Rethinking the Relationship of Ethics and Interculturality: A Dialogue with Levinas and Butler

Özkan ÖZTÜRK[1]
Yasemin ERDOĞAN-ÖZTÜRK

Karabuk University, Turkey

Abstract

This paper aims to open the conceptualizations of difference, the other and the self as the key terms in the epistemology of interculturality into questioning in a dialogue with the ethical frameworks of Levinas and Butler. In this sense, the paper attempts to contribute to reformulating the idea of self and other within the scholarship of interculturality. Objecting to the Kantian ethics based on the reason and consciousness of the self with reference to its relation to the other, the paper adopts Levinas's notion of 'absolute otherness' which proposes encountering the Other in his unique and absolute difference beyond the consciousness of the self and without reducing it to the sameness of the self. The possibility of an ethical obligation on a global scale is also argued in the paper with particular reference to Butler's concepts of precariousness and vulnerability. Drawing on the idea of ethical obligation based on affect by Butler who built on the notion of otherness in Levinasian ethics, the paper endeavors to add a layer of affect to the discussion of ethics and interculturality in the proposed ethical framework.

Keywordss: Interculturality, Ethical Obligation, Levinas, Butler, the *Other*

[1] **ozkanozturk@karabuk.edu.tr**

1. Introduction

> *The Other faces me and puts me*
> *in question and obliges me.*
> (**Levinas**, *Totality and Infinity*)

Current critical scholarship on interculturality and intercultural communication, which moves beyond unproblematized and simplistic categorizations and definitions towards more nuanced explanations of otherness, challenges us to rethink what the notions of *self* and *other* -as well as the *intercultural encounters* of the *self* and *other*- mean and how they might be re-conceptualized in all their complexities within the theories of interculturality. This attempt becomes more urgent in our time in which voluntary and/or reluctant encounters with *the other* occur more frequently than ever in the contexts of globalization, transnational mobilities, political conflicts etc. Such an endeavor of thinking over the relationship between *self* and *other* also requires to negotiate how *difference* should be positioned in the epistemology of interculturality. Drawing attention to a similar concern, Ferri asks if difference is the "gap between self and other that needs to be bridged through intercultural awareness and the exercise of tolerance" or it "connotes uniqueness, immanence and embodiment in the relation *self/other*" (2018a, p. 8). Indeed, the two questions pose a dilemma between "a dialogue for the reconciliation of differences" and "the dialogue interrupted irreconcilable differences" (Ferri, 2018a, p. 48); and between universalism and relativism.

Resonating with an understanding of difference which "connotes uniqueness, immanence and embodiment in the relation *self/other*", this paper intends (i) to engage with *difference* and the relationship between *self* and *other* by employing an ethical standpoint, and (ii) to offer that ethics – in the sense of a philosophical inquiry – needs to be incorporated into the epistemology of interculturality for a more elaborate account of *self-other* relation and positioning *difference* by going beyond the reductionist dualistic categorizations of self and other; and beyond the perception of difference as a negative oppositional construct (Warren, 2008, p. 295). The paper aims to contribute to the discussions of interculturality by advocating the necessity of the integration of a particular ethical perspective informed by Emanuel Levinas (1969, 1998), specifically by his theorization of *Other;* and by Judith Butler (2004, 2012) who builds on Levinas's ethical framework and seeks for the possibilities of a global ethical understanding with political implications by highlighting the concepts of precariousness and vulnerability. In

this respect, the paper serves as an attempt for an alternative understanding of *self* and *other* in intercultural communication, which exceeds reason, intentionality, consent and autonomy; and in which an ethical relation between *self* and *other* emerges through their corporeality and embodiment (Butler, 2012; Ferri, 2018b).

