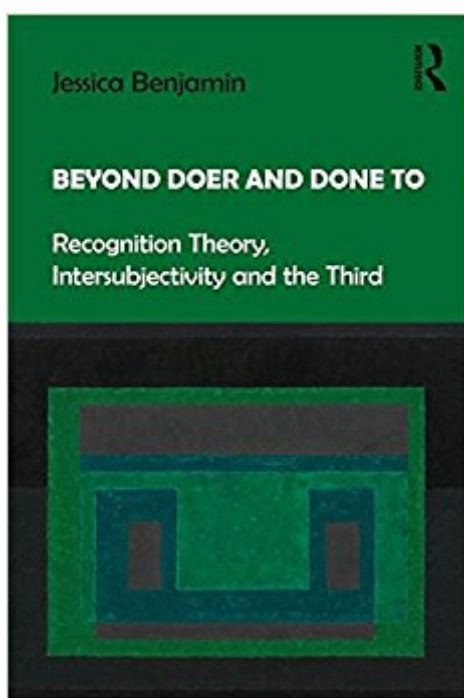


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# Beyond Doer And Done To: Recognition Theory, Intersubjectivity And The Third



## Synopsis

In *Beyond Doer and Done To*, Jessica Benjamin, author of the path-breaking *Bonds of Love*, expands her theory of mutual recognition and its breakdown into the complementarity of "doer and done to." Her innovative theory charts the growth of the Third in early development through the movement between recognition and breakdown, and shows how it parallels the enactments in the psychoanalytic relationship. Benjamin's recognition theory illuminates the radical potential of acknowledgment in healing both individual and social trauma, in creating relational repair in the transformational space of thirdness. Benjamin's unique formulations of intersubjectivity make essential reading for both psychoanalytic therapists and theorists in the humanities and social sciences.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In this extraordinary book Jessica Benjamin reveals the paradoxical process of thirdness as the growth of intersubjectivity through mutual survival of enacted breakdowns. The choreography of doer and done to makes way for a different kind of shared experience, creating and recreating the Third. This book must be read to grasp its singular importance, because it evokes the experience it clarifies: in trying to be good we fail; in accepting failure we go beyond it. Benjamin synthesizes our biggest insights about intersubjectivity and recognition with our most personal intimate experiences of being connected to another human being, moving psychoanalytic theory into what it has always hoped to be. Read this book, it is not to be missed!" Philip M. Bromberg, author of *The Shadow of the Tsunami: and the Growth of the Relational Mind* "In her

brilliant new book, Jessica Benjamin updates her early groundbreaking analysis of intersubjectivity, recognition, and mother-child development. As a result, *Beyond Doer and Done To* is one of the most powerful and robust accounts of the recognition process ever written. Discussing both individual and public trauma, Benjamin articulates a compelling distinction between the failed witness and the acknowledging witness, crucial to understanding our troubled times. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in recognition theory, trauma theory, and recent trends in psychoanalysis."-Kelly Oliver, author of *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, and most recently, *Carceral Humanitarianism: Logics of Refugee Detention* "Jessica Benjamin, one of the most original contemporary psychoanalytic thinkers brilliantly illustrates what is most alive in psychoanalysis today: what it means to think and work using the concept of intersubjectivity. I strongly recommend *Beyond Doer and Done To* not only to every psychoanalyst and psychotherapist but to all who are intrigued by the question of how a mind is born, and how it grows when it gets in touch with another mind."-Giuseppe Civitarese, author of *Truth and the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis*

Jessica Benjamin, Ph.D., is a psychoanalyst and supervising faculty member at New York University Postdoctoral Psychology Program and the Stephen Mitchell Relational Studies Center in New York. She is author of the Routledge title *Shadow of the Other*.

THIS IS EXCEPTIONAL BOOK. I'M MIDWAY THROUGH AND EAGER TO CONTINUE THIS EXTENSION OF BENJAMIN'S WORK.

This is an elusive topic, but Benjamin's writing is lucid and allows one to move through complex ideas with relative ease. Her ideas take us beyond intersubjectivity, into the realm of an exquisitely nuanced dance between "doer" and "done to." As a psychotherapist with many decades of experience in long term treatments, I found the author articulating experiences I hadn't quite been able to describe even to myself. I've long been concerned with the issue of therapist apology and/or acknowledgement of doing harm to the patient, mindful of the old training "rules" and mindful too of the human necessity of acknowledging responsibility when we inevitably harm each other. Benjamin's thoughts are welcome, partly because she comes down on the side that I favor and even more because she describes in great detail the ways in which such acknowledgment is psychically organizing and how it supports regulation, autonomy and integrity. She also writes clearly of the therapist's need not only to tolerate uncertainty, disregulation, blankness, helplessness and fear, but also to expose those states to the patient (with judgement and sensitivity) as a way of

creating the conditions for deep change. This is not just a book about psychotherapy. It doesn't flinch from issues of morality, most notably the moral necessity of what Ellie Wiesel called "Witnessing." Benjamin has done a masterful job of showing us that regardless of training or school of thought, moral issues must be acknowledged and lived in the therapeutic encounter.

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