# SOUL ON THE COUCH

## SPIRITUALITY RELIGION & MORALITY IN CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYSIS

edited by

**Charles Spezzano**
**Gerald J. Gargiulo**

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# SOUL ON THE COUCH

## Spirituality, Religion, and Morality in Contemporary Psychoanalysis

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# SOUL ON THE COUCH

## Spirituality, Religion, and Morality in Contemporary Psychoanalysis

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*edited by*

CHARLES SPEZZANO
GERALD J. GARGIULO

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*To my family*
*for infusing my life with spirit*
*C.S.*

*For*
*Julia*
*Paul and Connie*
*Robert*
*Nicole and Eric*
*for the gift of life they are*
*G.J.G.*

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# Foreword

## JAMES W. JONES

I've heard it said that writing a foreword to a collection of essays is a little like borrowing someone's watch so you can tell him the time. The chapters in this book stand on their own and do not require additional comment to make their content or value apparent to readers. One useful and nonredundant task, however, is to describe the contexts in which this book was created and in which it is likely to be read.

First, there is the cultural context of the contemporary dialogue of psychoanalysis and spirituality. Here we find ambiguity. On one hand, we have experienced an obvious secularization of our culture at the institutional level. On the other hand, there has been perhaps a slight increase in the number of people who report that they believe in God or some spiritual force, who pray or engage in some spiritual practice, who are willing to report a religious or mystical experience. The renewed interest on the part of clinicians in religious and spiritual issues does not take place in a cultural vacuum but is part of a larger cultural movement.

One context, then, in which this discussion of morality, spirituality, and psychoanalysis takes place is the ambiguous relationship between religion and modern American culture; certain public and institutional structures have been weakening for decades. Beneath this surface, however, there is a continuing, perhaps increasing, kaleidoscope of spiritual vitality of which the growing interest in religion on the part of psychotherapists and psychoanalysts is both an example and a carrier.

To help explain this spiritual vitality, I would like to map onto these sociological data about growing spread of religious interest and experimentation, data about the relationship among religion, well-being, and emotional and physical health. Such psychological research into the function of religion in health and sickness is the second context to which I want to direct our attention. The mental and physical benefits of having a sense of meaning and purpose in one's life have been widely documented. As a purveyor of meaning, purpose, and coherence, religion has a direct and documentably positive effect on mental and physical health even when one controls for such factors as health status, economic class, and social support.

Such metaphysical constructs as hope and meaning and purpose, whether religious or not, turn out, therefore, to be critical for mental and physical health and for psychological resilience and coping. It is not surprising, then, that even when confidence in institutional religion wanes, the drive for meaning and purpose and value does not disappear. And psychoanalysts and psychotherapists who become interested in religious issues are not just living out some idiosyncratic fantasy or even just following a cultural fad but are, rather, recovering a major, perhaps necessary, source of human wholeness.

Third, the twentieth century has witnessed a transformation in our epistemological models that has profound implications both for psychoanalysis and for the relationship between religion and science. A careful analysis of the actual conduct of science reveals that our popular theories about the rationality of science are misleading. Instead of the usual empiricist model of reason as a set of universal rules, scientific rationality (and by extension reason in general) involves what Richard Bernstein (1983) calls "imagination, interpretation, the weighing of alternatives, and application of criteria that are essentially open" (p. 56). A more contemporary and nuanced view of science challenges any strict dichotomy between natural science and all other fields, including psychoanalysis and religion.

The twentieth century's recognition of the contextual, mediated, and metaphoric nature of human understanding sensitizes us to the limits inherent in any discipline. Empirical science is only one lens through which reality is to be viewed. Science does not claim that science is the only way to see the world. Indispensably useful in some contexts, empiricism is impotent in others.

If we want to understand why a billiard ball goes into the corner pocket, there's nothing like Newtonian mechanics. If we want to understand why a child touches a hot stove only once, there's nothing like conditioning theories. But if we want to address the questions of meaning and value and purpose, so essential for human well-being, experimental method will be of little use. If we want to know why Einstein was attracted to mathematical physics, a good psychobiographical account will surely help us. If we want to know if the theory of general relativity is complete, an account of Einstein's childhood will be pretty irrelevant. Likewise, if we want to know why Martin Luther's or Krishnamurti's religious experiences took the forms they did, psychohistorical accounts like those provided by Erikson or Kakar are very useful. But if we want to know if there is a purpose in life or if forgiveness triumphs over death, the psychoanalysis of religious experience is no substitute for religious experience.

