

BOOKS

**LEARNING ALONG THE WAY: FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON
PSYCHOANALYSIS AND PSYCHOTHERAPY.** By Patrick Casement. New York:
Routledge, 2018, 156 pp.

After reading this short, emotionally calm, and informative text it is more than clear why Casement is such a popular and respected writer/psychoanalyst. The text is a collection of various talks, perceptive personal interviews, articles, and reflections, many previously published—eighteen chapters in all—written in an informed and engaging style. Casement is famous for his capacity to communicate the essence of therapy, psychoanalysis, and psychoanalytic training without the need for any intellectualized superstructure.

One of Casement's singularly important contributions is his addressing the need of a student, or an analyst, to develop an "internal supervisor," meaning by that a practitioner's capacity to step back and analyze a clinical impasse or a case, allowing for alternative perspectives. Appreciative of many of D.W. Winnicott's insights, Casement stays with the unique experience of each patient; the dignity and appreciation that an analyst owes each individual patient is his primary concern. He gives many examples of meeting patients where they are at developmentally, rather than assuming a level of integration that they may not be capable of. Casement reiterates very clearly that technique must always be guided by where a patient is developmentally.

In chapter three Casement gives eight short clinical vignettes, and in a few lines he offers alternative insightful perspectives, grounded in a wisdom gained from many decades of practice. As mentioned, Casement conveys his approach by emphasizing the need to recognize the otherness of the patient, the individuality that is the goal of treatment. That is, to understand that patients are not in treatment to confirm his or her preferred theory. It has taken psychoanalysis much too long to recognize this basic fact

and to be guided by it in practice. Only when clinicians can appreciate the otherness of a patient can they then safely identify with their patients in the session. This is another foundational point for Casement. He speaks to the unrecognized persecutory dimension of many analytic interpretations and alerts practitioners to such when he writes: "Unless we develop a caution in relation to how we are with our patients we are bound to evoke states of mind, which we will not be able to 'interpret away,' even though we can always interpret this away from our own awareness" (p. 119).

In his reflections on psychoanalytic training in England, the author speaks to and echoes many similar observations that are heard in the United States. He signals the constant danger of ritualistic practices masquerading as disciplined training, the potential abuse of power by training analysts, and the ever-present danger of committees abusing their power by their choice of which students to designate as psychoanalysts—that is, the ever-present danger of collecting disciples rather than explorers. One of the primary texts addressing such an issue is Roustang's (1982) *Dirigé Mastery*. Unfortunately, Freud himself did not help in this area. He was more than uncomfortable with analysts who disagreed with him; consequently, all too frequently orthodoxy became normative. Addressing the danger of imitation rather than creative informed innovation, Casement details the danger of suffering from what he categorizes as therapists' imprisoned minds. He characterizes this as an omnipresent danger unless a therapist has learned how to use theory and his or her self in a reflective, informed, but fundamentally free manner. He writes: "The potential of psychoanalysis is paradoxical. It can either free the mind or bind it. It can liberate creativity and spontaneity, but it can also foster compliance (particularly within psychoanalytic training)" (p. 59). Casement is acutely aware that it is not enough for an analyst to serve as the good object. Rather, it is the internal world of the patient that needs the light of awareness. As a patient has the experience of experiencing his or her inner world in the analytic setting, the analyst's benign, attentive presence can subsequently be appreciated and internalized. Casement conveys an attentive but nonintrusive presence. He speaks, for example, of his habit of wearing the same clothing colors, for example, the same jacket for many years, so that his personal presence would be evident but not distracting.

One of the most sensitively handled case vignettes is Casement's discussion of a modest gift he received from a patient. He did not simply accept it, under the rubric of interpersonal authenticity, nor did he reject it, as has been advocated by the orthodox tradition. Rather, he recognized its presence and kept it on his table, next to his chair, until both he and the patient could, at the close of treatment, decide what to do with it. It is this basic, informed commonsense approach that makes his insights so valuable. He knows the danger, particularly for psychoanalysts, of preconceptions, such as the analyst's conviction that he or she understands a patient by categorizing the patient's communications. He critiques any analyst who assumes knowledge of a patient's unconscious based on a given theory. Unconscious material is to be explored, never assumed. In my own writings (Gargiulo, 2016) I have tried to address the need to recognize that both analyst and patient create the experienced unconscious. There is always the danger of finding what you already know—what you have been taught is there—no matter what. Casement recognizes such a danger and suggests ways of not falling into such a trap.

His final chapter relates his personal account of his extended hospitalization due to cancer. It is a fitting close to this collection of articles, essays, and interviews. This chapter reveals a person who is emotionally sober in the face of possible death and always the psychoanalyst with the other hospital patients with whom he interacted. His patience over five months of hospitalized treatment is a reflection of the calmness that he brought to his practice. His was an unhurried attempt to help others who are on the same road as he but needing some help on their journey, a self-awareness and self-forgetfulness that conveys his experience with sobriety and calmness. It is a pleasure to say that each chapter, each article, and each interview of *Learning Along the Way* is more than a rewarding experience. It is getting to know and to benefit from the wisdom of a master clinician and theoretician.

REFERENCES

- GARGIULO, G. (2016). *Quantum psychoanalysis: Essays on physics, mind and analysis today*. New York: International Psychoanalytic Books.
- ROUSTANG, F. (1982). *Dire mastery*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

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