

bringing into conversation. He is, as Mark Spencer notes in the foreword, “a fair-minded reader of all his source texts” who “readily grants when a personalist (or other) criticism of Plato is correct” while also showing “how, surprisingly, even those criticisms of Plato are generally rooted in a Platonic insight, which Plato himself just failed to adequately develop” (p. xiv). That combination of generosity and rigor is rare, and it makes *Plato and Christian Personalism* a model of how the history of philosophy ought to be done. Alfred North Whitehead’s famous remark that the European philosophical tradition is “a series of footnotes to Plato” is quoted at the book’s close. Sheffler has written a footnote that illuminates the original text rather than obscuring it, and in doing so has rendered a genuine service to both the Platonic and the personalist traditions.

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There were already attempts to integrate the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas into psychology. Writing this work entails an attempt to add to what has already been started in the field of social sciences. One commendable aspect of Laubscher’s writing is to examine Emmanuel Levinas’ notions not simply chronologically, but also how the philosopher matured throughout his philosophizing.

Here, he acknowledged that Levinas’ life contributes to his thinking and philosophical position. To write this way entails acknowledging that the work does not function solely as a philosophical reference for studying Levinas, which was well written, but as a text that integrates the discipline of psychology to further understand Levinas’ complex philosophy. By situating himself at the intersection of philosophy and psychology, he showed that Levinas’ ethical philosophy poses a profound and necessary challenge to the assumptions of psychological practice. From the standpoint of a clinical practitioner, Laubscher not only exposed the philosophy of Levinas but also provided a sustained engagement with how the philosopher’s work can reshape the way psychology understands the human person, clinical encounters, and the broader social world and interactions.

The structure of the book provides a good and substantial idea of the life and philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. The author provided an introduction that contextualized the reader for the book’s goal: to bring Levinas’s thought into a meaningful dialogue with psychology. In doing so, he provided, in Chapter 2, the context in which these disciplines are the same, different, and the points at which they might overlap and converge. Here, one understands how psychology draws on phenomenology, looking into the lifeworld, and how philosophy, especially Levinas’s, takes into account how therapy occurs as looking at the other as an ‘other.’

Additionally, his essay on Levinas’s biography provided an account that helped one understand not just Levinas’s life but also the historical and political context that shaped his philosophy.

Laubscher treats Levinas' philosophy with both fidelity and analytic creativity. He provided a developmental approach to the philosopher's work, from *Existence and Existents* and *Time and the Other* to *Totality and Infinity*, culminating in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Such treatment of Levinas allowed the reader to see his maturity of thought and the deepening of his philosophy over time. Importantly, Laubscher avoids reducing Levinas to a set of simplified principles or techniques. Instead, he preserves the complexity, ambiguity, and often paradoxical nature of Levinas's thought, even as he strives to render it intelligible for a non-philosophical audience. This is notable in how concrete examples are drawn from clinical practice, research, and daily interactions to, indeed, clarify these complex and at times ambiguous ideas of Levinas. This approach not only aids comprehension but also demonstrates the practical relevance of Levinas's ideas.

As an expert in psychology, Laubscher provided a handful of critiques on the practice of psychological science. He argued the tendency of this particular discipline to reduce, objectify, and systematize the encounter one has with the other person. Diagnostics, standardized treatments, and empirical methods often reduce the human person into something that is measurable. He reflected how such an approach in psychology mirrors the 'totalizing' approach that Levinas is describing in his philosophy. Laubscher echoes this concern by highlighting how psychological practices can inadvertently erase the singularity of the person in favor of efficiency, predictability, and control.

From a hermeneutical perspective, Laubscher provided a foundational understanding of the philosophy of Levinas and, indeed, did well in relaying those ideas to his readers. In the treatment of Levinas' works, he did not begin with the texts themselves but provided a contextual approach to understanding Levinas' works. Before proceeding with the key ideas of the text, he firstly wrote the context in which the text was written, and his own context in reading the text. Such an approach provided a reflective pause before the reader jumps into understanding the works of Levinas. In doing so, the key ideas of Levinas, as he presented them, became clearer with all this given context.

