

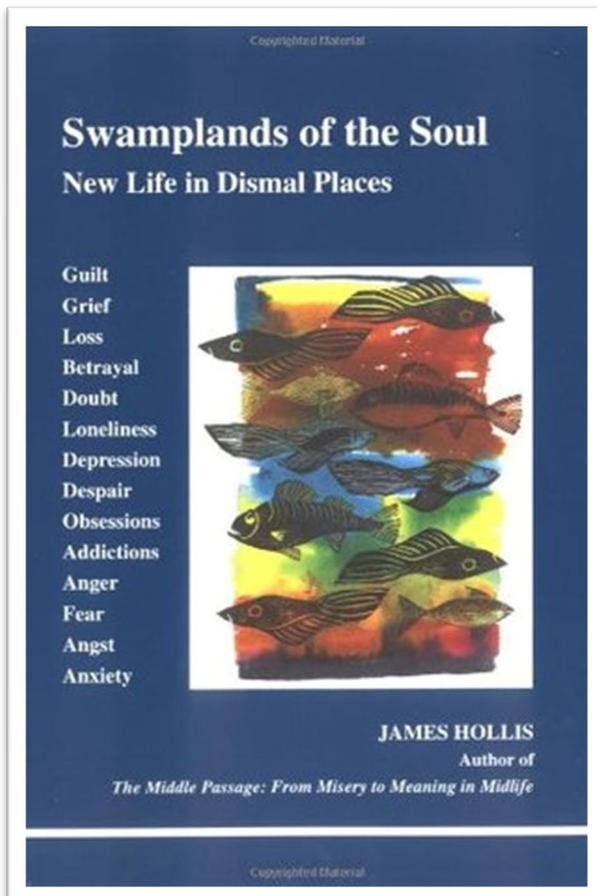
BOOK REVIEW



by **Olga Lytvynenko**

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Hollis, James: SWAMPLANDS OF THE SOUL: NEW LIFE IN DISMAL PLACES

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When in 2015, after the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war, I was offered to teach the subject "Psychotherapy of Trauma" at the Odessa National University, I did not think long and agreed. At that time, Ukrainian society had already experienced the killings on the Maidan, the annexation of Crimea, the invasion of eastern Ukraine and was generally very frustrated and overwhelmed with traumatic affects.

A large number of methods, approaches to working with trauma seemed to me an immense material, and as one of the ways of working, I suggested that students take separate books on working with trauma, revise and present to colleagues in the form of an abstract. I remember very well the speech of one of my young colleagues, who told me defiantly and sadly at the same time:

- Olga Dmitrievna, I am 21 years old, why did you ask me to read and review this book? I lived quietly for myself and did not want to know at all that betrayal, shame, guilt, betrayal, loss - this is a normal part of human life.

Her sincere impulse was both touching and sad for me at the same time, because it is so human not to want, not to see, not to know about those difficult trials that life can bring us. On holidays and birthdays, we wish each other only "good" events, ignoring the fact that "bad" events also happen to us regularly and are either a natural continuation of our internal strategies, or, even more difficult to experience, a natural continuation of the strategies of which - something of external objects in whose orbit we accidentally (or not) ended up. All these bad and "bad" events are experienced by a person as extremely unfair and frustrating - our value

systems of coordinates about what is right and what is wrong, how we live, act and how to interact with the world collapse.

But then the question legitimately arises, how does it happen that some people are torn and destroyed under the yoke of life's adversities, or acquire very unhealthy ways of adapting, while others manage not only to survive, survive and not collapse, but also find a new meaning and valuable experience in what happened? This question is answered by James Hollis in the book "Swamplands of the Soul: New Life in Dismal Places."

In this book, James Hollis reflects on the most difficult, dark and twilight times in a person's life. The titles of the chapters are: "Introduction: The Search for Meaning," "The Ubiquity of Guilt," "Grief, Loss and Betrayal," "Doubt and Loneliness," "Depression, Desuetude and Despair," "Obsessions and Addictions," "Anger," "Fear and Anxiety," "A Simple Complex Interlude," "Going Through," and the "Afterword: The Blur and Blot of Life." It would seem that they speak for themselves and offer us to plunge into the "swamplands" of our hardest experiences, from where there is no way out. However, the titles of the other chapters "The Search for Meaning," "Going Through," and "The Blur and Blot of Life" indicate that there is a way out, an opportunity and a potential to cope.

According to James Hollis, the goal of human life is not happiness, but meaning. "And the meaning, although it may not be solid sunlight and flowers, is quite real "It is in the swamplands where soul is fashioned and forged, where we encounter not only the gravitas of life, but its purpose, its dignity and its deepest meaning." (J. Hollis).

The author also offers his vision on the goal of psychodynamic therapy: "What psychodynamic therapy seeks to promote is a new attitude toward one's psyche. What is intimidating in its power is also healing in its motive." "The main goal of psychodynamic psychotherapy is to form a new conscious attitude in a person. What frightens with its power heals with its motivation. To align oneself with those forces within rather than reflexively adjusting always to the powers without, thereby furthering our self-

alienation, is to feel grounded in some deep truth, the nature of our nature. In those moments of contact with the deep truth of the person, the encounter with what Jung calls the Self, one feels the connection and support necessary to assuage the universal fear of abandonment." Of course, before we can connect with these forces, we will have to live in the "swamplands" of very difficult experiences for some time.

J. Hollis also offers three specific ideas - the principle of how you can expand the possibilities of your mental life: accepting the inability of the Ego to control the unconscious and accepting that the fantasy of happiness makes us more attached to our traumas; formulating an internal challenge and the task of finding one's own meaning; the transformation of ordinary (past) characteristic reactions to stress into new reactions that are necessary for our present.

J. Hollis writes simply and deeply at the same time, his style may seem simultaneously poetic and figurative. Like all Jungian psychologists, he resorts to examples of their mythology, world culture and literature, which allows you to touch the collective energies and stop feeling alone in experiencing your own trauma. The book also contains enough descriptions of specific cases, from which the reader can see how events and experiences unfold inside and outside.

And finally, I would not recommend this book for reading and self-help during an acute psychological crisis, but as an assistant for living through the consequences of trauma, this book is invaluable.

Well, with my young colleagues, we still managed to discuss how to live and comprehend difficult events in our lives and how to get out of our suffering whole and renewed..