2. Approaching Interculturality within a New Framework of Ethics

There has been a shift in the understanding of interculturality from a mode of abstract competence and a set of skills to be acquired for a successful integration towards a more critical and a non-essentialist position (Holliday, 2011) in the last two decades. The former approaches have been intensely criticized for disregarding the power asymmetries and inequalities in their formulation of cultural difference and interculturality (see Dervin, 201; Ferri, 2014). Later critical approaches to interculturality and intercultural communication successfully discuss the complexities of such power asymmetries in the society and of ideology as a broader concept. Still, as underlined by MacDonald and O'Regan, intercultural communication discourse persists with the idea and the desire of transforming the intercultural consciousness; of leading to a permanent change in the mindset of the intercultural speaker to a more complete consciousness with the ultimate aim of a harmonious dialogue and an implied wholeness (2013, p. 1006-1007). This idea of wholeness is also pinned down in the thought of Derrida as the tendency of Western philosophy to completeness and fulfillment, which is called by Derrida as *metaphysics of presence*. In his thought of *metaphysics of presence*, a binary oppositions system includes an original signified which is identified as the truth with full presence and the other term is identified with reference to the loss of presence as the negative other (as cited in Ferri, 2018b, p. 50). In MacDonald and O'Regan's understanding, such an implied desire for a fuller intercultural consciousness and oneness is a disguised form of a desire to erase the difference between self and the other (p.1007). The strong claim of transformation of the mind is expected to result in an ideal of completeness, which reveals the drive "towards universal consciousness" in which difference is finally erased and "resolved in favor of a rationally ordered 'transcultural' totality" (p. 1008). MacDonald and O'Regan calls this desire for a universal consciousness as an aporia in the discourse of interculturality since presupposing oneness undermines the very premise of the ontology of interculturality, which is the "irreducible relation to the other" (p. 1008).

Critical intercultural research goes beyond the notion of intercultural competence to achieve the transformation of the consciousness and engages with intercultural responsibility (Guilherme et. al, 2010; Ferri, 2014, 2018a). Therefore, it mostly employs an "interventionist" position appealing to transcendental ideals of "social justice and emancipation" with an egalitarian agenda (MacDonald and O'Regan, 2013, p.1010). This endeavor of reaching social justice as a result of a transformed consciousness and the idea of responsibility bring an ethical layer to the discourse of interculturality as Ferri notes (2014, p. 12). The most prominent characteristics of such an understanding of ethics give particular emphasis to transcendental ideals of truth (i.e. an abstract universal common good) which can be reached through reason, a higher moral status, autonomous subject and self-mastery of the common morality (Morrison, 2018; Ferri, 2014; MacDonald and O'Regan, 2013). This type of Kantian ethics which represents the modernization project in the West relies heavily on the instrumental reason and abstract categories of moral imperatives. For this very reason, this "critical-transformational" approach in interculturality research has its own critiques and limits. MacDonald and O'Regan draw on a second aporia arising from the transcendental truth claims made in the critical interculturality discourse. They question what makes those moral truth claims "truer than others" and warn that such truth claims might easily construct an intercultural meta-narrative which has been criticized and rejected in the postmodern tradition by Lyotard (1979). In *the Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard refuses the idea of meta-narratives which is defined as totalizing and unifying accounts of the past; and which appeal to absolute, universal truths/values (Lyotard, 1979). MacDonald and O'Regan underline that the current critical approaches to interculturality and intercultural communication are "grounded in an implicit appeal to transcendental signified" and suggest that the unproblematically assumed universal notions such as democracy, harmony, respect, tolerance and equality need to be problematized within the discussions of interculturality (p. 1009).

In an ethical perspective which overemphasize the above-mentioned transcendental signified, a number of questions remain unasked and unanswered. How should difference and the relation between self and other be conceptualized when a particular focus on universal moral categories sustains? Is difference something to be overcome to achieve the universal uniformity? In an attempt to answer such questions, a number of scholars in and outside the field of intercultural communication have argued how ethics might function to integrate plurality and particularity with the concept of interculturality. For instance, Yin points to the

need for a "new form of ethics embracing rights and responsibilities (Alexander etal., 2014, p. 56). Suggesting an epistemological shift in the way we think the concepts of similarity and difference, she reminds the possibility of reconstructing "ethically sound" philosophies for a better world based on commonalities in diversity. In her view, Western individualistic ethics based on right-consciousness create a paradoxical conflict between liberty and equality. Therefore, she underscores that a duty or responsibility-based ethics needs to be established with an examination of non-Western cultural and philosophical traditions:

> Only with this new form of ethics can we speak of listening to the voices of marginalized cultures in their own cultural uniqueness as our moral obligations (p.61).