To argue, as Freud did, that religion is inherently irrational is to presuppose a unitary definition of rationality which cannot be supported even from within the empirical sciences. The rationality needed to solve a problem in mechanics is rather different from that employed in constructing multidimensional geometries, and is different still from the skills needed to interpret the results of an experiment in high energy physics. As Stephen Toulmin, one of the most vigorous philosophers of science in the twentieth century, wrote in 1964:

> It is only if we suppose that religious arguments pretend to . . . [compete] with science on its own ground that we can be justified in attempting to apply to them the logical criteria appropriate for scientific explanations; and only if we do this that we have any grounds for concluding that all utterances about the nature of God are nonsensical or that religion is an illusion. Provided that we remember that religion has other functions than that of competing with science and ethics on their own grounds, we shall understand that to reject all religious arguments for this reason is to make a serious logical blunder [p. 212].

Another context in which a contemporary analyst's interest in religion takes place is, then, in a transformed understanding of the place and nature of empirical science. Obviously there are many from both sides who have a stake in the conflict between religion and science. Freud focused only on the most infantile aspects of religion which he then easily rejected in the name of science and progress. But both religion and rationality are more complex and multidimensional than Freud and other early analysts allowed for.

The discussion between religion and psychoanalysis involves, therefore, multiple contexts: The cultural context of spiritual discovery and vitality in the midst of institutional decay; the empirical demonstration of the importance of religious constructs like meaning and purpose and value for mental and physical well-being in the midst of a culture whose official ideology denies their import; and a transformation in our understanding of science that brings with it an increased sensitivity to the limits of any single frame of reference. In these contexts, an interest on the part of psychoanalysts, both the writers of these essays and their readers, in religious and spiritual issues makes sense and contains the possibility of a further contribution to the welfare of our patients and a deepening and broadening of the psychoanalytic understanding of human nature and its potentials and possibilities.

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# Introduction

GERALD J. GARGIULO

CHARLES SPEZZANO

This is a book about mystery, awe, and meaning. What God and the unconscious have in common is their paradoxical combining of meaning and unknowability. The unconscious is that which creates meaning in the unfolding event we call a human life. God is that which gives meaning to the unfolding event we call human history.

As prime meaning-givers, God and the unconscious have been natural competitors for first place in our thinking and talking about ourselves. Ever since Freud put religion on the couch in "The Future of an Illusion," there has been an uneasy peace, with occasional skirmishes, between these two great disciplines of subjectivity. Freud, in his bold manner, found projection, fear, and denial to be the wellspring of religion's domination over man. So convinced was he of having uncovered its power that he was unable to look beyond religion's possible abuses to its potential role in human subjectivity.

Freud gave analysts a way to ignore the conflict with God by treating the human quest for meaning as neurotic and by emphasizing (although not exclusively) the unconscious as container of knowable repressed ideas. As psychoanalysis evolved, one or another aspect of unconscious mental content or activity was treated as that which makes me who I am. From instincts and fantasies to ego defenses and object-relational representations, analysts have, by and large, understood our ultimate meanings as, at least in principle, knowable enough to obviate any interest in an extrapersonal source of meaning. This was, arguably, the psychoanalytic equivalent of those 20th-century movements in philosophy to construct a self-contained ethics that could refer to nothing but its own logic or lack of it for its truth value.

In much the same way that psychoanalysis could treat ideas about God, religion, spirituality, or morality that appeared anywhere in human consciousness as defenses against anxiety or as unconsciously created narratives of childhood experiences, those giving primacy to the soul over the unconscious could treat psychoanalysis as mechanistic and reductionistic. With the work of Frazer's *Golden Bough* and the numerous and profound works of Mircea Eliade, as well as of Joseph Campbell, the myth-meaning function of religious doctrine became clarified; and religion's creedal formulas could be seen in a broader context than blind denial of death and existential limitations. That is, their functions as organizing experiences necessary to negotiate the inevitably turbulent experiences of life came into focus. As this awareness grew, psychoanalysis itself became, not so much the neutral, rational science of the mind, but rather an equal contender in the field of organizing models of *personal* meaning.

