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***Psyche, Self and Soul: Rethinking Psychoanalysis, the Self and Spirituality***

By Gerald J. Gargiulo

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In 1916, Jung wrote a memorable essay on working within a spiritual dimension in our psychoanalytic endeavor. The transcendent function' lay unpublished in his files until 1953 and was revised in 1958. Jung writes in the English translation,

*The shuttling to and fro of arguments and affects represents the transcendent function of opposites. The confrontation of the two positions generates a tension charged with energy and creates a living, third thing ...a movement out of the suspension between opposites, a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation. (1969, p.90)*

Similar to Winnicott's potential space and Ogden's dialogical space, Jung's transcendent function is the mental space in which we can see the interplay of conscious and unconscious forces. How one comes to terms, in practice, with the unconscious, claims Jung, is *the fundamental question ... of all religions and all philosophies. For the unconscious is not this thing or that; it is the Unknown as it immediately affects us (p. 68).*

Jung concluded that this Unknown has an intelligence far greater than our consciousness. In presenting his widely acclaimed Terry Lectures on Psychology and Religion at Yale University in 1937, Jung, speaking in English, said *My psychological experience has shown time and again that certain contents issue from a psyche more complete than consciousness. They often contain a superior analysis or insight or knowledge which consciousness has not been able to produce (1938, p. 49).* Jung's interest in spiritual matters is not, by any means, the sole root of the engagement of psychoanalysis with spirituality and religion. I have begun my review with this particular historical background because the interests of Gerald Gargiulo, as I have encountered them in this thoughtful little book of essays, seem remarkably similar to Jung's. I am a Jungian psychoanalyst.

Gargiulo is a member of the International Psychoanalytic Association and the American Psychoanalytic Association.

In the final chapter, for example, Gargiulo gives a retrospective view of his aims in writing the book:

*In my focus on the need to be comfortable with mystery, with poetry, with unknowing, I have attempted to highlight the different dimensions that psychoanalysis must bring to clinical work, if they are going to know who and where they are. (p. 125)*

Gargiulo draws especially on the contemplative reflections of Meister Eckhart and the theories of Winnicott to acquaint the reader with his own original concepts of *everyday transcendence* and the *mist of infinite possibilities*.

Wanting to unburden us of the need for determinism in our clinical, cultural and psychological reasoning, the author argues persuasively for an openness to emergent and unknown possibilities in our work and our lives. His clinical work, and his interest in spiritual development and contemplation, have led him to believe that, *if analysts do the very things they are trained to do without appreciating a wider life context, they will miss something crucial in human experience (p. 125)*. At the same time, he cautions, *None of this should stand in opposition to analysts understanding the genetic determinants of a person's present situation, nor does it exclude a sensible analysis of defenses or transference manifestations (p. 125)*.

Gargiulo begins with a reference to Winnicott's plea *O God, when I die, may I be alive (p. xvi)* and remarks that surely Winnicott was not addressing anyone or anything other than the depth of his own soul. The author continues,

*Only when we can sense the depth that is within us, an openness that transcends the repressed unconscious, will we be able to experience the depth that surrounds us ... a reality that is within our world yet outside our immediate experience, a primordial back drop, as it were, to our actions. (p. xvi)*

He names this reality *everyday transcendence*. To experience such imminent transcendence, we need to be in contact with the *mist of infinite possibilities*, the constant coming into being of ourselves and the world.

Borrowing this notion of infinite possibilities from quantum mechanics, Gargiulo intends it to mean a kind of vital emptiness that requires a wise

unknowingness to be recognized. The spiritual tradition that has most influenced the author is the apophatic or negative way, a Western tradition that has its roots in Neoplatonism. This tradition emphasizes working from experience, not needing to know in advance what you are looking for, only how and what to reject. Meister Eckhart, the 13th century Christian mystic, philosopher and theologian, is a primary source for Gargiulo who finds the apophatic way compatible with Winnicott's concept of 'play' and with the analytic attitude.