More nuanced engagements with ethics and interculturality are observable in the works of MacDonald and O'Regan (2013) and Ferri (2014, 2016, 2018b). Carefully examining the paradoxes of the ethical approaches within Western modernity tradition in their article *The Ethics of Intercultural Communication*, MacDonald and O'Regan criticize an unsaid but implied movement towards a universal consciousness and argue that such a tendency traps interculturality in the framework of *totality* and *metaphysics of presence*. To escape the binary thinking and dualities of Western ethical perspective, they engage in a dialogue with Derrida and Levinas to propose a different ethical ground for intercultural theory and praxis (2013, p. 1005). By drawing on Levinas and Derrida, the authors object to Hegel and his idea of oneness and universal consciousness; rather, they argue in favor of an "irreducible distance and separation between the self and the other" (p. 1005). Their conceptualization aims to construct an *ethics of responsibility* based on immanence and entailing the very presence and acts of the other rather than pointing to a Kantian transcendental moral signified. Following a similar path, Ferri also draw from the philosophical inquiry, Levinasian ethics in particular. Since she believes that an ethical approach to interculturality necessitates exceeding the disciplinary boundaries, she adopts an interdisciplinary perspective in which philosophical investigation is of utmost importance for "epistemological assumptions" and "ethical implications" of the concept of *interculturality* and intercultural dialogue (2016, p. 98). Ferri carefully distinguishes Levinasian ethics from Kantian ethnics, the former of which emerged in the context of Western Enlightenment and modernity, and the latter of which emerged within the framework of postmodern thought. By comparing and contrasting the two traditions, Ferri examines the formulation of other in Levinas's philosophy as an embodied and corporeal subject and aims

to move ethical understanding in intercultural communication from autonomy to heteronomy, from accusativity to subjectivity, from intentionality to non-intentionality, from consciousness to face (2014, 2016, 2018b). Another noteworthy study problematizing the relation between ethics and interculturality is Ucok-Sayrak's investigation of identity and otherness through the ethical framework of Levinas and his concept of absolute otherness (2016). Ucok-Sayrak's study deserves attention since she offers an illustration of *attending to the other* in the way that it was proposed in Levinasian ethics in an intercultural communication class. Her study reveals that a pedagogical implementation of Levinasian ethics and a discussion of his conceptualization of self-other relation in the intercultural communication class help students shift their perspectives from "the identity of the self that is for itself" to the "responsibility of one-for-the-other" (p. 137).

To pursue the goal of linking the theories of interculturality with an ethical framework, one should attentively revisit multiple theoretical strands, move beyond the disciplinary boundaries and point to new possible directions and integrations. With such an endeavor in mind, this paper attempts to integrate Levinasian ethics based on the other's face and Butler's ethics grounded on precariousness and vulnerability. Positioned in a postmodern standpoint and in line with Derrida, Levinas and Butler's understanding of philosophy on ethics, the paper discusses whether it is possible to think of an alternative critical and ethical engagement in the scholarship of interculturality, which will problematize the narrow conceptualization of ethics as a given abstract morality becoming accessible through the reason of the autonomous subject. In this respect, the paper shares MacDonald & O'Regan's and Ferri's concerns about the universalist discourse surrounding interculturality and follows their traces in the discussion of ethics and interculturality. By doing so, it will hopefully contribute to the discussions of ethics and interculturality by taking the affective dimension of ethics into consideration. The stance embraced in this paper places particular emphasis on the idea that the epistemology of interculturality should look closer at the negative, chaotic and even violent territory embedded in the intercultural praxis. Therefore, inspired by Butler's revisiting of Levinas, a further goal of the study is to question the possibility of a political ethics of affect which might pave the way for a global ethical understanding, the essential constituents of which are particularities, embodied subjects, face of the other, the *self*-called by the other and the very encounter of self and other.

