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ABSTRACT

The quintessential movement of apology creates a fissure in the container of our self-centered state. The potent vulnerability and mystery of the other takes us to our knees, lifts her up and founds the meaning of our existence – a larger love. This apology is a never-ending movement, a never-ending responsibility. As teachers, therapists, and ongoing learners, how do we serve her when our paradigm of the real is challenged? Are we tolerating rather than welcoming other ways of being? Are we responding when the strange (to us) occurs in our encounters? Our convictions of what is true and real are woven into our experience and our cultural worldview. The central question in these encounters is - how do we honor strangeness, diversity, and multiculturalism with a depth of ethical response. Where might lived-experience and the ideology underlying worldview conflict? In this paper, I will explore the movement of apology in relationship to people who challenge us in this way. Their unusual experiences, their psychosis or a radically other culture confounds us yet asks us to continue to truly see and to hear them. Here I will elucidate interactions with clients, coast Salish first people and students. The apology responds because of the other, “I am here, I am here for you and listening.” The paradigm we hold dear of what is real and true may, to some extent, be ruptured by the face, by the saying of the other. This may be a worthy, challenging, and humbling gift.