

# THE MORAL THIRD

PSYCHOANALYSIS, WITNESSING AND REPAIR

ONE-DAY CONFERENCE WITH JESSICA BENJAMIN

TUESDAY APRIL 21 UCK DOMPLEIN 4 UTRECHT



## PROGRAM

- 10:00 – 10:05** Welcome by Harry Kunneman and Katie-Lee Weille
- 10:05 – 11:20** The discarded and the dignified: from the failed witness to 'you are the eyes of the world', Jessica Benjamin.
- 11:20 – 11:45** Discussion
- 12:00 – 12:30** Surrender and thirdness in parenthood and psychotherapy, Katie-Lee Weille
- 12:30 – 13:00** From Freud to Benjamin: relational theory and relational biology, Harry Kunneman
- 13:00 – 14:00** Lunch Break
- 14:00 – 15:30** Workshops
- 1 On collective trauma and processes of repair**  
Wouter Kusters and Marlies Stappers
  - 2 Domestic violence, thirdness and normative professionalism**  
Sietske Dijkstra and Harry Kunneman
  - 3 Surviving breakdown and impasses: Recognition theory in psychotherapy**  
Katie-Lee Weille and Marianne Vysma
  - 4 Between knowing and not-knowing. Relational theory and psychoanalytic practice.**  
Harrie Stroeken
  - 5 Ferenczi, Lacan and Benjamin on trauma: in search of triangulation**  
Lewis Kirshner, Raluca Soreanu and Jaap Ubbels
- 16:00 – 17:00** Discussion with Jessica Benjamin

Sign up: <https://benjaminconferenceapril21.paydro.net/event/benjamin-conference>

## WORKSHOPS

CONFERENCE THE MORAL THIRD



### WORKSHOPS 14:00 – 15:30

#### 1 On collective trauma and processes of repair. Problems and pitfalls of searching for truth and justice and the development of new, inclusive narratives in violent societies.

Marlies Stappers and Wouter Kusters

The goal of this workshop is to explore how we can profit from Benjamins work on psychotherapeutic dynamics on a societal level. That is to say, how can processes of alternating identifications with and interactions and dialectics between victims, perpetrators and witnesses/passive bystanders, be resolved and guided to some kind of reconciliation, positive peace, new identities and living with the past in an uncertain future. The societies at stake here are countries with a recent history – and actuality – of extreme violence, like Guatemala, Rwanda, South-Africa and Northern Ireland. On what level of society should processes of collective trauma therapy be operative and what is the political dimension that needs to be taken into account if collective trauma therapy is to be effective? How are the various roles distributed among the various actors? What can be done – and on what level or entrance of society and state – to relieve and process the pain and violence in societies where violence, impunity and injustice are reality in daily life?

Marlies Stappers will inform the audience about her wide and diverse experiences with such processes, and discuss with the audience the various methods with their various promises and draw-backs. She will stress the value-laden content of Benjamins 'moral third', and will show how this 'moral third' might be a source for societal reconciliation. This workshop will be of interest to everyone who is concerned with the question of the moral good and identity politics, and will also be highly relevant for psychotherapeutic processes where exploring issues like being-a-woman, being-a-moslem play a role.

#### 2 Thirdness, domestic violence and normative professionalism

Sietske Dijkstra and Harry Kunneman

In this workshop we will first consider the idea of 'thirdness' as defined by Jessica Benjamin ('a quality of mental space, of intersubjective relatedness') and how it applies to the role of witnessing and thirdness in dealing with trauma. We will then connect her perspective with the theory and practice of normative professionalization and the development of moral capital in professional contexts. Next we will elucidate the multi-layered complexity that reveals itself when space is created for moral learning and insight, especially when confronted with 'slow questions' in professional contexts. We will consider how that complexity shows up in organizations and professionals dedicated to helping victims of domestic violence, in particular in early childhood traumatized persons. We will relate this complexity to a recent analysis by Sietske Dijkstra of a fatal case of high conflict divorce (the Zeister case) and to her reflection on the book *The knowing Witness*, published last November by Anneke van Duin on handling sexual abuse 'with compassion and perseverance'. Finally, using ideas from Dijkstra's article of 'what the body knows and needs from trauma', we will investigate the usefulness of Jessica Benjamin's perspective on witnessing and thirdness in trying to help traumatized children and adults.