3. Levinas: Absolute Otherness and Face

The most distinctive aspect of Levinas's ethical framework which later influenced Derrida and Butler is his radical critique of the Western philosophical tradition dominated by the autonomous moral self. In this tradition, an ethical understanding is initiated by the motivation of the self who is a rational being and act according to the moral categorical imperatives (Murray, 2000; Ferri, 2018b). In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas argues that this tendency is flawed since the other in this perspective is reduced to its perception by the self and defined according to the sameness:

> Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being (1969, p. 43)

This traditional, self-oriented ontology prioritizes "being before the existent", "ontology before metaphysics", "freedom before justice" and "a movement within the self before obligation to the other" (1969, p. 47). Within the ontology of sameness, any endeavor to know and relate to the other ends up with defining the other on the basis of the terms of the sameness and reducing the other to the very same, which -at the end- results in the totality (p. 47). Levinas rightly points to a binary ontological trap in which the self and other are oppositely positioned and in which the way of resolving this opposition or conflict between self and other becomes transforming the other into the same. Suggesting a reversal and subversion of the terms in the Western philosophy, Levinas's ethics crucially departs from the Western philosophical tradition by his displacing the autonomous self; redefining the other as the one who has priority over the self by its presence and building an ethical relationship of responsibility emanating from the other's call. For Levinas, the Other is the absolute other which is irreducible to the sameness; therefore, he speaks in favor of an ethics taking the irreducible Other into account. Irreducible Other cannot be defined, known or understood with the terms of the sameness. This uniqueness of the Other is called *absolute Otherness* by Levinas (1969):

> The metaphysical other is other with an alterity that is not formal; is not the simple reverse of identity and is not formed out of resistance to the same, but is prior to every initiative, to all imperialism of the same… The ***absolutely*** Other is the Other. He and I do not form a number… Over him I have no power. (emphasis mine) (1969, p. 38-39)

By claiming that the Other is absolutely, genuinely and infinitely other in its alterity, Levinas underlines that the absolute otherness independently exists prior to and beyond the self's actions and perceptions. Keeping this separate and absolute presence of the Other in mind, we can comment that a transformational attempt to turn the other into our sameness and the claims of a universal consciousness is far from realistic. If the Other "overflows every idea I have of him" as Levinas states (as cited in Ucok- Sayrak, p.127), the autonomy of the self gets displaced and questioned; in the relation between self and other, the focus shifts from the self's consciousness towards the Other's existence beyond the self's will and intentionality. In other words, ethics is placed beyond the terms of the self:

> Levinas dispenses with these preoccupations regarding ontology and defines ethics in terms of responsibility to the singular other through a radical move from the Kantian ideal of autonomy to the notion of passivity of the self exposed to the other. This displacement of the traditional concerns of metaphysical thought translates into a movement of positive desire towards alterity- the 'otherness' of the other. (Ferri, 2018b, p. 57).

However, one needs to note that Levinas does not try to ignore the existence of the self by conceptualizing the self within its passivity and by disrupting the predominance of the consciousness and willfulness of the self. On the contrary, he indeed makes room for the possibility of an ethical relation between self and the other in which self is obliged to act beyond its intentions, agency, willfulness or preferences by giving priority to the metaphysical Other's presence. The Other, with its existence and irreducibility to an object of the self's consciousness, disrupts the self and the limited boundaries of the self's consciousness. The self and its egoism are no longer relevant to its relation with the other. At this exact point, a relation, where the self upon the call of the Other can negotiate and co-construct meanings, becomes possible since the self is also constructed in and through its relation to the other. In contrast to the traditional Kantian ethics, however, this possibility of ethical relation does not emanate from a universal moral imperative reached through reason. It rather emerges from the Other. The ethical relation of self to the Other involves passivity and receptivity. The Other imposes an ethical demand on the self with its corporeality and *face*. This type of relationship in which the call of the Other with its face initiate the ethical relation is what is called an *ethical relation of responsibility* (MacDonald and O'Regan, 2013, p. 1015).

The concept of face holds a key role in the ethical framework of Levinas to fully understand the ethics of responsibility. How does the Other start an ethical call to the self? The Other imposes the obligation of responsibility on the self towards the Other by its corporeal and embodied presence, in other words by its *face*. The ethical relationship between the self and the other is inherent in the materiality of the Other. In an interview with Richard Kearney, Levinas expands his understanding of face:

> The approach to the face is the most basic mode of responsibility ... The face is not in front of me but above me; it is the other before death, looking through and exposing death… The face says to me: you shall not kill… To expose myself to the vulnerability of the face is to put my ontological right to existence into question. In ethics, the other's right to exist has primacy over my own, a primacy epitomized in the ethical edict: you shall not kill, you shall not jeopardize the life of the other. (in Kearney, 1986 / 2004, p. 75)

