

**Presence and Shame in Pastoral Care  
and Counselling**

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**Doctor of Philosophy  
The University of Edinburgh  
1999**



## **Author's Declaration on Composition**

I, Neil Francis Pembroke, declare that the entirety of the work in this thesis, entitled 'Presence and Shame in Pastoral Care and Counselling', is my own.

Signed: ..... ..

(Neil Francis Pembroke)

Date: 11/5/99



## Acknowledgements

I wish to first of all acknowledge my deep indebtedness to my primary supervisor, David Lyall. David provided me with friendship, wise counsel, stimulating and challenging conversation and (something all pastoral theologians need) a sense of humour. For his gifts to me, I am profoundly grateful. In the early stages when I was wrestling over whether or not to pursue an empirical approach in my research Michael Northcott's guidance was of great value. I also wish to thank Michael for his early guidance on style and scholarly process.

Along the way I have had four valuable 'informal' conversation partners. Douglas Galbraith, Richard Hutch and Audrey McKeon not only offered their support and encouragement but pushed me to refine my thinking. While they saw my controlled, relatively serene side, my wife, Janelle, often had to contend with my insecure, angst-ridden self! As well as being prepared to talk me through the thorny issues in the thesis, she consistently offered affirmation and encouragement.

Research needs to be supported by good library resources. I very much appreciated the helpful and efficient work of the library staff.

Finally, I would like to thank my examiners, Professor Alastair Campbell and Dr. Jolyon Mitchell. Even in the context of an examination, they somehow found a way to facilitate a real dialogue. I also greatly appreciated their affirming comments.

## Abstract

There are two key terms in this thesis, namely presence and shame. 'Presence' is used broadly to refer to all forms of authentic 'being-with'. That is, it describes genuine relationality, real meeting. Shame indicates that the self is evaluating itself as defective, flawed, inferior in some way (e.g. morally, intellectually, or physically).

The aims are threefold. There is an intention, first, to develop an understanding of how genuine presence functions within pastoral care and counselling. The second aim is to develop an understanding of how distorted forms of presence operate in pastoral care and counselling, with a specific reference to their shame-inducing potential. In this way, attitudes and behaviours (often subtle) which militate against effective care (especially through lowering self-esteem in the recipient of care) are identified in order that they may be guarded against. The third aim is to show that shame has an important role to play in the process through which a pastor or counsellor moves from distorted to genuine presence.

In order to interpret presence, use is made of two notions developed by the so-called 'dialogical philosophers', Gabriel Marcel and Martin Buber: *availability* and *confirmation*, respectively. Availability is essentially the giving of self for the sake of the other. One disposes of oneself in the service of another. Confirmation is a process in which one challenges the other to reach for his God-endowed potential.

While pastoral presence is often construed in terms of empathy and acceptance (Carl Rogers), it is contended that Marcel and Buber offer us rich conceptualisations which, while being closely related to Rogers' relational keys, also take us beyond them. The *primary thesis* that will be argued is that *in pastoral relationships availability is before skills and techniques and confirmation is beyond acceptance and empathy*. That is, it is contended, first, that availability is foundational in pastoral care and counselling. Without it, the use of counselling techniques will be only minimally effective. It is also argued that while one must ground care in acceptance of the other, it is necessary to go

beyond this to sensitively challenge her to grow into her God-given spiritual, moral and psychological potentialities.

In moving to the relationship between distorted presence and shame, attention will be given to the shame experienced by *both* the provider and the recipient of care. The *secondary thesis* is that *the shame feelings a pastor or counsellor experiences as a result of his distorted way of being present have a potentially positive function, namely, moving him to a period of critical introspection in which he may grasp a vision of a higher capacity for genuine presence.*

# Contents

Introduction.....	i
<b>PART 1: METHODOLOGICAL AND OTHER INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: Pastoral Theology: Its Nature and Implications for this Thesis.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Reclaiming the Theological and the Ethical.....	4
Social Transformation and Congregational Mobilisation.....	9
Our Hermeneutic Task.....	12
Our Correlational Task.....	20
<i>Correlating the Key Concepts in Our Research with the         Christian Witness.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>'Interpretive Inquiry' and 'Biblical Grounding'.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<b>CHAPTER 2: Further Methodological and Introductory Questions.....</b>	<b>39</b>
Why Case Studies and How are They to be Used?.....	40
Where Does Our Approach to Counselling Fit?.....	42
Why Marcel and Buber as the Sources of Dialogical Thought?.....	48
<b>PART 2: PRESENCE IN PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING.....</b>	<b>50</b>
Introduction.....	51
<b>CHAPTER 3: Presence as Grace and as Availability: The Contribution of Gabriel Marcel.....</b>	<b>53</b>
Engagement with Life: Participation.....	55
Presence as a Grace.....	61
Presence as Availability.....	64
<i>Availability as Openness.....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Availability as Fidelity.....</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Availability as Belonging.....</i>	<i>71</i>
A Flaw in the Notion of Availability?.....	75
Conclusion.....	77
<b>CHAPTER 4: Presence as I-Thou Relation and as Confirmation: The Contribution of Martin Buber.....</b>	<b>79</b>

The I-Thou Relation.....	81
I and Thou.....	83
<i>Distance and Relation</i> .....	90
<i>Objections to I and Thou</i> .....	92
Becoming Aware: The Start of Dialogue.....	95
<i>Observing, Looking On, and Becoming Aware</i> .....	96
Responsibility.....	96
Confirming the Other.....	97
<i>Inclusion</i> .....	97
<i>Confirmation as a Step Beyond Acceptance</i> .....	100
<i>The Moral Context of Confirmation</i> .....	103
Conclusion.....	103

## CHAPTER 5: Pastoral Availability: The Foundation of Care..... 105

Compassionate Availability as Foundational in Pastoral Care and Counselling.....	106
<i>The Biblical Understanding of Compassion</i> .....	107
<i>Availability, Tenderness and Biblical Compassion</i> .....	109
Belonging and Substitution as Foundational in Pastoral Care and Counselling.....	117
<i>Israel's Experience of Belonging</i> .....	118
<i>Covenant and Substitution</i> .....	120
<i>Substitution: A Case Study</i> .....	120
<i>Covenant Versus Contract</i> .....	123
<i>Substitution, Contract and the Covenant of Care</i> .....	125
<i>Mutuality in the Covenant of Care</i> .....	127
<i>Jesus and Belonging to His Family</i> .....	129
Before Skills and Techniques There is Availability.....	133
Conclusion.....	134