#### 3 Surviving breakdown and impasses: Recognition theory in psychotherapy

Marianne Vysma and Katie-Lee Weille

The goal of this workshop will be to gain a deeper understanding of the clinical implications of Benjamin's recognition theory in those moments of breakdown and repair of the therapeutic relationship. Attunement lapses and other failures of empathy will inevitably occur during the course of deep psychotherapeutic work. Benjamin suggests that the acknowledgment and working through of these moments leads to an emerging 'third' position, in which powerlessness and agency can be dynamically experienced by both sides in the therapeutic couple. Using case material brought in by the workshop facilitators and by inviting participants to share their own reflections and clinical experiences into the discussion, we will explore how what Benjamin calls 'reciprocal survival' can lead to a new resilience.

#### 4 Between knowing and not-knowing. Relational theory and psychoanalytic practice

Harrie Stroeken

Based on his recent book *Tussen weten en niet-weten*, but also on his previous books and on his vast experience as a practicing psycho-analytical psychotherapist, Harrie Stroeken will develop connections between Benjamin's relational approach and one of the central insights from his work: the knowledge we have of our self is limited. There runs a dividing line through each of us, between what we know of ourselves and what we do not (want to) know, what we want to hide from others and preferably also from ourselves.

#### 5 Ferenczi, Lacan and Benjamin on trauma: in search of triangulation

Lewis Kirshner, Raluca Soreanu and Jaap Ubbels (chair)

In this workshop an attempt will be made to connect Benjamin's views on trauma with those of Sándor Ferenczi and Jacques Lacan. Both speakers will give an introduction of about 20 minutes, followed by questions and answers and a concluding discussion. To start with, Lewis Kirshner will speak about *Lacan and Ferenczi* as a *missed encounter* between two men who had a lot in common and many divergences. He will focus on the divided role of the analyst in treatment, where the analyst represents both the specific other of transference (the person of the analyst) and the symbolic function of the generalized Other, which may be intrinsic to the analytic set-up. Psychoanalysis furnishes an opportunity for symbolization of experience that has been excluded from or inaccessible to thinking. A common ground for Ferenczi and Lacan might lie in the definition of trauma as a failure of symbolization – a failure to capture or signify embodied and emotionally charged experiences. In conclusion Kirshner will relate this potential common ground between Ferenczi and Lacan to Jessica Benjamin's third position for the therapist and for those involved in social interventions in traumatized societies. The conclusion that access to a third (or thirds) can open situations and produce new configurations is inherent in his view in Lacan's own semiotics of transference.

Under the title *Working-through Collective Wounds*, the second contributor to this workshop, Raluca Soreanu will then present a Ferenczian perspective on Trauma, Denial, and Recognition. More in particular she will propose a reflection on the importance of Jessica Benjamin's conception of recognition, "thirdness" and the "moral third" for formulating a theory of collective trauma. She will mobilize the voice of Sándor Ferenczi, and his own theory of trauma, for discussing recognition, witnessing, and denial. Drawing on the Ferenczian idea of the "confusion of tongues" she will introduce her own formulation on "registers of recognition" and offer in conclusion a transposition of this idea to the realm of the collective.

## FACILITATORS WORKSHOPS

CONFERENCE THE MORAL THIRD



#### 1 On collective trauma and processes of repair. Problems and pitfalls of searching for truth and justice and the development of new, inclusive narratives in violent societies.

Main speaker at this workshop is **Marlies Stappers**. She is Executive Director and initiator of Impunity Watch ([www.impunitywatch.org](http://www.impunitywatch.org)). Prior to that she worked as the coordinator of the Universal Justice programme at the Dutch development organisation, Solidaridad. Marlies is also the initiator of the Dutch Guatemala Platform Against Impunity, a group of Netherlands-based NGOs advocating and lobbying for accountability in Guatemala. Between 1995 and 2001, Marlies lived in Guatemala, where she worked on accompanying Guatemalan refugees returning from Mexico and on mental health projects. She also worked as a researcher for the Guatemalan Historical Truth Commission and as an observer of the Peace Accords for the UN Mission in Guatemala (Minugua). Her educational and background is in Latin American studies.

Chair of the workshop is **Wouter Kusters**, Secretary at the Foundation for Psychiatry and Philosophy ([www.psychiatrie Filosofie.nl](http://www.psychiatrie Filosofie.nl)), and one of the organizers of this conference. He has been educated as a linguist and wrote his PhD on Language Change. In more recent years he explored the fields of Madness, Radical Phenomenology and the Pathologies of Philosophy, in books like *Philosophy of Madness; Fundamental and Transgressing Insights* (2014), and *Pure Madness* (2005).

