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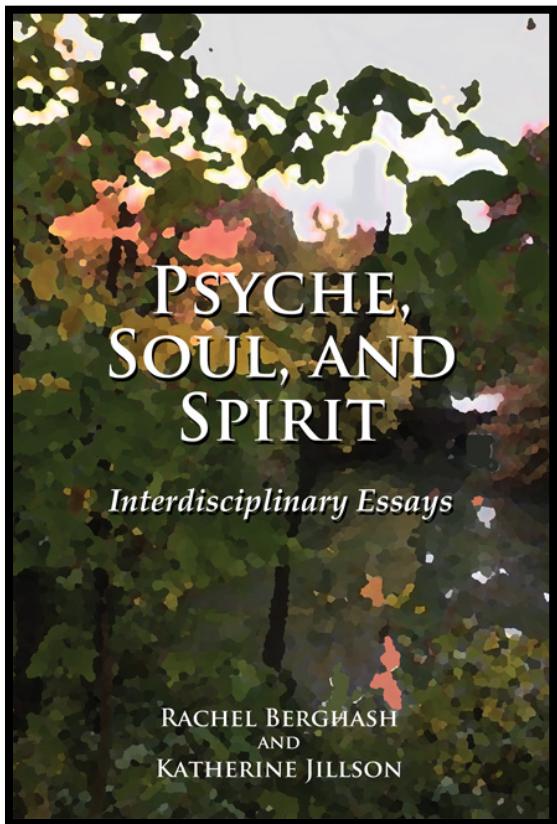
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New Title From Rachel Berghash and Katherine Jillson

Psyche, Soul, and Spirit

Interdisciplinary Essays



This book consists of ten interdisciplinary essays that include material from religion, spirituality, philosophy, psychology, and related poetry. The authors make use of source material of the great religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism, eliciting their spiritual dimension; philosophers such A. N Whitehead and George Santayana; psychoanalysts such as Preston G. Mclean, D. W. Winnicott, Melanie Klein, and Michael Eigen; and poets such as William Carlos Williams, Rilke, and Haiku poets.

These essays use a philosophical method of making distinctions to clarify key concepts. Religion and spirituality are distinguished in depth. The authors relate psychological, religious, and spiritual ideas and apply concepts to personal and social issues.

The book is unusual in that the approach is not only intellectual, but also is meant to be used in daily life. The notions gleaned from studies of religion, philosophy, and psychology can be applied to personal and social issues. The integration of the intellectual, religious, and spiritual life and life in general can be an antidote to the daily fragmented lives of people—professionals in religion, psychology, and philosophy as well as lay people.

Rachel Berghash has published a memoir, *Half the House: My Life In and Out of Jerusalem* Sunstone Press (2011). Her poetry and poetry translations have appeared in literary magazines. She has taught interdisciplinary interior life seminars in New York City, Long Island, and Jerusalem.

Katherine Jillson has published, with Dr. Preston McLean, two Survey Reports for American Management Associations. She has written educational materials and has taught interdisciplinary interior life seminars in New York City.

Psyche, Soul, and Spirit
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By Rachel Berghash and Katherine Jillson
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Interview with Rachel Berghash and Katherine Jillson

What is the origin of your interdisciplinary work?

We studied with Dr. Preston G. McLean, a psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and philosopher, who taught interdisciplinary interior life seminars combining religion, philosophy, psychology, and poetry, along with biographies of great personalities. These essays issue from the work with Dr. McLean and from the many years of our own teaching and study.

What would you say is the most important thread that runs through the essays?

One of the most important threads is the costliness of character and the costliness of ideas. We show it, for example, in St. Teresa's capacity to withstand attacks and in Milarepa's unceasing practice and persistent self-examination of demonic obstacles. We also show it in Socrates and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died for their ideas.

How is psychology related to religion in these essays?

The essay about the Buddhist Milarepa's struggle with demons was written from the point of view of psychology. We relate Milarepa conjuring up his guru for help to the psychological idea of calling on one's lost good object for support. We show that his achievement of realizing that the demons are in his mind is in concert with him owning his bad objects and then releasing them. In the essay "Being and the Self," we show that the psychoanalyst Winnicott and the Hindu sage Maharshi make the point that what is sought, either the true self or the Self, is already there inside the person. The Maharshi's teaching to repeat asking "Who am I," is similar to Winnicott's view—questioning the false self, enabling the true self to live.

What is an example of how you relate philosophy to religion and spirituality?

The philosopher Whitehead diverges from traditional dualistic religious thinking of good and evil. He strikingly articulates this dynamic in his theory that opposing ideas are vital means of evolution. Similarly, according to the poet Blake when love and hate and heaven and hell struggle with each other something new is created.

How do you relate poetry to spirituality?

In the view of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, the spirit, embodied by the saint and the artist alike, is tender and open and participates in the wretchedness of lives. The leper is a symbol for wretchedness. In Letters on Cezanne Rilke discusses the artist's life with respect to the self-overcoming exhibited in "lying-down-with-the-leper and sharing all one's warmth with him."

What sources did you use in writing these essays?