## CHAPTER 6: Pastoral Confirmation I: Integration in the Community of the Self..... 136

Counselling and the Language of the Heart.....	138
<i>Hobson's Notion of a 'Feeling-Language'</i> .....	140
<i>The Language of Feeling in the Psalms of Lament</i> .....	144
<i>A Feeling-Language and the Polar Self</i> .....	145
Confirmation and Reclaiming Split-Off Selves.....	148
<i>Self-Deception and Disavowal of Selves</i> .....	151
<i>The Self as a Community</i> .....	154
<i>Confirmation as the Process of     Reclaiming Isolated Selves</i> .....	158
<i>A Biblical Game of Confirmation: God and Jonah</i> .....	160
<i>Integration through a Dialogue in the     Community of the Self</i> .....	163
Egoistic Introspection or Growth in Holiness?.....	165
Conclusion.....	166

CHAPTER 7: Pastoral Confirmation II: The Role of Conscience.....	168
The Ethical Dimension in Confirmation.....	169
Existential Guilt, Conscience and Reconciliation.....	174
Two Approaches to Establishing the Moral Context of Pastoral Care: Method and Conscience.....	178
Responsibility and Conscience.....	186
Stimulating Conscience in Pastoral Care.....	189
<i>Challenging Others with the Demands of Respect</i> .....	189
<i>Challenging Others with Second-Order Responsibility</i> .....	192
Reconciling the Demands of Conscience.....	198
Conclusion.....	202
 PART 3: SHAME AND DISTORTED PRESENCE IN PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING.....	204
 Introduction.....	205
 CHAPTER 8: Shame.....	208
A Phenomenology of Shame.....	210
<i>Exposure</i> .....	210
<i>Incongruence</i> .....	211
<i>Threat to Trust</i> .....	212
<i>Involvement of the Whole Self</i> .....	212
<i>Hiddenness</i> .....	213
Shame and Guilt.....	214
Introducing the Shame Family.....	220
<i>Situational Shame</i> .....	221
<i>Aesthetic Shame</i> .....	222
<i>Inherited Identity Shame</i> .....	223
<i>Inferiority Shame</i> .....	224
<i>Moral Shame</i> .....	226
Conclusion.....	229
 CHAPTER 9: Shame and Failures in Availability in Counselling and in Care.....	231
In Betty's Case: The Shame Potential in Constancy.....	232
Counselling 'Technocracy' as a Form of Nonavailability.....	240
The Problem of Fidelity and the Shame of the Pastor.....	244
Conclusion.....	246
 CHAPTER 10: Shame and Disconfirmation in Counselling and in Care.....	248

Shame and 'Persecution' in Counselling.....	249
<i>A Biographical and Psychological Sketch of</i>	
<i>Anais Nin.....</i>	249
<i>Intrusion: Shame and the 'Look' of the Counsellor.....</i>	251
<i>Derogation: The Shame of Being Set Apart.....</i>	258
<i>Reductionism: The Shame of Being Categorised.....</i>	263
The Shame of the Pastor in Turning from the Struggle.....	267
Conclusion.....	269
CHAPTER 11: Shame, Sin and 'Conversion' to	
Genuine Presence.....	271
Shame, Sin and Conscience.....	272
The Discretionary Function of Shame in Counselling.....	282
Disgrace-Shame and 'Conversion' to Genuine Presence.....	285
Conclusion.....	292
Thesis Conclusion.....	294
Bibliography.....	300

# Introduction

Presence is at the heart of the pastoral ministry. Let me say at the outset exactly what I mean by presence. It is a term which is elastic in meaning. In its most basic sense it indicates simply 'being there'. For example, when the teacher is marking the roll and a particular student's name is called she will answer, 'Present'. In pastoral care, presence means much more of course. We refer, for example, to 'a ministry of presence' in situations where words have little to offer. The minister communicates her love and care by 'being there' with a hand on the shoulder or an embrace and with a listening compassion. When I use the word 'presence', this sense is included. Its meaning will be extended, though, to include all forms of authentic 'being-with'. Presence describes genuine relationality, real meeting. In Martin Buber's terms, it indicates dialogue in the sphere of the interhuman.

There are, of course, many different ways in which to approach the question of what it means to be faithful and authentic in pastoral relationships. Amongst the recent writings on pastoral care and counselling one finds a host of important insights. While we who exercise a pastoral ministry sometimes wonder whether we are strong enough to facilitate the care of souls, there are those who remind us that our woundedness and our 'laughable humanity' can be valuable healing resources.<sup>1</sup> Other writers suggest that at the centre of the pastoral vocation is the call to be an encouraging presence, one which instils hope.<sup>2</sup> The challenge of working out the dialectical relationship between the ministry of presence and the external Word indicates yet another important issue.<sup>3</sup> That is, in the midst of caring for others we need to find ways to communicate the gracious Word of God which are natural, respectful and authentic. Finally, there are those writers who hold to the idea of a normative

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<sup>1</sup> See H. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972). See also A. Campbell, *Rediscovering Pastoral Care*, 2nd ed. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986). Along with courage and integrity (the image of the shepherd), Campbell identifies both woundedness (Nouwen's image) and 'wise folly' as marks of a helping presence.

<sup>2</sup> See D. Capps, *Hope: A Pastoral Psychology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> See W. Avery, 'Toward an Understanding of Ministry of Presence', *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 40, no. 4 (December 1986), pp. 342-353.



Christian presence and yet want to remind us that all too often our ways of being with others are shaped by defective cultural norms on the one hand and by personal flaws on the other.<sup>4</sup>

One could go on for quite a while cataloguing the various approaches to pastoral presence offered in recent times. For our purposes, however, it is particularly relevant to point to a very important influence on the shaping of our understanding of what it means to be a supportive, healing, growth-promoting presence, namely, the work of Carl Rogers. The Rogerian understanding of the core conditions for effective counselling -- acceptance, empathy and congruence or genuineness -- has been highly influential in the theory and practice of pastoral care. However, we will turn to two thinkers who I believe allow us both to extend and to transcend the understanding of pastoral presence developed within a Rogerian framework. I refer to Gabriel Marcel and Martin Buber.

Marcel and Buber are often referred to as 'dialogical philosophers'. Whereas other existentialist thinkers such as Sartre and Heidegger grounded their reflections in transcendental subjectivity, Marcel and Buber posited meeting or dialogue as primary in interpreting the nature of human existence in the world. They struggled to capture in words and concepts that which is irreducible, elusive, mysterious: the meeting between the I and the Thou.

Gabriel Marcel was born in Paris in 1889. Aside from his philosophical expertise, he is known for his plays and his dramatic and literary criticism. At the age of 40 he embraced the Roman Catholic faith. While some like to characterise him as a Christian existentialist, he himself rejected the classification in both its parts.<sup>5</sup> Rather than being tagged as an existentialist, he preferred to be called a 'neo-Socratic' thinker or a 'concrete philosopher'. The reference to Socrates indicates his dislike for systems and a preference for open-ended questioning and answering. His liking for the appellation 'concrete philosopher', on the other hand, is particularly important for an understanding of his intellectual and existential commitments. Marcel stood firmly opposed to what he saw as the 'spirit of abstraction'. He disliked and mistrusted

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<sup>4</sup> See C. Gerkin, *Prophetic Pastoral Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), chp. 4.

