Introduction: Towards an ethic of hospitality

The past two decades have seen a series of provocative reflections (cf. Derrida, Foucault; Habermas, Lyotard; Rorty) on the long standing Western tradition of privileging institutional knowledge and holding it up as the royal standard, the unassailable truth to vanquish all pretenders to the throne. In effect these, and countless other voices have expressed dissent with what Weber (1987) calls "*imposability*, the conditions under which arguments, categories, and values impose and maintain a certain authority". That authority is not inclined to self-examination: it speaks with certainty and acts with resolve. It expresses itself as professional "expertise" which excludes, if not outright rejects, alternate points of view.

In the institution of psychology, the recent re-evaluation of the expert-oriented stance has generated an exhilarating range of ideas for approaching practice with an openness to mutual exploration and discovery. There is a make-it-up-together spirit, a shift from *im*posing to *com*posing, accompanied by a rejuvenated vocabulary of *co-constructed meanings* and *dialogic mutuality*. This book seeks to further the quest for self-reflective and collaborative practice while acknowledging the challenges that quest presents.

And there *are* challenges. One of these relates to the temptation to abandon a collaborative ethic when the going gets tough--to slip back into a 'fix-it" mode, thereby sacrificing relationship at the altar of technique. It is far easier to speak on behalf of mutuality than to embody it in the complex, changeful, and challenging realm of practice. The clinicians, teachers, supervisors and researchers who have contributed to this volume were asked to share some of the specific approaches they have developed which align

their commitment to mutuality in relationships with what they actually *do* from day to day in their work.   Staying that course requires clarity of vision and moral commitment. This is true of the micro-exchanges of therapy, training, supervision and research where professional hubris, weariness with uncertainty, or plain desperation may lead us to unilaterally legislate structures and frameworks. It is also true of the broader conversation that is theory, and therein lies a second challenge.

The creative explorations associated with postmodern psychology are frequently accompanied by a dismissal of previous accounts of human experience—a dismissal that ironically duplicates the dualistic, us-versus-them, ideology it purports to critique. As Kenneth Gergen (1999) points out, critical tools play a vital role in identifying concerns, but the object of a critique of the modern Western tradition in psychology "is not to argue for abandoning these traditions. Rather it is to open the commonplace to critical inspection and to explore the possibility of fresh and more viable alternatives" (p.19). And so a second key aim of this book is to present theory as a generative resource. While the theoretical contributions here are much influenced by the grand conversation that is postmodernism, they are dedicated more to pointing a way forward than trumping the claims of modernism. In that respect, they are guides for practice.

The traditional separation of theory from practice begins to break down when one assumes, as do the contributors gathered here, that speaking and writing are crafts of world-making (Bruner, 1987, Paré, 2001) which effect telling change through the shaping of human understanding and action. This formidable enterprise is inevitably a social process, an act of relationship. The aim of this book, then, is to explore ways of speaking the world into being that do not do violence to others. This is the potential violence of

theory, authority, expertise and technology to override others' contributions to their life narratives (Larner, 1999). Those "others" include therapeutic clients, students and supervisees, research participants, but also you, the reader. Beyond the domains of "theoretical constructs" or "clinical interventions", this collection of essays seeks to engage you with ideas and practices in a manner that does not perpetuate relational violence.

To this end, the contributors advocate for a collaborative knowing--a *knowing-with*--which can be contrasted with a long epistemological tradition of describing that which is purported to be real and true, a *knowing-that* (Paré, 1999; Polkinghorne, 1993; Shotter, 1993) which permeates the psychology literature. The *knowing-that* position is much like the stance of the colonizer, brandishing The Word to the unwashed masses (Todd & Wade, 1994, 1995). The paradox here is that to *know* one cannot avoid taking some position; but the key is whether knowledge is held heavily rather than lightly, to use one of Milan Kundera's well-known metaphors. The stance we encourage here places dialogue before didacticism. It involves openness to dialogue as one engages in practice, and in the description of practice (which, as noted above, can be understood as practice itself). Our preferred orientation is therefore one of what Cornell (1992) has called "institutional humility": we invite a consideration of collaborative alternatives without buttressing them with refutations of previous perspectives and practices. By striving to make explicit the *practice* of collaborative knowing we hope to offer those of a different persuasion a greater degree of freedom in choosing their own positioning. This actualizes the moral thrust of non-oppositional, non-colonizing knowing by encouraging dialogue

between therapists and psychologists expressing a diversity of opinions, which can only enrich the field.

Knowing With: Collaborative Practice in Psychology and Therapy engages with these timely questions in four central domains of psychology: theory, therapy practice, teaching/supervision, and research.   It suggests ways of moving the whole field forward in a manner that creates space for many voices, and is vigilant of the ethical responsibility of wielding knowledge in the service of others. In a nutshell, the book advocates for a view of all psychological practice as relationship characterized by the mutual exchange of knowledge and meaning. The book's chapters provide readers with a range of examples of clinical, research, training and supervisory practices in psychology and therapy that mindfully seek to avoid the fundamentalist zeal that characterizes many versions of both modernist and postmodern psychology.

The book includes a broad spectrum of theorists and professionals from a range of designated "camps". The trumpeting of one brand of psychology and therapy over another tends to promote an "us and them" dynamic which, in it own way, can be understood as theoretically violent. We would like this book to honor reflexivity and multiplicity; there are many roads to Rome. We believe that postmodern approaches have now become sufficiently widespread that they should engage in a constructive self-critique if they are to avoid promoting a new orthodoxy. In other words, postmodern practice, like the traditional approaches it critiques, can *also* unfold along colonial dynamics. Even our emancipatory ideals can be turned into unilateral relationships that defy the spirit of collaboration. We are aware of this dynamic occurring at times in our own work, and we witness it in the work of our colleagues. In this volume, we willingly

turn the mirror on ourselves and propose ways of preventing our cherished theories and

epistemologies from swallowing the persons who consult us. The hope here is to cultivate

what Derrida (2001) describes as "an ethic of hospitality" to the other, an openness to all

points of view and an exchange between diverse ways of knowing that is not mutually

exclusive but both/and or "one and the other at the same time".

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