



Object Relations Theory and Religion: Clinical Applications

Mark G Finn, John Gartner

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Until now, little attention has been paid to the application of contemporary psychoanalytic theory to religious experiences. In this edited collection, the contributors provide examples that illustrate both theoretical insights and clinical techniques that are relevant to clinicians who face religious issues in psychotherapy. This work follows in the footsteps of Ana-Maria Rizzuto who took the bold step of employing object relations theory to the clinical study of an individual's religious representations and argued that religious representations profoundly reveal a person's relational world. Dr. Rizzuto provides a detailed afterword for this volume.

While several of the authors maintain religious commitments which vary from Christian to Jewish to Buddhist, a critique of the recruitment of object relations theory in the service of religious apologetics is also included. The importance of a religious aspect to psychoanalysis becomes evident when we consider whether an effective therapy with the religiously committed patient is possible without the clinician's willingness to accept that God and other religious experiences are real phenomena, exerting a unique impact upon the personality. Or when we ask if by thinking too concretely and too statically about images of God, the clinician who is also a believer errs by focusing on the theological adequacy or inadequacy of a given representation. This book will interest mainstream clinicians who are eager to pursue the psychology of religion, as well as the traditional pastoral counseling community.

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