<sup>5</sup> See 'Conversation with Paul Ricoeur', in Marcel, *The Participant Perspective: A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, T. Busch ed. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), pp. 285-292, p. 285.

philosophical approaches which elevated the so-called objective approach. Standing outside experience and neatly categorising it is, he judged, a lifeless, unedifying activity. Marcel sought to connect as directly as possible with the concrete experiences which shape human existence. When he reflected on vital life-issues as such being and having, love, fidelity, availability and hope he engaged with these experiences as his own. So much so that, as one commentator puts it, 'Scarcely could Gabriel Marcel write a chapter of a book, an article or deliver a paper without becoming autobiographical.'<sup>6</sup> While this personal engagement may be construed by the 'objectivists' as introducing an inappropriate concern with the singular, it makes Marcel's work particularly attractive to pastoral theologians, interested as we are in case histories and personal insights.

Mention was made above of the fact that Marcel did not feel particularly comfortable with being classified as a Christian thinker. While he accepted that in giving attention to themes such as fidelity, hope and love he immediately put himself in the realm of biblical thinking, he did not want to close off his dialogue with those outside the household of faith. He saw his work as located at the *threshold* of faith. In a conversation with his friend and former pupil, Paul Ricoeur, he reflected: 'I consider myself as having always been a philosopher of the threshold, a philosopher who kept himself in rather uncomfortable fashion on a line midway between believers and nonbelievers so that he could somehow stand with believers, with the Christian religion, the Catholic religion, but also speak to nonbelievers, make himself understood by them and perhaps to help them.'<sup>7</sup>

Let us now introduce the other dialogical thinker, Martin Buber. He was born in Vienna in 1878. If Marcel defies easy categorisation as a thinker, this is even more true of Buber. Do we read him as a mystic, as a general theologian, as an existentialist, as a social theorist, or as a Hebrew humanist? These are just some of the categories which have been suggested. While there are those who associate him almost exclusively with the notion of the I-Thou relation, others will know him as a translator and exegete of the Hebrew Bible and as an

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<sup>6</sup> T. Busch in his introduction to *The Participant Perspective*, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Marcel, 'Conversation with Paul Ricoeur', p. 288.

interpreter of Hasidic wisdom. Indeed, Pamela Vermes concludes her long search for the 'real' Martin Buber with the suggestion that 'the Bible and Hasidism were the twin tabernacles of [his] soul during his lifetime'.<sup>8</sup> While this is no doubt true, I believe that Laurence Silberstein<sup>9</sup> is also saying something very important when he suggests that Buber should be understood as an 'edifying' philosopher (the term comes from Richard Rorty<sup>10</sup>). Indeed, Marcel should also be understood in this light. Whereas a conventional philosopher aims at an accurate mirroring of objective reality, the edifying thinker is intent on pointing up for his or her contemporaries the value systems, cognitive patterns and social structures which militate against real existence, against realisation of the self and of the community. The edifying philosopher provides his or her fellow travellers with a new vocabulary and grammar for interpreting life in the world. In this humanising vision, one is given the outlines of an authentic, life-enhancing presence to others.

Two key metaphors in the humanising vision offered by Marcel and Buber are *availability* and *confirmation*, respectively. *The whole thesis is structured around these important notions.* Availability involves both a *reception* of the other -- her thoughts and feelings, her hopes and dreams, her pain and her fears -- into one's personal centre, and a *belonging* to her in which one is prepared to substitute her freedom for one's own. Confirmation is a process in which one struggles with the other, sometimes against herself, as she endeavours to fulfil her God-endowed psychological, spiritual and moral potential. A genuinely loving presence, Buber holds, is one which aims at assisting the other in growing into her potentialities.

While, as was mentioned above, pastoral presence is often construed in terms of the Rogerian categories of acceptance, empathy and genuineness, Marcel and Buber, I contend, offer us rich conceptualisations which, while being closely related to Rogers' relational keys, also take us beyond them. The *primary thesis* that will be argued is that *in pastoral relationships availability is*

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<sup>8</sup> P. Vermes, *Buber on God and the Perfect Man* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation, 1994), p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> See L. Silberstein, *Martin Buber's Social and Religious Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> See R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1980), chp. 8.

*before skills and techniques and confirmation is beyond acceptance and empathy.* It is necessary to describe exactly what is meant by this formulation. Before getting to more substantive issues, I need to explain just what is intended by the term 'pastoral relationships'. It is used to refer to both the relationships developed in the course of parish ministry and in a specialised counselling ministry. On the whole, our interest is in the pastoral presence offered by parish ministers as they exercise their ministry of care. At certain points, however, our discussions will be orientated more to the work that pastoral counselling specialists do. Even there, though, the understanding is that the ideas developed will have an application in the short-term, often informal, counselling parish ministers are called upon to offer.

We move now to an explication of the claims made in the primary thesis. It was the great achievement of Carl Rogers to shift the emphasis in psychotherapy from interventions and techniques to the quality of the therapeutic relationship. He identified the relational attitudes and skills in the therapist which he saw as 'necessary and sufficient' to create a healing and growth-promoting environment. Importantly, the 'core conditions' can only be fully established -- and this is something Rogers was keenly aware of -- when the therapist is genuinely 'present'. In the absence of a personal capacity for disposability, I will be suggesting, even acceptance and empathy can be reduced to the level of techniques. The counsellor adopts an acceptant attitude and reflects ideoaffective content in a detached, mechanical way and thus fails to communicate empathy.

Therapists outside the client- or person-centred approach argue that it is necessary to go beyond the core conditions and make use of appropriate interventions and techniques. In recent times, we have witnessed a willingness by both theorists and practitioners in pastoral care to appropriate the techniques of the various schools of counselling (e.g. script analysis [TA], various Gestalt therapy techniques such as the empty chair and polarities exploration, reframing and paradoxical intent [brief therapy], and reshaping of cognitions [cognitive therapy]). While it is acknowledged that techniques certainly have a place in pastoral care and may be used to good effect, I will argue that in the absence of

giving of self, of real emotional availability, of genuine love and fidelity, they will be only minimally effective in facilitating healing and growth. Put differently, a person feels genuinely cared for not so much because she has received expert psychological assistance, as important as this is, but rather because she has received a gift of self from her pastor or counsellor. To be sure, too many pastors suffer from a woeful lack of psychological and therapeutic knowledge. It is important that those offering care develop good counselling skills. My argument, however, is that in pastoral care availability is the *foundation* which supports skills and techniques. Without this solid base the edifice of care is very shaky indeed.

