

*Soul on the Couch: Spirituality, Religion, and Morality in Contemporary Psychoanalysis.*  
C. Spezzano and G. Gargiulo, editors. Hillsdale, N.J: The Analytic Press, 1997.

This collection of nine essays carefully selected by Spezzano and Gargiulo is intended for a readership already immersed in psychoanalytic thinking and conversant with contemporary religious expression, particularly Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity. At once challenging and immensely rewarding reading, it is not for those who want a cozy, warm feeling of "spiritual unity." Each essay invites thoughtful, critical reflection.

For chaplains, pastoral counselors, and other religious health care providers, the role of representing religious tradition has lately given way to representing a spiritual presence ready and willing to search for hope, meaning, purpose, and community. Religious traditions have taken a secondary place in favor of functional theologizing. The question, "How can my faith help me in this suffering?" is understood as far more important than a knowledge of ritual forms. An operating premise offered is that suffering persons are less comforted by religious doctrinal traditions than by thoughtful caring characterized by mutual meaning-seeking within the current cultural context. Yet when faith traditions deeply search themselves for the roots of hope, meaning, and community, they can form a surprising alliance with contemporary healers. The essays begin with the task of healing suffering from the point of view of various psychoanalytic traditions and search the roots of the faith traditions to form such alliances. The respect for the complexity of current cultural contexts is evident throughout and adds richness to the interface of psychoanalytic reflection with spiritual, religious, and moral issues raised.

It is not the purpose of this review to lift up any of the essays as exemplary; each one in its own way is a rich feast for thought. However, some commentary on two essays may serve as invitations to read further. The first essay, "Inner Mind/Outer Mind and the Quest for the I," by Gerald Gargiulo, sparkingly invites the reader to reconsider the Christian spiritual writings (Meister Eckhart, among others) alongside contemporary analysts, such as Winnicott and Jacoby. The result is a striking openness to the "interdependent relational self in the world," which moves both analysis and religion away from the radical individualism (often portrayed in both spirituality and psychoanalysis) which characterizes much popular self-help literature. This openness also points toward a recaptured sense of "creative immanence," which is one foundation for hope. Gargiulo challenges us to revalue our notions of the self and its propensity to seek meaning, purpose, and interpersonal relationships.

For readers seeking a challenging tour de force of contemporary Buddhist spirituality and analytic thought, Joseph Bobrow's essay "Coming to Life: The Creative Intercourse of Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism" offers a rich study experience. For those concerned with the difficult struggle to discover meaning and interpersonal connection, for those asking the perennial questions, "Who am I? Where am I going?" Bobrow reflects on the value of meditation practice in conjunction with analytic therapy. His search for common human rhythms ("letting go and coming forth," emptiness, koans) offers a life-giving connecting to contemporary therapy. Perhaps most encouraging is that both meditative work and analysis affirm the coexistence of gradual as well as immediate growth and change. At the same time, the complexity of the functions of each discipline receive careful delineation and commentary.

Unquestionably valuable, this collection of essays advances the current discussion of spirituality and psychoanalysis to a more responsible and useful level. It is not for the faint-hearted, yet the rewards are great.

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