"Religion," Alfred North Whitehead (1926) wrote, "is what the individual does with his own solitariness" (p. 16)—likewise for psychoanalysis. One presents a myth from without, the other from within: myth understood as an organizing model to create order out of the chaotic givenness of human existence. But to speak of religion, of dogma, even of ritual, is only half the story. What Freud did not address was the whole area of spirituality. That is, what is spirituality? Is it tied to creedal beliefs? Is it essential to understanding human existence? Or is it tangential? Such perennial questions need no final answers; they are neither possible nor desirable.

This book was conceived as an opportunity to explore the possibility that discourses about the soul and the discourses of the couch could inform, and not simply argue with or ignore one another. The essays we have brought together address such questions in ways that avoid the respective dangers, we hope, of either reductionism or of salvation—settling instead for reflective inquiry.

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# Inner Mind/Outer Mind and the Quest for the "I"

## *Spirituality Revisited*

GERALD J. GARGIULO

In this essay I suggest that some of the fundamental concerns of traditional Western spirituality can be understood as addressing not only the search for the "hidden God," but the need to experience, as well as to delimit, the autonomous "I." Psychoanalysis, it can be argued, stands in the tradition of Western spirituality in its inquiry into personal meaning and in its efforts to achieve reconciliation.[1] Although analysis does not hold the promise of salvation in a distant heaven, it does offer a more present, if less comprehensive, form of salvation, one that psychoanalysts have been slow to talk about since it entails a redefinition of mind, culture, and the notion of the "I."

Long before psychoanalysis spoke of the need for an object, or of object constancy, Meister Eckhart, the 13th- and 14th-century theologian mystic, spoke of internality as externality (Fox, 1980, p. 2), meaning that individuals are not separate monads, figuratively speaking, but are interconnected by our very nature to all that is. His idea was that to know oneself is to know the world, and to know the world is to know oneself. Speaking in the Christian religious symbols of his day, Eckhart went on to indicate that the self was destined to incarnate God. He taught that the Christian belief of God's incarnation in Jesus was not meant as a singular event to be worshipped, but rather as an exemplar event to learn from—an educational event, so to speak. What this "learning" might mean will be the subject of this chapter. Eckhart's theology, in the tradition of what is categorized as negative theology, was one of a radical immanence; that is, he eschewed a God over against man, a God who is spoken of as utterly transcendent. He was impatient with any "dogmatic" that attempted to capture the "holy" awe of life within human language. Thus he could write, in the 13th century, "God, rid me of God" (Fox, 1980, p. 217). That there is a bridge between Eckhart's theology and Buddhist thought is, as Suzuki (1957, p. 221) has observed, rather clear. Today, reflecting Western categories, we might speak of the fact that all life is to be valued, a manifestation, in Alfred North Whitehead's thought (in Jordan, 1968), of an overriding creative life principle. Further, to speak of our individual capacity to be alive, to be the breath of life, as it were, is to speak of man's soul. And, as Bruno Bettelheim (1983) has reminded us, Freud himself had no difficulty in speaking of man's soul.

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[1] To understand the past (an essential task of psychoanalysis) is ultimately to forgive the past; more specifically, in Erik Erikson's (1964) thoughts, maturation is evidenced by a capacity to will the inevitable that has happened to us.