In order to demonstrate that in Marcel's concept of *disponibilité* we have the foundation for pastoral care, I will attempt to establish its affinities with the biblical notion of compassion. For some, the biblical idea of compassion is captured by the Rogerian terms acceptance and empathy. No doubt, in being accepting and empathic we are showing compassion. I will argue, though, that beyond these core relational attitudes and skills, is a more profound communication of self. Right at the heart of the biblical understanding of compassion is a commitment to dispose of oneself, to receive the other into one's 'home-space'. Marcel conceives of availability as a willingness to receive the other *chez soi*, at home. Here, it will be suggested, there are very strong connections with the biblical interpretation of compassionate love. The Old Testament writers understand compassion as an expression of an intimate attachment to the other. They identify the seat of this emotion as the womb or the heart. For Paul, compassion is more than the registering of emotion, it is an expression of one's total being at the deepest level. The Greek word he uses, *splánchnon*, originally referred to the 'inward parts of the body', or to the womb. These two terms, one's home-space and the womb/heart, both point to a deep level of receptivity. Both suggest that to be compassionate in the fullest sense is *deeply personal*; it involves the exercise of the virtue of love.

This line on showing that disposability is foundational in pastoral care will be augmented by referring to the important Marcelian concepts of *belonging* and *substitution*. Marcel works with the concept of 'disposability as

belonging'. To belong to the other involves substituting her freedom for one's own. 'Belonging' is also a rich biblical and theological term. Indeed, Marcel extends the idea of availability to include belonging to Christ -- the key fact in a life of faith. For the Hebrew people, personhood was defined through the belonging established in a covenantal relationship. Using the theology of covenant as a framework, we will extend our understanding of the foundational role availability plays in pastoral care and counselling. I will attempt to show that the willingness to substitute the other's freedom for one's own is an important dimension in a covenantal relationship. Substitution is thus a fundamental attitude for the pastor and for the pastoral counsellor.

The primary thesis also refers to the necessity of going beyond acceptance and empathy. While Rogers advocated a non-directive approach to counselling, a commitment to confirmation involves a readiness for sensitive confrontation. We have already noted Buber's idea of helping a person against himself. This relates to his understanding of the polarities in the self. In each one of us there is a 'yes' and a 'no', refusal and acceptance. Sometimes we want to refuse our possibilities because the path onto which they are leading us looks dangerous, threatening. We need someone who is prepared to push us onto the path, so to speak. Now of course for someone committed to the Rogerian belief in a non-directive approach, this suggestion presents as a violation of the autonomy of the counsellee. Indeed, Buber and Rogers debated this issue at a conference on the former's thought organised by the University of Michigan in April of 1957.<sup>11</sup> In the course of the dialogue, Buber argued that every genuinely existential relationship begins with acceptance of the other, but moves on to an active engagement to help her realise her potential.<sup>12</sup> Included in the notion of confirmation is the need for acceptance, but there is also a recognition of the need for an active contribution to the other's growth.

We will take the idea of confirmation and apply it both to psychological wholeness and to moral development. The two, of course, are interrelated and cannot be neatly separated. Sometimes, however, psychological issues are more

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<sup>11</sup> See M. Buber and C. Rogers, 'Dialogue Between Martin Buber and Carl R. Rogers', in M. Friedman and R. Gregor Smith trans., *The Knowledge of Man* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965), pp. 166-184.

<sup>12</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 181-183.



to the forefront; and on other occasions moral concerns are more central. In relation to the quest for psychological integration, we will observe that most, if not all, people live with unacknowledged polarities. That is to say, there are 'sub-selves' which are disavowed because to recognise them is anxiety-producing. Growth towards psychological wholeness, it will be argued, involves recognising these disowned selves and integrating them into the community of the Self. In pastoral counselling, then, an important aim is a sensitive confrontation concerning a person's disavowed polarities and a facilitation of the process whereby they are integrated into her expression of her personhood.

Buber, however, also establishes an explicitly moral context for confirmation. He observes that persons sometimes act in ways which injure what he calls the social 'order-of-being'. When this happens there is an experience of *ontic* or *existential guilt*. Buber understands the *conscience* in terms of the inner place where one attends to one's existential guilt. In a paper delivered to a group of psychotherapists, he argued that the members of their profession often fail their clients because they, the therapists, tend to construe all guilt feelings as neurotic.<sup>13</sup> He urged them to recognise existential guilt and the constructive role of conscience. Under the demands of her conscience, a person feels a need to repair the damage she has inflicted on the order-of-being. This work of repair Buber calls *reconciliation*. Confirmation in the moral context consists of encouraging and sometimes challenging a person as she struggles to respond to the demands of her conscience.

While in recent times a number of theorists have argued for a rediscovery of the moral dimension in pastoral care, very few have addressed the role of conscience. The focus tends to be on method in ethical decision-making. I accept that this is an important issue. However, I will be advocating a greater stress on conscience, responsibility and reconciliation in the practice of pastoral care.

Availability and confirmation indicate *two fundamental moments in the ministry of care*. First, there is a disposing of self in entering into the pain of the other and in committing oneself to her support and growth. There is, secondly,

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<sup>13</sup> See Buber, 'Guilt and Guilt Feelings', *Psychiatry* 20 (1957), pp. 114-129.

sensitive challenge or confrontation aimed at helping the other realise her God-given psychological, spiritual<sup>14</sup> and moral possibilities. While both these moments are primarily oriented to the interpersonal realm, a concern with socio-economic and political realities and structures is not excluded. Behind the analyses of both Marcel and Buber is a keen awareness that contemporary cultural ideologies and social structures result in alienation and suffering and need to be challenged and reformed. In this sense, the interpersonal moments point to a third moment in pastoral care, namely, a commitment to socio-economic and political renewal. As important as this political dimension of the ministry of care is, we will only be able, given the focus of our research, to engage with it to a very limited extent.<sup>15</sup>

The first moment -- the one defined by availability -- is foundational. The willingness to be receptive at a deep level to the pain, confusion and fear of the other is a fundamental quality in the pastoral ministry. Another fundamental quality, as was indicated above, is a readiness to establish a relationship of belonging with those one serves. The second moment -- defined by confirmation -- involves an attempt to build on the first.

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<sup>14</sup> In every age, spiritual guidance has had a role to play in pastoral care. For most of the history of the Christian Church, this role has been a substantial one. However, in the fifties, sixties and seventies of this century there was a tendency for pastors -- especially those with a therapeutic orientation -- to downplay the role of spiritual guidance. The recent upsurge of interest in spirituality has led to something of a turnaround. Be that as it may, the reference here is not to spiritual direction *per se*. We will not be engaging with the literature on spirituality and spiritual guidance. Rather, the word 'spiritual' is used to indicate my conviction that the attempts persons make to overcome distortions and defects in both their psychological functioning and their moral character constitute spiritual growth.