We used original source material throughout. For example, we used the autobiography of St. Teresa and the book of Jeremiah. For Zoroastrianism we consulted the hymns and litanies of the religion. We quoted from the Qur'an and Jewish sages when writing our essay about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Another example is our use of the songs of Milarepa, without which those essays would have been impoverished.

What do you expect readers to get out of your book?

We hope that readers will expand their understanding of their relationship to themselves and to the Other by becoming intimate with the ideas and examples of people in the book. We also hope that readers will appreciate and learn from religions not their own, and will recognize the value of integrating material from myriad disciplines. One reader has said that reading the essay "Exploring Unity and Distinction" brought him closer to the divine.

An Excerpt from *Psyche, Soul, and Spirit*

The soul has a religious dimension and a spiritual dimension; distinctions between these two are made by McLean. One's religion is what one believes and what one does with the purpose of securing and promoting results, home, future, repose, and rest. (A person's religion may or may not have the view and practice of a particular organized religion.) When the word religion is used in this broad sense, we can see religion in the doctor's or the homemaker's daily work. The religious doctor makes rounds in the hospital and keeps records of her or his patients. She or he relies on records and regular examinations of the patient for the purpose of curing the patient. The religious homemaker cleans the house, does the shopping and the cooking. He or she aims to nurture and to please the family. Both are bent on results. These activities involve being tied or bound to something (the Latin word for bind is the root word of religion). The homemaker may discover, however, that he or she is unconsciously interested in curing people; the doctor, in homemaking. The soul, insofar as its interest is religion, concerns itself with concepts of virtues and sins that promote goodness and eradicate or neutralize evil.

In contrast to the religious aspect of the soul, the spiritual aspect—the spirit—wanders and is at home wherever it is, reposes and rests in whatever it is contemplating, and is result free and future free. The spirit is complete; it does not possess, hold, or grab; it is open to love, embracing the alien, the unattractive, the "adulterous woman," the sinner, the sick, and the dying. The spirit transcends time; it is not concerned with temporal time, but with eternal time, which intervenes in temporal time; an example is the beauty expressed in music, dance, and art.

The spiritual self benefits the environment but without the motivation to do so, which is the motivation of the religious self. For example, the spiritual psychotherapist, when in a session with a patient, is detached from the desire that the patient make progress; he or she attends, listens, and speaks the patient's language. The spirit is not entangled with the world, and the world is hostile to the spirit. Santayana points out that the spirit submits to the limitations imposed by the world, but it does experience them as limitations. The territory of the spirit is an eternal world stirred by inwardness.

Jesus, though he came to save the world, would have continued with his mission as a fisher of men even if he had saved not one soul. Milarepa sometimes sang to people in order to convert them, but he often sang to himself songs of self-realization and renunciation alone in his cave, not being concerned with proving himself. It is interesting that the root of the word prove is probare, to test a thing for its goodness, to try, to approve, to make good, and acts of these great religious personalities came out of concern, and not to be proved or be approved by the world.

When Socrates is sentenced to death and his friends suggest that he flee Athens, he refuses on the grounds that he has no right to break the law—his "agreements and covenants" with the state. His adherence to the laws is spiritual; violating "the most sacred laws" would be for the sake of "the miserable desire of a little more life." Practicing justice overrides security and life itself. Socrates puts himself in the hands of the law, and by doing this he frees his spirit to pursue the truth about life and death, free of want, free to die.

Praise for *Psyche, Soul, and Spirit*

“Berghash and Jillson have given us a journey of mind and heart, a road into ourselves and sensitivity to others. They bring to the fore our concern with interiority and ways to touch and further it. You will feel you are walking with caring leaders who open doors to places that, perhaps without knowing it, you have always wanted to go.”

—Michael Eigen, author of *Image, Sense, Infinities, and Everyday Life*

“Berghash and Jillson’s book is exemplary in laying bare a hidden secret beyond world religions. . . . The book seems to portend the arrival of a fresh kind of cultural research in academia.”

—Admiel Kosman, Professor of Talmud, University of Potsdam and Geiger College

“In *Psyche, Soul, and Spirit* the authors identify, in essay form, essential attributes that build character. Spiritual maturity, psychological integrity, and constant inner effort mark the lives of saintly persons who have had world-changing effect. A handbook for a person of any faith or philosophy, this is a book to read more than once.”

—W. Kurt von Roeschlaub, STM

“Superbly written, concisely organized, and deeply compelling, *Psyche, Soul, and Spirit* covers a panoramic view of many luminaries in psychoanalysis, philosophy, science, and religion. This is done in the service of understanding such people and themes in context and, further, to explore their import for learning and growth, individually and collectively.”

—Brent Potter, author of *Elements of Self-Destruction*

“An inspiring, even breathtaking book. Berghash and Jillson draw on the widest range of the most profound sages of the human soul—Hasidic masters, Tibetan monks, Hebrew prophets, Christian mystics, Freudian psychoanalysts, English poets—with one goal: to explore our diverse struggles with obstacles and adversaries to spiritual growth.”

—Nathaniel Berman, Author; Rahel Varnhagen Professor of International Affairs, Law, and Modern Culture, Cogut Center for the Humanities, Brown University

