

FROM ILLUSION TO SYNERGY?

PSYCHOANALYSIS, SPIRITUALITY, AND RELIGION IN DIALOGUE

A Roundtable Discussion with:

Tsvi Blanchard, Marie Hoffman, Therese Ragen, Jeremy Safran, and Dennis Shulman.

Moderated by: *Amanda Hirsch Geffner and Irwin Kula*

With Discussions by: *Henry Grayson, Amber Haqu,e and Elliot L. Jurist*

The topic of the place of spirituality/religion within, or in relation to, psychoanalysis and vice versa is clearly fertile ground for the stirring up of diverse, intense, and deeply held opinions. Many clinicians dare not touch it. Similar to politics, it raises the potential for volatility and polarization, as is often experienced in exchanges with family and friends, observable in societal controversies around secularism versus religious belief, and both nationally and internationally, in violence and wars waged in the name of faith or the lack thereof. It seems that in embarking upon such conversations, we open the door to vast possibilities both for soaring and of plunging. Given this awareness, what kind of place do we make for this dimension in our work, or don't we? And what happens when the analytic dyad travels down this road?

In a collaborative effort with the faculty of CLAL¹, *Perspectives* (Fall/Winter 2006), invited an interdisciplinary, interfaith, panel -- all psychoanalytically-trained professionals, who

¹ Founded in 1974,-The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership (CLAL) is a leadership-training institute, think tank, and resource center. A leader in pluralism, CLAL offers innovative programs and tools to explore the future of American Jewish life and encourage civic and spiritual participation. Its diverse faculty provides cutting-edge techniques that speak to contemporary challenges. Bringing Jewish wisdom to a broad audience, CLAL helps people on their own internal journeys, while building spiritually rich and engaged communities involved in the intellectual and ethical questions of the wider world.

often visit, or perhaps even dwell within the overlapping borders of these conceptual lands -- to mutually reflect upon a series of questions.

Out of this open-spirited exchange, the following themes emerged and were collaboratively explored: “Psycho-Spiritual Self-Definitions,” “The Nature of Things,” “Good and Evil and Analysis,” “Whence Compassion?” “Exiled Voices,” “In Defense of Freud,” “Where One Leaves off and the Other Begins,” “Where’s the Dissonance?” “The Question of Suicide,” “Going Global: The Spiritual and the Socio-Political.” From here, the dialogue was taken up by the significantly divergent vantage points of three esteemed discussants (providing respectively Muslim, atheist/agnostic, and spiritually-integrative perspectives) to which the original panelists then briefly responded. We offer this printed dialogue as an opening and as an invitation to broaden and continue the discussion.