<sup>15</sup> The emphasis in pastoral care in the recent past has been largely on promoting healing, growth and self-realisation in the individual. Recently, however, writers in the field have been advocating a widening of the scope of the ministry of care to include a commitment to transform unjust, oppressive social structures. See, for example, J. Poling, 'An Ethical Framework for Pastoral Care', *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 42, no. 4 (Winter 1988), pp. 299-306; S. Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care* (London: SCM Press, 1988, 1993), chp. 5, and idem, *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and P. Couture and R. Hunter eds, *Pastoral Care and Social Conflict* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995). One of the main points these writers make is that since socio-economic and political ideologies and structures are very often potent factors in the symptomology of suffering individuals, holistic care involves action aimed at changing those oppressive ideologies and structures. A third moment in pastoral care is a joining in with God's work of redeeming the prevailing socio-economic and political structures. While my work is focused on the first two moments and the interpersonal dynamics captured in them, there is some overlap with the third moment. For example, helping a person grow in moral character may involve confronting her with the need to act for social and political change. Indeed, this is precisely what I suggest in one of the case studies in chapter 7 (concerning a woman who has a guilty conscience over her involvement in corrupt business practices).



The two basic moments, then, are closely linked. Disposability is foundational in pastoral care. We need, however, to build on the foundation and work with the other to help her develop her God-endowed potentialities (confirmation). Confirmation is actually an extension of the idea of availability. To say to the other, 'I belong to you; I give myself to you' (Marcel) means for Buber, 'I am prepared to struggle with you, even to help you *against* yourself, as you grow into the person God created you to be'.

Up to this point, we have concerned ourselves with, on the one hand, what genuine presence looks like, and, on the other, how it functions in pastoral practice to assist a person towards healing, growth and wholeness. What happens, though, when pastoral presence is distorted. Ministers and counsellors can subvert their intention to heal and to help through defective modes of relating to those in their care. When this happens, it will be argued, both the person offering care and the person receiving it experience a sense of shame. The systematic theologian and ethicist, James McClendon, expresses the situation well. '[T]he primal defection from presence', he writes, 'is found in the experience of shame. In genuine presence I am with another and she or he with me, and there is a wholeness in the shared act or fact of our being there. But shame is a failed wholeness.'<sup>16</sup>

Our first aim in the latter part of the thesis is to describe the shame dynamics in *both the providers and the recipients of care* associated with pastoral nonavailability and disconfirmation. We are interested, first of all, in the harm done when pastors and counsellors fall from the ideals of availability and confirmation. Our attention will be directed especially to those persons in care who have a strong propensity for shame. They are, of course, particularly prone to be hurt when on the receiving end of dismissive or inattentive treatment.

While our major concern is the harm done to clients, we are also interested in the shame feelings pastors and counsellors suffer in causing that harm. When we, the providers of care, can get beyond our rationalisations and our other defenses, we see the negative impact associated with our distorted way

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<sup>16</sup> J. McClendon, *Systematic Theology: Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 107.

of relating. Face-to-face with this subversion of our intention to help, we feel ashamed. This brings us to the second aim in this final part of the thesis. I want to point up a positive role for shame. Shame feelings stimulate the reforming function of the conscience. *The secondary thesis* I will argue is that *the shame feelings a pastor or counsellor experiences as a result of his distorted way of being present have a potentially positive function, namely, moving him to a period of critical introspection in which he may grasp a vision of a higher capacity for genuine presence.*

I need to explicate this secondary thesis. The main idea contained in it is that shame feelings may lead a care provider to a time of what Marcel calls *contemplation*. In contemplation, a person is faced with two modalities of being. On the one hand, there is the actual self: the self experienced as flawed and defective. On the other hand, there is the potential self: the new person one can become if one is prepared to make certain decisive changes. Looking squarely at his tendency to defective forms of presence, a pastor or counsellor may also see a vision of himself in which he is more available, more ready for the demands associated with confirming others. In a theological interpretation, the Holy Spirit has moved him to contemplation, and now empowers him for growth towards genuine presence.

Before moving to the tasks of describing the theories to be employed and of developing our arguments, it is necessary to give attention to certain methodological questions. We need, first, to outline our understanding of the nature of pastoral theology and the implications for this thesis. This we will do in chapter 1. Secondly, we must attempt to justify the choices we have made to focus on the thought of Buber and Marcel and to use case studies in grounding the theory. Finally, it is necessary to indicate which school of counselling theory we are aligning ourselves with. These last three issues will be taken up in chapter 2.

**Part 1: Methodological and Other  
Introductory Questions**

# 1. Pastoral Theology: Its Nature and Implications for this Thesis

In this first part of the thesis, our task is to describe and attempt to justify the methodological principles and commitments undergirding our research. It is necessary as a starting point to outline our understanding of pastoral theology. Here we may as well get straight to the point. The following definition is proposed. *Pastoral theology aims at a critical correlation of theological, ethical, and social scientific conceptualisations in an attempt to interpret both what is normative in human development and in communal life, on the one hand, and what is effective in the pastoral practices which aim at support, challenge and promotion of the normative vision, on the other hand.*

The definition takes us beyond the bounds of the work we will be doing in this thesis. It will be used as a framework in which to locate our particular concerns and emphases. While it is broader than our focus in this research, it may not, in fact, be broad enough. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to construct a definition of pastoral care, or of anything else for that matter, which is comprehensive enough to include all possible perspectives. There are, of course, definitions by others which use different terms and have a slightly different frame of reference. Nevertheless, our definition will at least provide us with a concrete starting point for our reflections.

Our statement on the nature of pastoral theology points to five key issues in the discipline. The first is the moral dimension in pastoral care and counselling. The reference in the definition to the 'ethical' indicates the commitment I have to the notion of a moral context for pastoral care. I believe that Don Browning and others are fundamentally right in their conviction that ministers and pastoral counsellors need an ethical framework in which to situate their practice of pastoral care.

The second issue identified in the definition is the role of interpretation in pastoral theology. Any field of knowledge needs its own particular hermeneutic principles; this is an undeniable fact. We will engage with

hermeneutic theorists such as Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer, asking the question: How can their insights be applied in the doing of pastoral theology in general and in this thesis in particular? Of course, the issues in hermeneutics are many and they are complex; our engagement will necessarily be very limited.

In the definition, thirdly, reference was made to a critical correlational task. In what follows, we will make use of David Tracy's description of a revised correlational method in theological reflection. Tracy advocates a critical dialogue between the questions and answers from the human sciences and the questions and answers from the Christian tradition. In this process, one observes, there is a creative fusion of horizons of thought (Gadamer). In attempting to merge these different horizons, points of identity, analogy, and dissimilarity will be established. Below there will be a discussion of the way the first two categories function within our correlational work. It will be suggested, further, that two main avenues for pursuing the correlational task are what Peter Homans<sup>1</sup> calls *interpretive inquiry* and what we will call *biblical grounding*. Interpretive analysis involves both uncovering the psychological infrastructures associated with theological systems, and the reverse, identifying the implicit religio-ethical commitments in psychotherapeutic psychologies. Our approach, however, will involve the more modest task of demonstrating the affinities between, on the one hand, the psychological philosophy of Buber and Marcel and the theory of shame, and on the other, key biblical themes and stories. In this task, we will use the integrative work of Donald Capps<sup>2</sup> as our model.

