

SIMON CRITCHLEY is Hans Jonas Professor at the New School for Social Research. His books include *Very Little ... Almost Nothing*, *Infinately Demanding*, *The Book of Dead Philosophers*, *The Faith of the Faithless*, *The Mattering of Matter: Documents from the Archive of the International Necronautical Society* (with Tom McCarthy), and *Stay, Illusion! The Hamlet Doctrine* (with Jamieson Webster). An experimental new work, *Memory Theatre*, and a book called *Bowie* were both published in 2014 and a book on suicide is forthcoming. He is moderator of 'The Stone', a philosophy column in *The New York Times*, to which he is a frequent contributor.

Levinas's idea of ethics as a relation of responsibility to the other person has become a highly influential and recognizable position across a wide range of academic and non-academic fields. Simon Critchley's aim in this book is to provide a less familiar, more troubling, and (hopefully) truer account of Levinas's work. A new dramatic method for reading Levinas is proposed, where the fundamental problem of his work is seen as the attempt to escape from the tragedy of Heidegger's philosophy and the way in which that philosophy shaped political events in the last century. Extensive and careful attention is paid to Levinas's fascinating but often overlooked work from the 1930s, where the proximity to Heidegger becomes clearer. Levinas's problem is very simple: how to escape from the tragic fatality of being as described by Heidegger. Levinas's later work is a series of attempts to answer that problem through claims about ethical selfhood and a series of phenomenological experiences, especially erotic relations and the relation to the child. These claims are analyzed in the book through close textual readings. Critchley reveals the problem with Levinas's answer to his own philosophical question and suggests a number of criticisms, particularly concerning the question of gender. In the final, speculative part of the book, another answer to Levinas's problem is explored through a reading of the *Song of Songs* and the lens of mystical love.