Actually, psychoanalysis, in its commitment to resolving projection(s) and in its desire to help people live in the present, free of the troubling past and the elusive future, would have little difficulty in embracing many of Eckhart's thoughts. Admittedly his optimism about finding the "living God" within us and the world would have to be read on more than a linear, fundamentalist level. Historically, following the work of the 20th-century theologian and scriptural scholar Rudolph Bultmann (1971), we would have to "demythologize" this concept in order, paradoxically, to find a truer (i.e., latent) meaning. But this is not as foreign as it might at first appear, since any translator is, ultimately, a demythologizer, and psychoanalysts are translators—midwives of meaning. It is also in this sense that I spoke of them as heirs to Western spiritual traditions. That is, at their best they are Virgilian guides to wandering Dantes, ferreting out what is true from what is no longer true, what is real from what is no longer real, and what is realizable from what is no longer so. They are physicians, not of the body, but of culture and mind, of word and symbol. Although such psychoanalytic interpretative readings of man's meanings and values are clearly culture-bound and intellect-limited, they reflect both scientific and spiritual pursuits. They are scientific in limiting the range of inquiry, with an openness to alternate viewpoints and formulations; they are spiritual in the desire to know the truth of a given life beyond the recurrent distortions and reactions that cloud such knowing.

In order to explore what Eckhart's thoughts entail when he speaks of imitating God rather than worshipping him, we have to understand the "problem" of the autonomous "I." That is, we have to rethink some of our basic concepts about the psyche.

One such reconceptualization entails broadening our understanding of the concept of mind. In Winnicott's (1949) seminal article on mind he writes *"I do not think that mind really exists as an entity"* (p. 243) but that it is *no more than a special case of the functioning of psyche-soma* (p. 244). While he describes in this essay how mind can be pathologically split off, his generic thoughts about mind can, I believe, be applied to his notions of culture and transitional space. And in doing so we are able to speak, I believe, of mind as a special function of psyche/soma/culture. For example, when we speak of culture we mean, among other information conduits, the experience of language. Language which, paradoxically, both forms us and which we, collectively, create. Winnicott provides the foundation for our conceptualizing the cultural dimensions of mind when he elaborates on the transitional space of childhood as the seedbed of culture. In writing of the child's developmental stages of the me-not me experiences, with the early mother-other-environment, Winnicott grounds man's capacity to play with, and therefore to both find and create, the world. Such is the birthplace of culture. Mind, then, is clearly an achievement, it is not a given; consciousness is a prerequisite for the experience of mind, but it is not simply coequal. Consequently, we can say that to speak of culture is to speak of mind, and to speak of culture is necessarily to speak of a gestalt; there is no culture without different people, and implicit in that, no notion of self except within a particular social context. If mind comes to be in the works of our hands, so also does our sense of self. In our culture, our "I" experience reflects a collective presumption.

Just as Winnicott could write, now rather obviously, that there is no such thing as a baby (without a mothering environment), so we can say that the self does not exist in itself. The "I" is a cultural-imaginative construct. It is a way in which our culture attempts to organize experience into meaningful patterns. Lewis Thomas (1974), struggling with similar thoughts, uses the image of looking down on a giant ant hill as an analogue of human cultural activity. The self, seen from enough distance, is understandable more as a process within a context than as autonomously individuated. Such a perspective is not easily accepted, particularly in Western political and social experience, named as we are as separate "I's." What our culture conveys and what psychoanalysis has augmented is that self-experience and interiority are synonymous. Thus, interiority being experienced as radically distinctive, it is no wonder that Western culture gave birth to Descartes—no wonder that "I think therefore I am." We have been taught to experience ourselves more as individual, separate human beings than as structurally interrelated and interdependent members of humanity. Obviously, I am arguing for a more relational, structurally interdependent understanding of the "I" self than has been operative in traditional psychoanalytic drive theory, or for that matter, in political economic theory.

One of the factors that complicates our rethinking the experience of "I" and of "mind" is the fact that psychoanalysis, particularly in America, has spoken of the integration and the resolution of neurotic conflicts in terms of achieving an adequate level of "separation-individuation." With few exceptions, most notably in the philosophical work *The Self in Transformation* by Herbert Fingarette (1963), as well as *Love's Body* by

Norman O. Brown (1966), psychoanalytic theory has unreflectedly presumed that an "individuated" autonomous "I" was not merely an intellectual possibility but a therapeutic ideal. Psychoanalytic clinical practice followed this belief, not only in its everyday therapeutic goals, but most notably in accenting, and consequently aggravating, the "postulated" difference(s) between patient and analyst. Had we listened more, perhaps, to Sandor Ferenczi (Dupont, 1988), when he spoke of the actual as well as the therapeutically necessary interdependence of analyst and patient, we might have taken a different route.

