

Response to William Ventimiglia

By August J. Cwik, Psy.D.

Ventimiglia's paper warns us of the dangers of supervision run amok: forced compliance resulting in false persona formation, abuses of power, the destructive forces of envy, unresolved idealizations, unquenchable mirroring demands, and potentially vampiric supervisors feeding off the mana energy generated by unsuspecting supervisees. Using the circumscribed heart as an evocative reverential image, he reminds all supervisors that what is being sought in supervision is facilitation of the ego-Self axis of the supervisee. To this extent his paper is a humbling reminder of the true goal of supervision. Being more conscious of the dangers inherent in the supervisory process, we might be more able to stop ourselves from "acting-in" during supervision. Certainly the unique attributes of the supervisory relationship are becoming more recognized. It is no mere didactic situation, and eventually may be legally safeguarded in a manner similar to that of therapy and analysis. Dealing with parallel process and projective identifications brings the psyche of the supervisee under scrutiny. Robert Langs, in his book *Doing Supervision and Being Supervised*, emphasizes that supervisees should actually experience the working of the emotion processing aspects of the psyche rather than just learn about them intellectually.¹

Ventimiglia espouses a fealty to the Self that is often very hard to conceptualize, and he clearly identifies it as "ethical practice ... grounded in a consciousness of the religious dimension of human experience." One may stand back and usually identify the lack of it in the work of others, but how does the Self (and I know this may sound like blasphemy) operationalize—especially in a training institute? Conflicts usually occur when one party assumes they are coming from Self connection; the other party claims they are actually following a false god, a plain old ordinary complex. There is no doubt that our training institutions are plagued with narcissistic injuries from prior training. Nowhere is it clearer that we are our own material—the trainees eventually become us. They can then perpetuate these injuries in their analyses and supervision of the next generation or attempt to transform their wounds into new training ideas and principles. Paul Kugler nicely delineates this dynamic in his paper "The Transition from Training Candidate to Supervising Analyst."²

Indeed, one must be very careful whenever the theme of Narcissus is evoked. It is a wily archetype and has a way of entrapping those who might see it in others. We must be wary lest supervision become circumvision.

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Notes

1. Robert Langs, *Doing Supervision and Being Supervised* (London: Karnac, 1994).
2. Paul Kugler, "The Transition from Training Candidate to Supervising Analyst," *In Jungian Perspectives on Clinical Supervision*, ed. Kugler (Einsiedeln: Daimon, 1995).