Fourthly, the definition points to a growing recognition that pastoral theologians need to pay attention to communal and social dynamics. Along with a concern with personal transformation, there needs to be a concentration on social renewal.

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<sup>1</sup> See P. Homans, *Theology After Freud: An Interpretive Inquiry* (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> See D. Capps, *Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); idem, *Reframing: A New Method in Pastoral Care* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); and idem; *The Depleted Self: Sin in a Narcissistic Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

Finally, our statement on the nature of pastoral theology should be taken as indicating that pastoral care is an activity of the whole People of God. The term 'pastoral practices' in the definition is an inclusive one. It includes the ministry of care of the pastor and of those working with her in that ministry.

Below, we will see that the three key areas in relation to the research in this thesis are the ethical, the interpretive and the correlational. In looking at social transformation and at congregational involvement in providing care, the aim is to both acknowledge the importance of these emphases and to indicate that the parameters established for our research preclude a focus on them. We begin our discussion with a consideration of the first of the three keys areas, the moral dimension in pastoral care.

### ***RECLAIMING THE THEOLOGICAL AND THE ETHICAL***

Let us begin our investigation with a brief, and somewhat rough, historical overview of the development of the theory and practice of pastoral care in North America and in Britain.<sup>3</sup> It is beyond our scope to attempt the construction of highly accurate time-lines. We are not attempting a careful piece of historical description. The thumb-nail sketch which will be developed will be enough, though, to highlight certain crucial developments. While there are significant differences between the American and the British scenes,<sup>4</sup> we will not be able to pick these up with any degree of precision. The discussion will in fact be oriented to the situation on the other side of the Atlantic. This is simply because that is where most of the literature comes from.

The post-War period saw a turning point in the theory and practice of pastoral care in the United States. (The shift came somewhat later in Great Britain and was not as marked.) Prior to World War II, little or no attention was given by ministers in their attempts at the care of souls to psychological

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<sup>3</sup> Most, if not all, of my observations in this historical overview are commonplace in the pastoral care literature. For a thoroughly researched treatment of the changes in the pastoral outlook in America after the Second World War, see S. Southard, 'The Current Need for "Theological Counsel"', *Pastoral Psychology* 32, no. 2 (Spring 1984), pp. 89-105.

<sup>4</sup> I, in fact, come from an Australian context. It is closer to the British than to the American scene. There is a general reticence amongst both pastors and parishioners concerning the role of psychotherapeutic psychology. There is also a more restrained approach in terms of appropriating the raft of psychotherapeutic options which have emerged in recent times.

dynamics. They tended to operate with the view that emotional distress and moral failings could be overcome through prayer and divine assistance on the one hand, and a resolute will and personal effort on the other.

Moral guidance was considered to be an important part of the pastoral task. Unfortunately, ministers most often failed to distinguish between guidance and moralising. Their moral exhortations often had a very 'hard edge' to them. Also, the pre-War pastor tended towards a strongly directive approach in his ministry of care. He characteristically assumed that he had the right and the responsibility to prescribe the course of action his parishioner should take in addressing her problems.

In the fifties and sixties, however, first in the United States and then in Britain, new attitudes to pastoral care began to emerge. With the help of pastoral theologians, and sometimes on their own, ministers began to explore the theories of Freud, Jung, Horney, Sullivan, and Rogers. From the psychoanalytic and neo-psychoanalytic thinkers they appropriated the key insight that humans are not as rational as they like to think they are. That is to say, the notion that unconscious conflict is behind -- or underneath -- mental dysfunction and emotional distress is was beginning to take root. While still holding to the place of prayer in dealing with emotional suffering, many began to think of the old faith in the power of the will as naive and simplistic. An openness to the Freudian approach also resulted in a healthy respect for the destructive potential of the superego. Fearful of burdening their parishioners with an extra load of guilt, ministers began increasingly to bracket-out their moral concerns.

From Carl Rogers they learned about the therapeutic power in acceptance and unconditional positive regard. Many adopted his optimistic assessment of human potential. They grounded their counselling approach in the conviction that each individual has a self-actualising tendency, and that this innate tendency is often suppressed by the conditions of worth parents and other significant figures establish. Healing and growth will come if only the therapist can consistently adopt the behaviours and attitudes which encourage and nurture the tendency to self-realisation, namely acceptance, empathy and genuineness.



In the sixties and seventies new psychotherapeutic theories were emerging to challenge the established ones. Significant numbers of theoreticians and practitioners alike were eager to embrace the insights of Berne, Perls, Ellis, Frankl, Beck, Kohut and others. Eventually, however, pastoral theologians began to challenge what they saw as uncritical borrowing of psychotherapeutic psychologies. Concern was expressed over the dominance of the psychological paradigm in the theoretical and practical expressions of pastoral care and counselling. In the 1970s and 80s, the call to reclaim our theological identity was issued quite widely and rather insistently.<sup>5</sup> Pastoral theologians identified two important ways in which they could re-establish the theological paradigm in their field. First, by interpreting psychological dysfunction and emotional distress with the aid of the categories of theological anthropology, namely, sin and grace, persecution and love, injury and forgiveness, alienation and meaningful existence. The aim was not to push dynamic conceptualisations out of the conversation, but rather to establish clearly the principle that while psychology has an important role in informing pastoral theory and practice, the theological paradigm is primary. The conviction that theological categories are of first importance indicates the second avenue which was pursued. In using a particular psychotherapeutic theory, pastoral theologians endeavoured to clearly demonstrate how that theory may be grounded in the Christian witness.

One of the reformers, Don Browning, argued not only for a reclaiming of the perspectives of theological anthropology, but also for a retrieval of the moral dimension in pastoral care. He observed that the cure of souls has traditionally had two functions.<sup>6</sup> First, the induction of members into the Church's normative vision for life in the world. Second, support and guidance for persons in the grip

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, P. Pruyser, *The Minister as Diagnostician* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976); D. Browning, *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), and idem, 'Pastoral Theology in a Pluralistic Age', *Pastoral Psychology* 29, no. 1 (Fall 1980), pp. 24-35; Q. Hand, 'Pastoral Counseling as Theological Practice', *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 32, no.2 (June 1978), pp. 100-110; W. Oglesby, 'Implications of Anthropology for Pastoral Care and Counseling', *Interpretation* 33 (April 1979), pp. 157-171; S. Southard, 'The Current Need for "Theological Counsel"', *Pastoral Psychology* 32, no. 2 (Spring 1984), pp. 89-105; A. Campbell, *Rediscovering Pastoral Care* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981, 1986); and H. Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), esp. chp. 3.