Today those demarcations are lessened, and with good reasons. For if the goal of psychoanalysis is to be able to love and to work, we are immediately in the arena of "the other." Despite all of Freud's mapping of the inner terrain, his model(s) of mental agencies, his postulating an arcane unconscious and the ego's hidden defenses, when he speaks of the goal of analysis he is relational and communal. In the case of "love," the other is experienced as more desired than the self, as its fulfillment. Actually, were one not capable of loving, neither the world nor oneself would have emotional reality. In such a scenario, one would merely exist, one would not be alive. This is certainly the thrust of Winnicott's (1960) thought when he observes that therapy can go on for many years under the false assumption that the patient is alive. In the stability of love, the individual has an experience that Winnicott characterizes as "an-ongoing-in-being"—an essential prerequisite for being alive. "Work," for its part, enables us to interact with the environmental world on many levels. Work supplies an essential "process" identity because it mediates a community's recognition of personal competence. Love and work are made possible only in community. The overemphasis on intrapsychic phenomena, as if there is a separate self, independent of the self's self-revelation, has been misleading and dangerous in its consequences, as has the exaggerated notion of personal autonomy. And this is true without our discussing how we are culturally molded, from our very beginnings, by language—the exact opposite of any solipsistic notion of individuality.

Psychoanalysts name and give voice to the meanings of a self, their own and their patients', and in doing so, they situate an individual within a particular cultural framework. The analytic place mirrors the family, just as the family mirrors society, in its defining functions for the individual. Twentieth-century philosophy has helped us to understand that language forms consciousness, just as consciousness forms language. We are formed by the language that is spoken to us—a language that we had no power in creating. We repeatedly have to be called by a name; we repeatedly have to be told we are an "I" for us to be able to organize our experience in these terms. And how we are called by and within our culture commits us to what we are allowed to hear about ourselves and about our world. Nor do we have a choice. This process is neither good nor bad—it is simply the way we pass on our cultural patterning. But a society, in all its various components, does have an obligation to examine the contact lenses, as it were, that it gives its members so that their vision may become more expansive, not less so. The fact that our particular cultural conditioning makes individuals prone to be experienced as if they are individual products, that is, as essentially unrelated to each other, should not be lost sight of, particularly since such consequences serve a capitalistic economic system rather well. (In most spiritual traditions, by way of contrast, a life of poverty is not a repudiation of work or a masochistic disdain of matter, but a desire not to be stuck in "thing" consciousness.)

Psychoanalysis looks for the hidden in the obvious, for an alternate meaning behind the manifest meaning. From such a perspective, one would have expected psychoanalysis to be a radical critique, following Fenichel and some of the early analysts, of society's identifying processes. Why this did not occur has been discussed by Russell Jacoby (1983) in *The Repression of Psychoanalysis* and need not detain us here; but the question of whether psychoanalysis should address the cultural product of the "I" should concern us, even in a preliminary way.

One of the difficulties in the task of correcting the distortions of the overemphasis on the autonomous "I" is related to Freud's theoretical conceptualizations of the early vicissitudes of narcissism. As a point of reference and reflection, Freud speaks of the individual child as possessing both primary and secondary narcissism. Primary narcissism, as a postulate for the life force, holding together and fostering growth, is understandable. Secondary narcissism, as the capacity of a young infant to withdraw "libido" from the other and invest it in the self, is more than misleading. It is misleading because there is no "self" except in context of another. Freud assumes what he is trying to prove, namely that the self is "self-contained," as if there is a separate operational "I" directing the flow of libidinal investment(s). But libidinal investments are always a context experience, that is, child-mothering-environment. The child can *imaginatively pretend* that he/she has withdrawn interest from the world, but this results in what Winnicott refers to as "split off intellect," that is, mind thought of as located in a thing we call the brain. Without an adequate parental environment supporting the young infant, he or she starts on the road of splitting from that environment with the concurrent *illusion* of being a separate entity—an "I" unto him/herself.

