' (Te Rangiita, R. Personal communication, Turangi, 2013).

This way of understanding the river illustrates Barad's proposition of the response-ability of all inter-active phenomena – of the river with its surrounding ecology and with human relationship with the river's life. Barad notes

> Nature is not mute and culture the articulate one. Nature writes, scribbles, experiments, calculates, thinks, breathes and laughs. (Barad, 2010, p. 268)

This understanding of intra-activity as constitutive of all of life forms includes the interplay of physical and symbolic realms. It is an understanding which is found in a range of disciplinary thinking, such as in the quantum field interpretations of Peter Senge. (2008)

How do quantum dynamics link to Levinas and ethics?

Levinas's exposure of the fault of the idea of the ontological subject as a distinct agential individual subject, is substantiated by Barad's account of the relational condition of matter. Relationality is the condition of differentiation; including the emergence of humans as one form of matter amongst all life forms and phenomena.

Barad's interpretations of the intra-active processes of matter suggest that all encounters create a response in one and another. The term intra-action conveys the mutual and multiple interplays of phenomena; intra-action moves matter to the register of ethics by the interpretation that all intra-actions are constituted in 'response-ability'. The ability to respond, whether as humans or any form of living matter, testifies to the interdependence of all of life and to connectedness and entanglement that underlies the appearance of discrete forms of life.

Karen Barad interprets quantum physics philosophically to collapse the separation of culture and nature, or word and world (Barad, 2003, p. 806). She exposes relationality as intra-activity across borders and boundaries. Accordingly all distinctive life forms are entangled and constituted relationally. The appearance of distinctive entities disguises the dynamic interconnectedness of all of life.

The appreciation of interdependence; interdependence between human and between humans and plants and soils and water and animals and air is one of the most compelling reasons to engage with an ethics of responsibility. For Levinas responsibility is proposed as an alternative to the capacity for violence within western metaphysics; it offers a paradigm shift away from Cartesian subordination of the other, with a move towards an ethics constituted in responsibility *for* the Other, the stranger, the neighbour. The question for ethics is how this relationship is mediated.

The recognition of responsibility as the ground of all becoming is shared by Levinas and Barad. In terms of scientific research and the emergence of quantum physics, Levinas's philosophical elaboration of relationality at the heart of life is not new – it is a matter as old as love and birth, as suffering and death. Quantum physics, as interpreted by Barad, takes the notion of responsibility further with a quantum shift towards elaborating the shared destiny of humans and nature.

Levinas's philosophical ouvre is an alternative to the Cartesian order of dualism and mastery. Descartes and Levinas are both concerned with the structure of the relationship between one and an Other. For Descartes this is mediated through hostility and for Levinas through welcome and hospitality. A more disquieting dimension is the assignation of

responsibility which cannot be escaped. It might be refused or denied, but for Levinas it is a condition of life. The more elusive aspect of Levinasian interpretation is in the quest for an order of human sociality that arises from responsibility.

Conclusion

This article builds on the idea that responsibility, as an ethics *for* the Other is the foundation of community; it seeks to develop an account of the community of all of life with an ethics for all matter.

Exploration of hospitality shows something of the inter-connection of all matter, a gesture of kindness such as in the offering of water entangles us in the world that sustains life. Earth, water and air, animals and plants matter for ethics.

We must keep sight of the correction that ethical responsibility is proposed to bring. Levinas's ethics are addressed to the capacity for human violence, to the domination that humans have assumed and the dehumanizing cruelty to which the holocaust, slavery, apartheid and colonization bear witness. At the same time, we are invited to amplify relationality and compassion at the heart of life and which can be seen in the intimacy of families and on grander scales of human courage and responsibility.

The notion of responsibility ruptures indifference. Climate change now signals the reach of domination as a prospect of unraveling the order of nature and the fabric of life. The sacrificial, proximate and transcendent face-to-face relation suggest the potential for social and ecological justice which restores the interwoven fabric of life.

We might ask why the need for a philosophical investigation when many of the issues of justice are self evident. Pathways for human and environmental justice are often caught in a quest for moderation of the existing system whereas an examination of the underpinnings of the system makes a case for different paradigm. Justice as social equity and a custodial role for planetary ecosystems may be a far horizon, unless the prospect of an exponential climate tipping point engages humanity in a paradigm of respons-ability with quantum speed.

An interest of this philosophical work is in how responsibility can be given effect systemically. Indigenous traditions offer an important reference for these systems, and the notions of obligation may be free from the judicial and blame associations of responsibility. Attention to public policy developed from obligation and responsibility gives a deeper recognition of respons-ability as inherent in the condition of all of life. It gives a better starting point for engagement beyond sovereign interests in matters of common good and public interest.

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