#### 2 Thirdness, domestic violence and normative professionalism

The main speaker at this workshop is **dr. Sietske Dijkstra**. She was connected to the Avans University of Applied Sciences in the domain of 'Domestic violence' from 2007 through the 2014 and has published several books on this theme. In the Dijkstra Agency she specializes in the field of relational and social safety. She conducts practice-oriented research on violence in relations and professional action, and provides specialized courses and consultation that contributes to the education of professionals confronted with molestation, sexual abuse, and negligence among domestic partners, families, and institutions. Her constant goal is to help professionals become more sensitive to the risks of violence, to provide insights and raise awareness of how conflicts can be managed to prevent violence and its destructive consequences. (See also [www.sietske-dijkstra.com](http://www.sietske-dijkstra.com))

**Harry Kunneman** will give a short introduction on witnessing, thirdness, and normative professionalization to provide a conceptual backdrop for this workshop, and will serve as the workshop chair.

#### 3 Surviving breakdown and impasses: Recognition theory in psychotherapy

**Marianne Vysma** is a psychoanalyst trained at the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich, in private practice in Den Haag. She is also a medical anthropologist with a theoretical interest in what heals after collective violence, most recently doing research in a psychosocial intervention in Rwanda.

**Katie-Lee Weille**, PhD, ACSW, received her masters from Smith College in 1989, and worked for 10 years with children and families in a range of clinical settings in the United States and at Tavistock Clinic in London. She received her PhD in Psychology from the University of London in 2004, after which she taught and supervised clinical and research students at the London Institute for Family Therapy and other postgraduate programs in England and the Netherlands. From 2009-2012 Dr. Weille was Professor of Parenthood and Professional Work with Parents at Leiden University of Applied Science. She is currently Adjunct Professor at Webster University; instructor at the RINO; and has a practice in Amsterdam for individual and couples therapy, training and supervision. Her publications and other details can be found on <http://weille.com>

#### 4 Between knowing and not-knowing. Relational theory and psychoanalytic practice

**Prof.dr. H.P.J. Stroeken**, is trained as a psychologist and psychoanalyst and has an independent psychotherapeutic practice in Utrecht. Until his retirement he taught as a extraordinary professor at Leiden University. He published many books on the theory and practice of psychoanalysis, such as *Tussen weten en niet-weten* (2015); *Een ontwikkelingsgeschiedenis van de psychoanalyse* (2014); *Breien en betekenis* (2008); *Klein psychologie van het gesprek* (2000) en *Dromen – Breien en betekenis* (2005).

#### 5 Ferenczi, Lacan and Benjamin on trauma: in search of triangulation

The first contributor to this workshop, **Lewis Kirshner**, is Clinical Professor, Harvard Medical School and psychoanalyst (Boston Psychoanalytic Institute). He has been Affiliate (visiting) Professor in Clinical Psychology at Lyon 2, France and Fulbright Scholar in the Department of Psychoanalysis and Counseling Psychology at U Gent, Belgium. He has written extensively about French psychoanalysis and published widely in *La Revue Francaise de Psychanalyse*, *The Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, and other publications. His books: *Having a Life: Self Pathology after Lacan* and *Between Winnicott and Lacan: A Clinical Engagement* are attempts to integrate Lacanian concepts with other models, including Self Psychology, Winnicott, and Andre Green.

The second contributor, **Raluca Soreanu**, is a practising psychoanalyst, associate member of the Circulo Psicanalitico do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She is Marie Curie Fellow in Sociology at the Department of Psychosocial Studies, Birkbeck College, London, United Kingdom. She obtained her doctorate in Sociology from University College London, United Kingdom. Her areas of interest are psychosocial studies, psychoanalytic theory and the sociology of emotions. She is currently working on a book manuscript with the title *Working-through Collective Wounds: Trauma, Denial, Recognition in the Brazilian Uprising*.

The chair of this workshop, **Jaap Ubbels**, is psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. He is involved in the training of psychoanalysts in the NVPA and worked until his retirement in 2012 at the *Nederlands Psychoanalytisch Instituut* in Amsterdam. He now has an independent practice. In 2014 he got a BA in Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam, where he is currently finishing his Master in Philosophy.

Sign up: <https://benjaminconferenceapril21.paydro.net/event/benjamin-conference>

This conference is organized by *Stichting Waardenwerk* in cooperation with the *University of Humanistic Studies* and *Stichting Psychiatrie en Filosofie*. (Accreditation for this Conference has been requested from the NvVP)