Throughout the book, Laubscher showed consistency in his treatment of Levinas' philosophy. Despite the concreteness of examples, the book accurately depicted the non-normative ethics of Levinas and the daunting demand of responsibility. In his very words, he stated that 'Levinas's responsibility is extreme, hyperbolic even. It is *indeclinable and passive*.' (p. 164)

Despite the highlights mentioned regarding the contributions that Levinas could promise in the practice of psychology and how his philosophy sheds light on the totalizing tendency of this practical science, Laubscher is not blind to the challenges and questions that stick to the philosophy of Levinas, i.e., how his ethics could be treated in relation to non-human animals, discussions about femininity, and accusations of androcentrism. Adding these critiques and challenges in understanding the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas provided an indication of impartiality regarding the philosopher's ideas.

To conclude, Laubscher's work, *Levinas for Psychologists*, is a thoughtful, challenging, and ultimately rewarding contribution to both philosophy and psychology. It functions as a starting point of reflection, more than a definitive guide. It succeeds

in making Levinas's complex ideas accessible without sacrificing their depth and in demonstrating these ideas' their relevance to psychological practice. More importantly, it invites psychologists to reconsider the ethical foundations of the discipline and to engage more deeply with the human person as an irreducible Other. Faithful to the non-normative ethics of Levinas, which does not provide definitive answers or ready-made solutions, it offers something arguably more valuable: a framework for rethinking what it means to practice psychology in an ethically grounded, relationally attuned, and responsive way to the complexities of human existence.

For readers who will engage with its philosophical demands, Laubscher's book stands as a work that challenges, inspires, and opens new possibilities for a more humane and reflective practice of psychology.

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Reimers, Adrian. *The Ethos of the Christian Heart: Reading Veritatis Splendor*. South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2025. pp 250. ISBN-13: 978-1587312427. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55997//2011pslxi185br5>

Dr Adrian Reimers is known for his extensive research into Karol Wojtyła's personalism and ethics. In his latest publication, *The Ethos of the Christian Heart: Reading Veritatis Splendor*, he analyses both the encyclical itself and the way Wojtyła's moral vision is recovered through it. In addition, he attempts to show that *Veritatis Splendor* is not only a response to dissent in the history of moral theology but a constructive account of the Christian moral life as a response to divine love.

Reimers contextualises his research within the contemporary tension in Catholic moral theology between fidelity to tradition and the desire for reform and renewal in light of the signs of the times. In particular, he discusses the concept of dissent, especially in the wake of *Humanae Vitae* and *Amoris Laetitia*. For Reimers, dissent is not just a sociological or ecclesial issue but a reflection of a deeper philosophical problem: the eclipse of transcendence and the fragmentation of the notion of the good within post-Enlightenment thought.

The work is unique in that it systematically reads *Veritatis Splendor* as a constructive, rather than a reactionary, moral vision grounded in the primacy of love. Thus, the encyclical is not juridical but relational. Morality is a response to divine love and not just mere conformity to law (p. 14, 31). Under this interpretation, the encyclical can be placed within the broader tradition of Christian ethics, drawing on both classical accounts of the good, such as those of Thomas Aquinas and Saint Augustine, and contemporary articulations by modern thinkers such as Kant and Scheler.

One of the strongest and most insightful aspects of Reimers' analysis is his examination of modern thought. He presents figures such as David Hume, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, and Max Scheler not as intellectual adversaries but as interlocutors whose positions illuminate the stakes of Wojtyła's project (p. 11). This is seen in his analysis of the vanishing good. Modernism gradually did away with the concept of teleology within modern science and ethics. In doing so, the moral discourse has been destabilised with the good being understood as preference, utility, or personal satisfaction. Morality thus