People (like infants) are continuously engaged in creating the found world, avers the author. Only when we love the world are we able to know it and desire it. And, second, we are intrinsically limited by our historical context, our perceptions and knowledge, and our power motives. Our concepts about our world and ourselves are tainted by these limitations. In our engagements with our patients, then, we create the therapeutic action in finding and refinding the world in the affective presence of the other, while remaining skeptical of our predetermined theories and concepts.

Many clinical examples, including one long case vignette from his practice and an intriguing object-relational reworking of the case of Anna O, illustrate the author's clinical work and guiding wisdom. These examples illuminate the ways in which Gargiulo thinks and works towards the aims of psychoanalysis, which he describes succinctly as the patient's *ability to resolve anxiety by experiencing more personal ownership of the events of one's life* (p. 24). He understands contemporary psychoanalysis as offering the patient an opportunity to 'experience personal meaning' which has to do with 'appreciating and personally integrating one's historical actuality' as an 'active response to life's vicissitudes' (p. 25). These goals necessarily include the patient's ability to experience everyday transcendence and to live in contact with the mist of infinite possibilities.

While the clinical illustrations were useful in fleshing out the spiritual and philosophical concepts that Gargiulo employs, graciously contextualized in an academically responsible way so that we know the background from which he draws, I found myself noting down more about his theoretical stance. For example, pointing to Winnicott (1954), Gargiulo reminds us that mind has no particular location. In recent years, I have found myself in countless debates with psychoanalysis, psychiatrists and psychologists about the relationship of mind and brain. Repeatedly, I hear my colleagues erroneously refer to the 'mind-brain, or a similar conflation of the two failing to recognize that mind and brain depend on two distinct conditions, and must be kept separate in our discussions in order to think clearly about what we are doing This quote is just what I need to pull out of

my pocket when I am frustrated by my inability to convey the singular importance of the mind/brain distinction:

*[W]e come to know mind through all the languages of culture. It is, consequently, not reducible to a biological entity. Consciousness, which is uniquely dependent on neurological brain functioning, is a prerequisite for the experience of mind, but it is not co-equal. Consciousness, in human experience, makes the awareness of mind possible. But meaning, which is the calling card of mind, so to speak, is a singularly communal accomplishment. (p. 35)*

Brain and mind do not share the same origins or epistemology.

In emphasizing the shared nature of mind, Gargiulo wants us to reevaluate our psychoanalytic emphasis on autonomy by taking responsibility for the errors we have made in promoting *an exaggerated notion of personal autonomy*. Rather than referring autonomy to a bounded and separate I-ness, the author suggests we revision autonomy to mean *the experience of competence within a culture, a culture that gives individuals a language by which to name both themselves and the world they inhabit* (p 36). Naturally, he wants us to be alert to both the potentials and the limitations of this cultural bestowal. Along these same lines, he suggests a revision of our theory of a separate self.

*In moments of self-forgetful orgasm of self and other, just as in the great cultural achievements of humans we are allowed to give up the experience of separateness—one might say the delusion of separateness. Adult autonomy has more to do with the capacity to depend on and interact with others than it does to function independently, (p. 101)*

Naturally, as a reader, I am happy to find ideas and examples in which I feel I can immediately share. There were many of these in Gargiulo's essays. Frequently, though I found myself wanting him to acknowledge Jung, who was a pioneer thinker on many of the topics Gargiulo is writing about, especially the work of Mister Eckhart. It is a shame that even those psychoanalysis who are interested in spirituality fail to read Jung. Because I write and speak about so many of the same ideas that have preoccupied Gargiulo, I found it fascinating that my roots (beyond psychoanalysis) in feminism and Buddhism are quite different from his in Western

philosophy and Christian mysticism. It is always delightful to see how we can arrive at the same places by taking different paths—or almost the same places, anyway.

I would recommend this collection of essays to analysts, students of religious studies who are interested in psychoanalysis, and anyone else who wants to read in depth about the conversation between making sense of ourselves and keeping ourselves open to mystery. The only criticism I have is that some of the chapters have many redundancies and could have used much better editing. Occasionally, essays are burdened with a wordiness that clouds their wisdom. Again, it would have been the job of a good editor to help with this.

Finally, I especially recommend this book to psychoanalysis who find themselves musing about the following questions: *Did I go into this profession to free myself or to help others? Is there a difference?* (p. 69).

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