<sup>6</sup> See D. Browning, *The Moral Context*, p. 20.



of emotional and developmental crises. Browning lamented the fact that in recent times the former role had been given far too little emphasis. Pastoral counsellors and ministers had learned well from the psychotherapeutic community not to moralise. However, he contended, the time had come for establishing a religio-ethical base for pastoral care which allows for non-moralistic counsel. The model suggests that it is only when those offering care have a firm moral outlook that they can afford the luxury of not moralising. Pastoral care, Browning argued, is not only about love and grace, it is also involves rational moral inquiry as to the normative shape of human life.

It is only right, I believe, that both these reforming themes -- the need for a theological framework and a moral context -- have been heard and embraced by a significant number of pastoral theologians. While psychological dynamics have a crucial role in pastoral care, theological and ethical principles are primary. That is not to say that in offering care religio-ethical themes will always be in the forefront. In counselling a person, there will be times when a good deal of the conversation is structured around psychological language and concepts. But even when the theological and ethical themes are, for a time, set in the background, they retain their power to inform and shape the therapeutic activity. On other occasions, of course, they will appropriately be located at the centre of the healing conversation.

While I agree with Browning's basic premise that pastoral care needs a solid moral infrastructure, I question what seems to be a concentration on rational processes of moral inquiry to the exclusion of intuitive and affective activity. The symbols and metaphors in Christian story and liturgy have a very real power to stimulate moral development. It may be that a person is inspired to a life characterised by courage, compassion, and a commitment to justice even though, initially at least, the level of rational elaboration is minimal. Of course it is necessary, as Browning insists time and again, to think through as systematically as possible how these virtues should be expressed in our (post)modern complex, pluralistic society. The question, is, however, why does Browning almost completely ignore the important role of the affective in the moral life. His analysis, as profound and as comprehensive as it is on the whole,

seems to lack balance at this particular point. Elaine Graham captures the blind spot in his vision well: 'Moral discourse [in Browning's mind] is the systemisation of human rationality upon which all behaviour rests, and religion is the symbolic and mythical vehicle of such moral-rational debate. Yet ultimately, it has no autonomous use beyond rationality, and so the symbolic, ritualistic and mythical dimensions of religion tend to be discounted.'<sup>7</sup> We need in our ethical reflections to work more with the metaphor of the heart, the place where intellect and feelings are united.<sup>8</sup> As important as this insight is, what is really crucial in relation to our work in this thesis is Browning's fundamental insight that pastoral care needs a moral dimension if it is to be true to its identity.

## **SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND CONGREGATIONAL MOBILISATION**

We have begun to identify some important recent developments in the theory and practice of pastoral care and counselling. In returning to our definition of pastoral theology, we will note other significant areas where thinking has changed. As we look at these developments, we will both identify the context in which our research is set, and describe its particular shape.

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<sup>7</sup> E. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (London: Mowbray, 1996), p. 88.

<sup>8</sup> The theological ethicist, Richard Bondi, has clearly demonstrated the importance of 'the capacity of the heart' in moral development (see his 'The Elements of Character', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 12, no. 1 [Spring 1984], pp. 201-218). In the heart we hear and respond to the normative vision projected by the stories of the good life. The metaphor of the heart identifies the core of our being, the place where intellect and feeling are united. This idea of the union of intellect and feeling, I believe, is crucial; it indicates a balanced view of the process of growth in moral character. We do not respond to stories depicting the good on the basis of feelings alone. The rational faculties operate to process and order the symbols and images mediated through the narratives. With reference to what he calls the *visional* level of practical moral rationality, Browning rightly identifies the process of using metaphors to describe the ultimate horizon of meaning beyond the grasp of our mental capacities and categories (see his *Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983], p. 57ff; and idem, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991], p. 105ff). However, Bondi's analysis advances our understanding by pointing to the role of imagination and the yearnings of the heart in moral development. 'The heart', he writes, 'is the seat of the deepest memories, of our imaginative exploration of other lives and times, of our yearning for union both of the self and with other people, ideals, and possible ways of life' ('Elements of Character', p. 210).

*Pastoral theology*, we said, *aims at a critical correlation of theological, ethical, and social scientific conceptualisations in an attempt to interpret both what is normative in human development and in communal life, on the one hand, and what is effective in the pastoral practices which aim at support, challenge and promotion of the normative vision, on the other hand.*

Let me attempt to explain how I understand the remainder of the key concepts in the definition. It was Erik Erikson who first alerted us to the importance of construing human development in *psychosocial* terms.<sup>9</sup> Erikson drew attention in his writings to the fact that human development is shaped by both personal factors (genetic determinants and family psychology) and social milieu. This observation indicates that pastoral theology needs to take cognisance of the fact that there are distorting and oppressive forces in the social order. Pastoral care, then, is not only concerned with reorganising intra- and interpersonal dynamics, but also with seeking to transform defective or unjust social structures. With this in mind, Charles Gerkin has argued for a 'widening of the horizons' of pastoral care to include shaping the consciousness, the ethos, of local communities, and beyond that, to the society as a whole.<sup>10</sup> We find this same concern with social transformation in the work of James Poling.<sup>11</sup> He argues that since those of us committed to pastoral care are concerned with the relief of suffering, and given the fact that oppressive social structures contribute substantially to human distress, we need to set ourselves the task of resisting evil and working for the transformation of unjust systems within our society. On the British scene, we have seen important works by Peter Selby,<sup>12</sup> Elaine Graham,<sup>13</sup> and Stephen Pattison<sup>14</sup> challenging pastors and congregations to widen their circle of care to include the heath of the society and its structures.

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<sup>9</sup> See E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (London: Triad/Granada, 1977). First published in 1950.

<sup>10</sup> See C. Gerkin, *Widening the Horizons: Pastoral Responses to a Fragmented Society* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> See J. Poling, 'An Ethical Framework for Pastoral Care', *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 42, no. 4 (Winter 1988), pp. 299-306; and idem, *Deliver Us From Evil: Resisting Racial and Gender Oppression* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> See P. Selby, *Liberating God: Private Care and Public Struggle* (London: SPCK, 1983).

<sup>13</sup> See E. Graham, *Transforming Practice*.

<sup>14</sup> See S. Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care*, 2nd ed (London: SCM Press, 1993), esp. chp. 5; and idem, *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

I support in principle this extension of the scope of pastoral theology. It represents a significant new development in the field. However, in directing our attention to social renewal it is important that we do not lose sight of the significance of personal transformation. It is certainly possible, and essential I believe, for pastoral theology to move around in both the 'inner and outer circles'. It needs to concern itself both with intra- and interpersonal issues on the one hand, and with social and political dynamics on the other.<sup>15</sup> In this thesis, however, we must limit ourselves to working largely in the inner circle.<sup>16</sup>

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1994).