For Levinas, "the whole human body is.. more or less face" (as cited in Ferri, 2016, p. 102). The notion of face does not have to be exclusively a human face as noted by Butler, but it "communicates what is human, what is precarious, what is injurable" (2004, p. xvııı). The responsibility towards the other occurs through the encounter with this immanent vulnerable corporeality of the Other *here and now*. The material presence of the Other functions as a reminder of the responsibility towards the Other to the self. In Levinas's own terms, "the Other faces me and puts me in question and obliges me" (1969, p. 207); therefore, the self becomes obliged to respond to this ethical call of non-violence which prioritize the existence. Put it another way, self finds itself responsible for the Other beyond its own consciousness and perception, which make every subject in the world responsible to each other even though they do not know and will not know each other.

One might immediately realize that the notion of the face here adds a layer of affect and sentiment to the discussion of ethics. Upon the call of the Other, the self negotiates itself in its relation to the Other as a sentient being rather than constructing itself within the limits and terms of its own reason. A second realization which have significant implications for intercultural communication is that his idea of ethical relation is a mode of "intersubjectivity" (Bergo, 1999, p. 1), in which two parties, in their own singularities and independent existences, construct and negotiate their own subjectivities in their ethical encounter. The discussion of

abstract common good, hence, is removed from the discourse of ethics. The third implication is that by giving the Other primacy over the self, Levinas theorize an absolute and binding ethics which is unconditional yet not reciprocal since reciprocity implies a bargain and change of position depending on the Other's behavior (Butler, 2012, p. 140). This implication gives us a perspective critically to revisit the reciprocal self-other relationship predominating the discourse of interculturality and offer instead a framework of ethics in which "we are bound to those we do not know and even those we did not choose… and that these obligations are precontractual" (Butler, 2012, p. 140).

4.   Butler: Towards a Political Ethics of Affect on a Global Scale

In a dialogue with Levinas and his ethical perspective, Butler adopts an ethical understanding with an attentive discussion of the body, its precariousness and vulnerability (2004, 2012). Butler's engagement with ethical sphere is of vital importance since she opens a path where she challenges us to rethink the political and the ethical together with her discussion of the precariousness of the body. Similar to Levinas, Butler's understanding of what the ethical sphere encompasses contrasts with the ethics of modernity. Positioned in phenomenological and post-structural thought, Butler's ethics based on the effects of singularity, precariousness, grief and loss allows her to seek the possibilities of global ethical obligations with reference to current politics of war and violence. As opposed to scholars such as Mouffe who strictly argues that ethics need to be kept separate from politics and rejects "the political... within the moral register" (2005, p. 5); Butler asks if "any of us have the capacity or inclination to respond ethically to suffering at a distance and what makes that ethical encounter possible, when it does take place" (2012, p. 134). Morrison explains that the objections of Mouffe to integrate an ethical perspective in politics results from her narrow conceptualization of ethics in which she defines ethics in a reductionist and limited way as "a dogmatic adherence to non-negotiable system of common moral norms" (Morrison, 2018, p. 530, 539). However, Butler's perspective is far from framing ethics as a sum of normative moral codes. She, on the contrary, builds her ethics on the concept of the "unconditional" as Levinas and Derrida do. For her, the ethical is comprised of an unconditional obligation to respond to the Other. And this type of ethical obligation exceeds the national, linguistic and territorial boundaries. Therefore, she problematizes the ethical position taken on the basis of the condition of *proximity* or *nearness*. To her, the idea that the ethical relation becomes binding only when one knows or has the possibility of knowing the other is very flawed:

They valorize nearness as a condition for encountering and knowing the other and so tend to figure ethical relations as binding upon those whose face we can see, whose name we can know and pronounce, those we can already recognize, whose form and face are familiar… And yet, it seems to me that something different is happening when one part of the globe rises in moral outrage against actions and events that happen in another part of the globe, a form of moral outrage that does not depend upon a shared language or a common life grounded in physical proximity. (2012, p. 134-135).