It is at this important point of discussion that Winnicott's and many of the English object-relational theorists' observations are particularly applicable. The mothering person is defined by his/her caring for the child's developing physical needs and concurrent language-social-emotional needs. And if that individual mix-up of mutual needs and services goes well enough, both the caretaker and cared-for have an experience of being alive in their bodies, without experiencing themselves as locked in their heads. Within a positive environmental framework, the cultural transmission of the self as an "I" can be experienced as primarily relational and interdependent, not as separate and autonomous. One of the indications that a relational and interdependent self is present is a person's capacity to experience cross-identification—that ability to put ourselves in another's shoes. Is such a capacity what Winnicott (1963) has in mind when he reflects that were we able to raise children with good enough environmental provision, there would be no need to teach them morality—they would have a natural ethics? We are, to repeat, only an "I" in context. Without this context, our drives cease to be human drives and become merely physical sensations. To love and to work, as Freud knew, means infinitely more than negotiation of physical sensations. In this sense, we can note that instincts do not have vicissitudes, people do.

Another difficulty in the path of analysts fully appreciating the import of an interdependent and totally relational "I" is the traditional model of the unconscious. With Freud's introduction of the structural model, the unconscious went, so to speak, from being a noun to being an adjective; it was, however, still thought of as "located" in a person—individually. Although this is an exceptionally complex topic, I will offer a few thoughts in line with the general thesis of this essay. We can postulate, as has been done by many thinkers outside the mainstream of analytic theory, that *the unconscious* is only created, and therefore revealed, by and through interpretations. It has no existence in itself and should not be spoken of as if it has. It is essentially an interpretative experience and not an ontological one. Furthermore, inasmuch as mind is a communal experience, none of its complexity can be split off from that communality. Basically, meaning is as culture-bound as is the autonomous "I." Both are imaginative cultural constructs. The reading of any text, and here I include both dreams and symptoms, depends on the cultural framework of the reader. An analyst's interpretative reading of an unconscious component is primarily one among many possible interpretations. Actually analyst, patient, and culture join together to create the "mind" out of which come particular interpretations. Human thoughts and actions are complex because they are capable of alternate meanings; put differently, the human is an animal capable of generating and understanding metaphor(s). Because we can think metaphorically, interpretations are potentially endless.

Now we can return to Eckhart's thought that internality is externality, and that spirituality is not necessarily searching for a God we cannot know, but can be equally a capacity to find, unobtrusively in the present, whatever is holy in life. Although Eckhart would postulate a theistic God as *the* source of that which is holy, such is not necessary in order to understand a spiritual quest. Human life, Winnicott reminds us, entails more than the resolution of neurotic conflict; it is the capacity to find life interesting and worthwhile by experiencing ourselves as connected with the world, not isolated in our own thinking, creative in our interactions, not simply reactive to our environment. Consequently, "internality as externality" means, I believe, that the "I" is better understood as a (necessary?) individuated referent point within communal experience. Communal (cultural) experiences and individual experiences are inextricably related, so much so that *mind* does not exist as a locatable thing, primarily because it is a process that occurs between people, between self and other—as other and as world. Such an approach does no violence to our *personal* psyche-soma experiences of memory and imagination. It does help us understand, however, that mind resides in all the cultural bridges we have built: language, art, philosophy, religion, and psychoanalysis, to name a few. *Meaning*, which is integral to our appreciation of mind, is, as Marcia Cavell (1988) has noted, inextricably communal. To all appearances the Earth is stable, just as to all appearances we are autonomous "I's." Both are false. We walk on bridges; our very coming to be is a bridge experience. And so when Winnicott says that the first thing a patient should be able to do is play, he is talking about getting someone off an illusory island and on to a bridge, getting someone out of the house of mirrors of the "anxious ego" (mind and "I" as *pathological isolates*) and into the marketplace of life.

