

WISDOM OF THE



Ginette Paris author of *Wisdom of the Psyche: Depth Psychology after Neuroscience*. London and New York, Routledge.

THE WISDOM OF THE PSYCHE is both a personal story and a manifesto, written after the author's descent into a deep hole – an empty swimming pool into which she fell on her head – and her return to the upper world with the aid of neuroscience and “*the Great Mother's milk of compassion*”. It is informed by her encounter with death which taught her, she says, more about the psyche than had many years of analysis.

Her voice, though, has not changed from the one we hear in her books *Pagan Grace* and *Pagan Meditations*. She is the same original, provocative, bold, poetic, insightful and incisive writer whom we know from her writings on myths in everyday life. But this book is more personal and courageous as it takes a trenchant look at attitudes and issues in the practice of psychotherapy, enlivened by case material and accounts from the author's own life.

Firmly rooted in depth and archetypal psychology, which she teaches at Pacifica Graduate Institute at Santa Barbara, California, Paris is particularly influenced by James Hillman and his work on the renaissance of psychology

through the imaginal. Like Hillman, her approach is lively and polemical as she pulls apart modern psychotherapeutic dogma, putting into question all of the myths about therapy that therapists of any persuasion might hold dear. Her ideas are underpinned by feminism and Existentialism, particularly Sartre's dictum “*We are condemned to freedom*”. She writes: “[T]o develop psychological wisdom we must learn, early on, that even the most loving relationship cannot spare us the solitude of human destiny.”

She begins by engaging with current models of psychotherapy—the medical model (the promise of healing), the economic model (multiplying one's psychological investments), the judicial model (negotiating one's psychic territory, e.g. jockeying for the role of victim), and the religious model (the hope of redemption). None of these models, she concludes, addresses the passionate, irrational, Dionysian aspect of psychological life. She sees the practice of depth psychology as a celebration of psychological life. It is depth psychology that teaches us to dance with the psyche.

E PSYCHE

by Ginette Paris

Reviewed by Anne Di Lauro

Of the rejected models, the one that comes closest to the bone for many of us, I imagine, is the myth of therapy as redemption, analysis as the redemptive quest masquerading as individuation, *“the belief that analysing the unconscious will lead to a clean, pure, healthy psyche and that one will evolve into a luminous, loving, dignified, pacified soul.”* While the spiritual need is real, attributing a quasi-divinity to the Self brings the danger of inflation. For her, Jung’s notion of the Self as an ideal centre, a dream of totality, was literally turned on its head in the aftermath of her accident, when she learned to live out of liminal spaces rather than aspiring to live from a notional centre.

As to the future of depth psychology, she urges us to *“drop the medical pretence”*. *“Analysis is not so much a cure as an education, like learning a new language, a philosophical adventure in self-discovery, an art of living more lucidly and intensely.”*

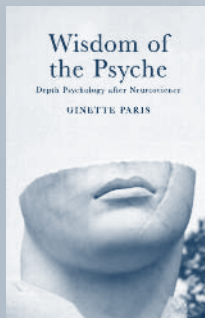
The stress by Freud and Jung on the medical scientific basis of their work was necessary in the beginning, but it no longer serves. Depth psychology as

a theory, she asserts, *“is a deep thinking about the life of the psyche and, as such, belongs to the arts and the humanities.”* As a practice it belongs to mythology – a narrative evoking the complexities of human life. Like literature, depth psychology transmutes the psyche’s story, changing the myth and elevating the psyche from shame.

A work containing such a profusion of insights and bold assertions, impossible to even hint at in this short space, will sometimes surprise, will sometimes bring nods of agreement, and will at times jar, requiring readers to re-examine and revise or reaffirm their own values.

As we learn, Ginette Paris emerged from her descent with a new myth of her own, the springtime thawing of her heart that had been frozen in childhood for lack of warm mothering.

In this book, she has combined the compassion of the Mother and the rigour of the Father with her newfound sense of the absurdity of life, and produced a Dionysian dance of fresh and challenging ideas.



“The future of depth psychology is concerned [with raising] the fever of imagination, to amplify the loving connection that binds us to the world.” page 240, *Wisdom of the Psyche.*



Pagan Grace
by Ginette Paris.