Her idea of unconditional ethics rejects any type of presumptions and conditions and requires one's responsiveness and answerability to uncalculated and spontaneous demands. The idea of responsiveness and draws on the fact that "ethical responsibility presupposes ethical responsiveness" (as cited in Ucok-Sayrak, 2016, p. 130). To be able to speak of a global ethical obligation, she asks a number of provoking questions: Does one carry the responsibility for something happening very far from him/her? Does one have to take responsibility when s/he does not suffer from something? (2012, p. 136). To address such questions, she refers to Levinasian ethics and recalls that the self is obliged by the Other whom the self never preferred to encounter or know. Reminding that it is almost impossible to see the face of someone (the other) whom we do not know or do not choose to see by means of the media, Butler states that ethical obligations cannot be reduced to "neither consent nor communitarianism" (p. 138). If we cannot reduce ethical obligation to such dynamics, how do we need to reformulate the ethical obligation to ethical demands? The answer to this question is embedded in Levinasian ethics and his formulation of the ethical relation which start upon the call of the face of Other with its presence. In other words, one needs to leave the *possessive I* and the *egological* perspective.

Butler adds to Levinasian ethical perspective by building upon the concept of precariousness. For Butler, we are precarious and vulnerable bodies "exposed and attached to others" (as cited in Ucok-Sayrak, p. 129). Her conceptualization of the body points to bodily life as a site where ethical claims can emerge from. For her, precariousness and vulnerability might transform the understanding of the other and the political arena where "certain human lives are more vulnerable than others, and thus certain human lives are more grievable than others" (Butler, 2004, p. 30). In this sense, precarity is inescapably political. This brings us to a further question: Is there a possibility in precarity to formulate and ethical obligation that

might transform the political? Butler positively responds to this question. She draws our attention to the very possibility of a struggle in favor of "a conception of ethical obligation that is grounded in precarity" (2012, p. 148). The primary condition for understanding cohabitation is to understand that a generalized precarity of ethically obligates us to "sustain life on egalitarian terms" (p. 148). For Butler, precarity and vulnerability are significant resources for opening to an ethical relation:

> We struggle in, from, and against precarity. Thus, it is not from pervasive love for humanity or a pure desire for peace that we strive to live together. We live together because we have no choice, and though we sometimes rail against that unchosen condition, we remain obligated to struggle to affirm the ultimate value of that unchosen social world, an affirmation that is not quite a choice, a struggle that makes itself known and felt precisely when we exercise freedom in a way that is necessarily committed to the equal value of lives. (2012, p. 150)

In Butler's view, the ethical obligation that she underscores all along might emerge even when the cohabitation is not voluntary. Indeed, what she tries to manage in her ethical sphere is to achieve a mode of cohabitation which originates from the ethical obligation that she conceptualizes. For achieving such cohabitation, one needs to comprehend that the things happen "here", happen "there" as well. Therefore, here and there are reversible. Grasping this reversibility might lead us to better understand the shifting global connections.

5. In Lieu of Conclusion

This paper has attempted to highlight that it is possible to engage in an alternative reformulation of the relation of the self and the other within a Levinasian ethical framework. In his book *Interculturality in Education: A Theoretical and Methodological Toolbox,* Dervin touches upon the need for the Intercultural Competence (IC) discourse to deal with the "discomfort, to appreciate entering risky territory, and to accept that some degree of 'pain' is involved in dealing with intercultural encounters" (2016, p. 83). The main concern of this paper has been to problematize this *risky territory* and question if an ethical framework might function to realistically comprehend the nature of the interculturality which is far from the ideal in our time. In today's world which is surrounded by new forms of domination and inequality caused by power asymmetries, political agendas and ideologies, the question of how difference

need to be conceptualized and practiced remains to be problematic. For this very reason, Butler asks why some lives matter more and are worth grieving while others are ungrievable, unspeakable and unhearable. As Dervin notes, the IC discourse has the desire for "interculturally correct" situations (p. 83). As explained in the first section of the paper, this desire results in a transformational agenda where the Other is approached as someone to be turned into the sameness of the self in favor of an imagined and interculturally correct scenario in the form of a universal completeness. The critically alone does not suffice all the time to discuss difference and the Other.

