The Dissociative Mind

By Elizabeth F. Howell, Associate Editor of the Journal of Trauma and Dissociation, New York, USA

"Howell's excellent and clearly written book covers both aspects of dissociation. Howell makes excellent use of both her emotional sensitivity and her sharp intellect ... read it and discover all it has to offer." - International Journal of Psychoanalysis

Drawing on the pioneering work of Janet, Freud, Sullivan, and Fairbairn and making extensive use of recent literature, Elizabeth Howell develops a comprehensive model of the dissociative mind. Dissociation, for her, suffuses everyday life; it is a relationally structured survival strategy that arises out of the mind's need to allow interaction with frightening but still urgently needed others. For therapists dissociated selves are among the everyday fare of clinical work and gain expression in dreams, projective identifications, enactments. Pathological dissociation, on the other hand, results when the psyche is overwhelmed by trauma and signals the collapse of relationality and an addictive clinging to dissociative solutions.

Elegant in conception, thoughtful in tone, broad and deep in clinical applications, Howell takes the reader from neurophysiology to attachment theory to the clinical remediaiton of trauma states to the reality of evil. It provides a masterful overview of a literature that extends forward to the writings of Bromberg, Stem, Ryle, and others. The capstone of contemporary understandings of dissociation in relation to developments and psychopathology, The Dissociative Mind will be an adventure and an education for its many clinical readers.


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