

UNDERSTANDING RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN CLINICAL PRACTICE



MARGARET CLARK

THE SOCIETY OF ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY
MONOGRAPH SERIES



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AND SPIRITUALITY IN
CLINICAL PRACTICE



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Margaret Clark trained as a psychodynamic counsellor and a psychoanalytic psychotherapist at WPF Therapy before she trained as a Jungian analyst at the Society of Analytical Psychology in London. She has been a training therapist for the Foundation for Psychotherapy and Counselling (WPF), a training analyst and supervisor for the British Association of Psychotherapists and a training analyst of the SAP. Her previous book in this series was published in 2006: *Understanding the Self–Ego Relationship in Clinical Practice: Towards Individuation*.



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PREFACE TO THE SERIES

This series of clinical practice monographs is being produced primarily for the benefit of trainees on psychotherapy and psychodynamic counselling courses. They are produced with the hope that they may help students a little with the psychodynamic “Tower of Babel” encountered as they embark on training.

It can be a time-consuming task for students to access all the pertinent books and papers for any one clinical subject. These single-issue monographs have been kept relatively brief and, although not comprehensive, aim to bring together some of the major theorists and their ideas in a comprehensible way, including references to significant and interesting texts.

Much of the literature provided for students of psychotherapy has been generated from four- or five-times weekly analytic work, which can be confusing for students whose courses are structured on the basis of less frequent sessions. The authors of these monographs have aimed to hold this difference in mind by offering clinical examples that are not based on intensive work. A decision was taken to maintain the terms “therapist” and “patient” throughout.

When a training is “eclectic”, that is, offering several different psychodynamic perspectives, a particular difficulty can arise with the

integration, or, rather, *non*-integration, of psychoanalytic and Jungian analytic ideas. The teaching on such trainings is often presented in blocks: a term devoted to “Freud”, another to “Jung”, “Klein”, and so on. It is frequently the students who are left with the job of trying to see where the ideas do and do not fit together, and this can be a daunting, even depressing, experience.

SAP analysts are in a better position than most to offer some help here, because its members have been working on this kind of integration since the organization was founded in 1946. Although retaining a strong relationship with “Classical” Jungian scholarship, SAP members have evolved equally strong links with psychoanalysis. Those readers who are unfamiliar with Jungian terms may wish to consult the *Critical Dictionary of Jungian Analysis* (Samuels, Shorter, & Plaut, 1986), while those unfamiliar with psychoanalytic terms may turn to *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988).

The authors are Jungian analysts who have trained at the Society of Analytical Psychology, with extensive experience of teaching both theory and practice. We are indebted to our patients. Where a patient’s material is recognizable, their permission to publish has been given. In other cases, we have amalgamated and disguised clinical material to preserve anonymity. We have also borrowed gratefully from the work of our supervisees in many settings.

We thank Karnac Books for their continued support and patience in bringing the series to publication. I want to end by thanking my colleagues within the SAP for their work so far, and for their work to come.

Hazel Robinson
Series Editor

Introduction

Out of the myriad definitions of spirituality and religion, this book uses the following: these definitions are expanded later in the Introduction.

It takes a wide definition of *spirituality* to include our longing to find meaning and significance in our daily lives, to grasp a purpose beyond the physical for being alive at all. This longing is “as real as hunger and the fear of death” (Jung, 1928, par. 403). Along with the physical, the emotional, and the intellectual/rational, it is the fourth major mode by which we respond to our environment and to the facts of our existence. Our need for spiritual satisfaction is just as urgent as our need for physical, emotional, and intellectual satisfaction. Spirituality is not necessarily about “uplifting” or “good” experiences; the spiritual can also be demonic, terrifying and destructive. It can include the denial of any purpose or significance in our being alive. Spiritual experience is like emotional experience: it is amoral. Only the use that the whole personality makes of it renders it morally good or bad.

It is necessary to distinguish spirituality from its frequent associations with God and with religion. *Religion* is understood here as a particular formulation of a spiritual quest which includes a focus on “God”, and the many different religions, sects, and cults reveal