Therefore, the paper tries to incorporate a layer of 'ethics of affect' to the discussions of interculturality rather than employing an ethical perspective emerging from the reason and consciousness of the self. However, one should note that adopting this understanding of the ethical does not come without its difficulties. As Ferri underlines, "the discovery of the self as a sentient being" might imply a trauma for the self (2016, p. 115). Or, as Butler writes, it is not an easy task to both "feel vulnerable to destruction by the other" and yet "feel responsible for the other" at the same time (2012, p. 141). Such paradoxical feelings are commonly observed in the settings of intercultural communication. However, it is important to remind that paradox constitutes the very spot from where the potential of ethical relation rises. This relation is never a virtue of the self. Echoing Levinas, it should be highlighted once more that we are established and defined by that very relation. Such an interdependency of the self and other is what leads to the ethical obligation for cohabitation on a global scale.

Disclosure Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

References

Alexander, B.K., Arasaratnam, L.A., Durham, A., Flores, L., Leeds-Hurwitz, W., Mendoza, S.L., Halualani, R. (2014). Identifying key intercultural urgencies, issues, and challenges in today's world: Connecting our scholarship to dynamic contexts and historical moments. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 7(1), 38–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2014.869527

Bergo, B. (1999). *Levinas between ethics and politics: For the beauty that adorns the earth*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. New York, NY: Verso.

Butler, J. (2012). Precarious life, vulnerability, and the ethics of cohabitation. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy (Special Issue with the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy)*, 26(2), 134-151. DOI: 10.5325/jspecphil.26.2.0134

Dervin, F. (2016). *Interculturality in education: A theoretical and methodological toolbox*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Doi: 10.1057/978-1-137-54544-2

Ferri, G. (2014). Ethical communication and intercultural responsibility: A philosophical perspective. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14(1), 7–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2013.866121

Ferri, G. (2016). Intercultural competence and the promise of understanding. In F. Dervin & Z. Gross (Eds.), *Intercultural competence: Alternative approaches for today's education* (pp. 59–77). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ferri G. (2018a). Intercultural communication-current challenges and future directions. In: *Intercultural Communication: Critical Approaches and Future Challenges* (pp. 1-13). Palgrave Macmillan: Cham. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73918-2_1

Ferri G. (2018b) The Ethics of interculturalism. In: *Intercultural Communication: Critical Approaches and Future Challenges* (pp. 47-68). Palgrave Macmillan: Cham https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73918-2_3

Guilherme, M., Keating, C., & Hoppe, D. (2010). Intercultural responsibility: Power and ethics in intercultural dialogue and interaction. In M. Guilherme, E. Glaser, & M. del Carmen Méndez Garcia (Eds.), *The intercultural dynamics of multicultural working* (pp. 77–94). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Holliday, A. (2010). *Intercultural communication and ideology*. London: Sage.

Kearney, R. (2004) Debates in continental philosophy: Conversations with contemporary thinkers. New York: Fordham University Press.

Levinas, E. (1969). *Totality and infinity: An essay on exteriority* (A. Lingis, Trans.). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Levinas, E. (1998). *Otherwise than being: Or beyond essence* (A. Lingis, Trans.). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Lyotard, J. F. (1979). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

MacDonald, M. N., & O'Regan, J. (2012). The ethics of intercultural communication. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 45(10), 1005–1017. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2011.00833.x

Morrison, A. (2018). Rescuing politics from liberalism: Butler and Mouffe on affectivity and the place of ethics. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 44(5), 528–549. https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453717730875

Mouffe, C. (2005). *On the Political.* London: Verso.

Murray, W. F. (2000). Bakhtinian answerability and Levinasian responsibility: Forging a fuller dialogical communicative ethics. *Southern Journal of Communication*, 65(2-3), 133-150. https://doi.org/10.1080/10417940009373163

Ucok-Sayrak, O. (2016). Attending to the "face of the other" in intercultural communication: Thinking and talking about difference, identity, and ethics. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication,* 9(2), 122-139. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2016.1142600

Warren, J.T. (2008). Performing difference: Repetition in context. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 1(4), 290–308. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513050802344654

Yin, J. (2009). Negotiating the centre: towards an Asiacentric feminist communication theory. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 4(1), 75-88. https://doi.org/10.1080/17447140802651660