

Broken Fathers /Broken Sons
Gerald J. Gargiulo
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This is a beautifully written book filled with compassion, intelligence and honesty. While this is a profoundly personal memoir it is also instructive and brimming with insights culled from a lifetime of self-examination and rigorous study of various intellectual disciplines. Through the perhaps unlikely melding of monastic/religious life and psychoanalytic sensibilities, Dr. Gargiulo describes some of his more painful life experiences and the subsequent understanding he developed of loss, love, doubt, betrayal, and reconciliation.

The reader can witness the influence of these disciplines through the many questions he poses to himself and the engaged reader. Rather than offering pedantic, jargon filled answers he poses his questions in lucid, poetic prose: “I still do not have proper words for this wondrous mind of ours. Is it, perhaps, a wonderful emptiness? Something like the bubbles we would blow with soap pipes? Beautifully colored, self-contained, light filled nothingness.”

Gargiulo’s life story is compelling. His early years were filled with alienation, confusion, and brokenness where the childhood rhyme of Humpty Dumpty reflected both his conflicts, especially with his father, and his search for meaningful connections. This simple Old English rhyme expressed the fears of a young boy consumed with torturous doubt about himself and his future: “What could befall me that all the forces available would be unable to mend? Was such a fate something I should watch out for—or—worse, had it already happened?”

Well into to his psychoanalytic training and during his own analysis, some thirty-five years later, Humpty Dumpty still served as a powerful story: “I had to recount all of Humpty’s childhood, his flight to the seminary and his present whereabouts in order, paradoxically, to forget him, I found a safe place to mourn his passing.” In describing his working with his history in this fashion, Gargiulo very effectively reveals the therapeutic power of psychoanalysis.

Dr. Gargiulo is a man of integrity, modesty and courage. He continually questions, examines, explains and alters his analytic beliefs and as a result his practice. In the tradition of a true healer, he not only puts the welfare of his patients before his own comfort but he also seeks to learn from their experiences to advance his own learning. Dr Gargiulo demonstrates he is a wise analyst and a kind, loving man. He is a man to spend time with, which is possible by reading his gentle words.

Richard Raubolt, Ph.D.

www.richardraubolt.com,