Caversham invites you to join in celebrating the release of
Donald Carveth's book
THE STILL SMALL VOICE:
Psychoanalytic Reflections on Guilt and Conscience
Karnac Books (2013)

Whereas Freud himself viewed conscience as one of the functions of the superego, in The Still Small Voice: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Guilt and Conscience Carveth argues that superego and conscience are distinct mental functions and that, therefore, a fourth mental structure, the conscience, needs to be added to the psychoanalytic structural theory of the mind. He claims that while both conscience and superego originate in the so-called pre-oedipal phase of infant and child development, they are comprised of contrasting and often conflicting identifications. The primary object, still most often the mother, is inevitably experienced as, on the one hand, nurturing and soothing and, on the other, as frustrating and persecuting. Conscience is formed in identification with the nurturer; the superego in identification with the aggressor. There is a principle of reciprocity at work in the human psyche: for love received one seeks to return love; for hate, hate (the talion law).

"What will be our moral purpose? And, how may we exceed the confines of rationality in learning to live with others? With these questions Donald Carveth’s superb study integrates social theory with the history of psychoanalytic thought. With deep sensitivity to the nuances of mental life and the dilemmas theory inherits, the study proposes the psychoanalytic project as one of listening to the voice of conscience. Carveth provides insightful readings of the moral significance of guilt from a number of perspectives and argues for a shift from the superego to that of conscience. Questions of theology are placed between the cultural and clinical realms and readers encounter the modern dilemmas of tolerating mental pain as the human condition."

- Deborah Britzman, author of Freud and Education and Distinguished Research Professor, York University

Donald L. Carveth is Emeritus Professor of Sociology and Social and Political Thought and Senior Scholar at York University in Toronto. He is a training and supervising analyst in the Canadian Institute of Psychoanalysis and current Director of the Toronto Institute of Psychoanalysis.

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