Fingarette (1963), as mentioned above, made analysts aware that their task is not so much the resolution of neurotic conflict in itself as it is the overcoming of the anxious ego, which then makes possible a sensible living in the *now* of time and the *here* of place. To experience our interdependence, familial and cultural, is not only realistic, it resolves the illusion that one has an "I" that is definable *in itself*. Within such a framework, psychoanalysis re-presents a spiritual tradition that has among its operational goals an individual's capacity for communal civility (i.e., cross-identification) rather than schizoid isolation; unencumbered personal presence rather than neurotic repetition; love that sees the other as other, not as mirror or mother; and, finally, work that is done competently but not necessarily self-consciously. Cross-identification does not entail obliterating the differences of the *here* and *now* of one's existence. Rather it develops as one is able to recognize the relativity of the autonomous "I"; such recognition fosters a willingness to entertain differences in time, place, and cultural identity. To recognize our commonality with others, by resolving the narcissism(s) of the anxious ego, is, as we have mentioned, a hoped-for outcome of the analytic process. Desire, which is integral to our understanding of the "I," can be understood, as I have noted elsewhere (Gargiulo, 1989), as transference desire (self-preoccupation) or relationship desire. I can barely touch on this enormously complex topic, except to note that psychoanalysis in naming desire, both manifest and latent, provides for its partial integration. *Partial* because desire, similar to the "I," is not a solitary experience; it is created and augmented by the culture, familial and social, in which one lives. T. S. Eliot (1943), in "Little Gidding," spoke to such issues:

> This is the use of memory:
> For liberation—not less of love but expanding
> Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
> From the future as well as the past.

Psychoanalysis offers the possibility for a spirituality that is humanly possible rather than religiously necessary. It offers a liberation, as Eliot alludes, that is more an ongoing task than an accomplishment. A liberation that, by experiencing the interconnection of self and other, of past, present, and of necessity future, provides the possibility for the nonconflictual *now*. Is that the (Western) experience of *I am who am*? Is that the experience of the holy?

Augustine (1943), long before Freud, advocated that we should "love, and what you will—do." That is, find yourself as a self, with, through, and in others—not in yourself. In Eckhart's thought, to know the self is to know the other. This has nothing to do with masochistic functioning, which is simply another manifestation of getting caught in the anxious ego.

That psychoanalysis reminds human beings of the normative role of love is particularly well stated in Jonathan Lear's *Love and Its Place in Nature*. As we are listened to, we know that we have a voice; as we are cared for, we know that we can love the world. Thus we can see the profundity of Winnicott's simple prayer to be "alive when I die"—a prayer that life not *un-soul* him. In view of Winnicott's wish, we can also ask, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?" Such a biblical question is one with which most psychoanalysts, heirs as they are to an old tradition, could agree.

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## — 2 —

# Self-Reparation in Religious Experience and Creativity

KEVIN FAUTEUX

In this essay I examine the psychological regression that takes place in religious experience. Some readers will take offense at the suggestion that religious experience is a return to primitive psychological processes. Others will say it is obvious. Their differing views can be traced back in this century to the debate between the French philosopher Romain Rolland and Sigmund Freud. Rolland agreed with Freud that religion is an expression of childish needs, but he challenged Freud to consider "oceanic" experiences, in which a person felt selflessly united with God or Nirvana, yet this did not "in any way harm critical faculties" (quoted in Fisher, 1976, p. 21). Freud responded that a dissolution of ego boundaries and merger with another *can* be reparative, as in therapeutic transference, but that oceanic experience—which induces "feelings of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole"—is a regressive flight from reality and pathological return to maternal unity (Freud, 1930, p. 39).

A reader of the following analysis of religious experience who expects allegiance either to Freud or to Rolland will be disappointed. Instead of taking sides, I suggest that religious experience is neither an unconscious undertow that drags people deeper into its grasp, nor an idealized state free from the relentless pull of underlying needs. The experience *is* regressive, as discussed in the first section, when Nirvana and communion with God are analyzed as a loss of ego boundaries and a restoration of maternal unity. But as examined in the second section, the dismantling of self and return to unconscious processes that takes place in religious experience can be as reparative as the regression that takes place in experiences such as creativity and therapy. A final section offers a new stage of religious experience, comparable to that of elaboration in creativity (i.e., the expression of that which inspires), in order to expand the definition of a healthy religious experience to include acting on that which was experienced.