

The Third in Therapy and Responsibly Loving the Other

The very relationship with the other is the relationship with the future (Levinas, 1987, p. 77). Historically, conceptualizations of individual psychotherapy have assumed a didactic practice: one therapist and one client collaboratively engaged in dialogue focused upon the client's difficulties. If this was the totality of the psychotherapeutic endeavor, therapists could more easily pursue a non-comparative "obsession" with the other that approximates a Levinasian ethical ideal. However, Levinas and contemporary theorists acknowledge that the psychotherapeutic dyad is influenced by a number of external factors. These elements encapsulated in a Levinasian framework take form as "the third" in relating between therapist and client. Managed care expectations, professional ethical codes, expectations of overseeing entities, psychopharmaceutical pressures, rigid theoretical perspectives, cultural and societal norms as experienced by both the therapist and client task therapists with "the need for comparing the third and the Other in order to judge how to divide [their] responsibility between them" (Beals, 2007, p. 15).

This presentation inquires and investigates the obstacles and potentialities of dividing responsibilities of ethical therapeutic endeavoring according to Levinas. Central to this exploration is the question: *in what ways can therapists responsibly "love" their clients?* Several "thirds" will be described in relation to therapeutic complexities brought with the act of responsibly being present with clients while providing context for evaluating Levinasian informed ethical best practices. Our exploration will discuss personal examples of challenges from pressures to prioritize ontological approaches and our responses through a wisdom of love.

Constance A. Kellogg, MS, LPCC, LMFT

Cell Phone: 805-338-9467

Email: psych2heal@yahoo.com

School Affiliation: Pacifica Graduate Institute

Dylan A. Keenberg, MA

Phone: 661-706-0594

Email: dylankeenber@gmail.com

School Affiliation: The Chicago School of Professional Psychology