<sup>15</sup> Given the fact of the massive challenge associated with the disorienting and oppressive social forces operating in our world today, it is still very important for pastoral theology to orient itself to the individual and her need for actualisation of the real (Buber). In an enthusiasm to establish the new orientation to social renewal, some pastoral theologians seem to be in danger of losing sight of the significance of careful analysis of the theory and practice associated with supporting persons through their various emotional and developmental crises. Elaine Graham, for example, suggests that '[t]he subject of care is shifting from that of a self-actualized individual for whom care functions primarily at times of crisis towards one of a person in need of nurture and support as she or he negotiates a complexity of moral and theological challenges in a rapidly-changing economic and social context' (*Transforming Practice*, p. 51). It is right to point out that the postmodern self is confronted with new challenges and that those of us offering care must respond appropriately. However, one wants to ask: What does this statement by Graham about a shift in the 'subject of care' mean in concrete terms? Does it mean, for example, that less people today are experiencing personal and developmental crises? Is it meant to imply that there is less of a need for self-realisation in the postmodern society? If these are the intended meanings, Graham is wide of the mark. There is just as much of a need to give pastoral time and energy to crisis care and personal growth as there ever was.

I do not agree, either, with the American pastoral care theorist, Larry Graham, in his contention that today we are witnessing a paradigm shift in pastoral care from 'relational humanness' (John Patton's term) to 'relational justice' (see his 'From Relational Humanness to Relational Justice', in P. Couture and R. Hunter eds., *Pastoral Care and Social Conflict* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995], pp. 220-234). In the new paradigm Graham proposes, caregivers see their task primarily as working to overcome domination and oppression. Talk of a paradigm shift to justice concerns is, I believe, inappropriate. I do not accept that the therapeutic and interpersonal model of pastoral care has been superseded. It is necessary, granted, to set personal suffering in the context of distortions in the socio-political sphere. It is also important to engage in action aimed at reshaping these distorted structures. While such action may appropriately be construed as linked to an intention to care, it is more fundamentally associated with the socio-political mission of the church. That is, a decision by a pastor and her faith community to engage with certain social and ethical issues should not be seen primarily as an expression of pastoral care -- although there is a definite link -- but as participation in mission. To attempt to reshape pastoral care in terms of relational justice leads to a loss of both identity and focus. What is required is care of both individuals and communities. What is required is care of individuals which is oriented to socio-economic and political realities. We need a widening of our vision, but we do not need a paradigm shift to relational justice. In exercising the ministry of care, some pastors will prefer to concentrate on counselling individuals and on working with small groups. As long as they situate their work in a framework established by socio-political analysis, and as long as they do not ignore the call to co-operate with God in renewing social structures and systems, this is entirely appropriate. It is also right that other pastors will choose to give priority to social action. They are entitled to see this as an expression of care, although it is more than this. They must, of course, also make some time available for ministry with

The term 'pastoral practices' in the definition, to move on, is intended to include all caring activity within the community of the faithful. Recently, a number of theorists have argued for moving beyond the ministerial paradigm when reflecting on the church's ministry of care.<sup>17</sup> Pastoral care, it is rightly said, is the work of the whole People of God. One of the important challenges facing those of us committed to the theory and practice of care is the development of models and action plans for training and mobilising congregants for a more effective healing, comforting and transforming presence in the world. Buber and Marcel situated their reflections on dialogue and availability in the arena of everyday life. They wanted to construct a normative model for interhuman communion in friendship, in family life, in the church, in educational communities, and in the workplace. Anyone committed to the life of confirming communion and transforming presence will learn much in journeying with the thought of these master dialogical thinkers. While the description of the way in which the caring practices of the whole People of God may be informed by dialogical philosophy is an important and worthy project, it is not one that we are able to tackle here. In order to keep a tight rein on our research, it will be limited to an attempt to apply the insights of Buber and Marcel to the ministry of pastors and pastoral counsellors.

In our definition, moving on again, the words 'interpretation' and 'critical correlation' have been used intentionally. They indicate two very important and closely related methodological issues in pastoral theology. It is to a consideration of these issues that we now turn.

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individuals. What is required, I believe, is an elastic understanding of pastoral care which allows for an *emphasis* either on work with individuals or on action for social-economic and political renewal. It is a question of focus and of prioritising, not of rightness and wrongness. Those calling for a paradigm shift to relational justice wrongly imply that their model is the most adequate. Care in a justice key, they seem to say, is more powerful than care in a therapeutic mode. This, I suggest, is the wrong way to approach the issue. Let us grant the freedom to practitioners and theorists to decide their own emphasis.

<sup>16</sup> As indicated in a footnote in the introduction, at one point at least (in a case study in chp. 7) ethical challenge in counselling is set in a political context.

<sup>17</sup> See D. Browning, 'Mapping the Terrain of Pastoral Theology: Toward a Practical Theology of Care', *Pastoral Psychology* 6, no. 1 (Fall 1987), pp. 10-28; B. Gill-Austen, 'Rediscovering Hidden Treasures for Pastoral Care', *Pastoral Psychology* 43, no. 4 (1995), pp. 233-253; E. Graham, *Transforming Practice*; and H. Stone, 'Sojourn in South Africa: Pastoral Care as a Community Endeavor', *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 50, no. 2 (Summer 1996), pp. 207-213.



## **OUR HERMENEUTIC TASK**

The doing of pastoral theology is an interpretive exercise. In an address to the International Academy of Practical Theologians held in Berne in 1995, James Fowler offered this important insight: 'The community of faith is a community of interpretation.'<sup>18</sup> In a similar vein, Don Browning describes the work of the practical theologian as 'a broad-scale interpretive and reinterpreting process'.<sup>19</sup> In one sense, of course, these statements do not tell us much. Every attempt to gain knowledge involves interpretation.. Scholars in each and every discipline will, or should, say that their work is interpretive (we are finding that even natural scientists, in growing numbers, are coming to recognise this). At an even more fundamental level, as the researches of Heidegger in *Being and Time*<sup>20</sup> have shown, life in the everyday world is an interpretive exercise. What of course Fowler and Browning and others are really interested in is the *particular way* in which pastoral theologians go about their hermeneutic task. There are, I suggest, four major areas in which we as pastoral theologians need to apply our interpretive skills. We need, first, to direct our attention to *the central themes in the Christian witness*. Here we involve ourselves in appropriating ideas, symbols, metaphors which are prominent in the Bible and in our tradition of theological and ethical thought. Secondly, we must focus on the conceptual output from theorists in *the human sciences* (such as anthropology, sociology and psychology). Pastoral theologians need, thirdly, to attend to *contemporary community and societal dynamics*. That is, we need to identify the questions and answers being generated by ordinary people in our local communities and in the society at large. Finally, the pastoral theologian needs to study *the caring practices of ministers, pastoral counsellors, and lay persons*.

In identifying the first location for hermeneutic activity, the biblical and religio-ethical traditions, we are immediately confronted with the problem of a

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<sup>18</sup> J. Fowler, 'The Emerging New Shape of Practical Theology' p. 5. Unpublished paper presented to the 1995 Berne Conference of the International Academy of Practical Theologians.

<sup>19</sup> D. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>20</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 182ff.

temporal and cultural gap. The scriptures and other historical documents in our tradition come from a different time and a different cultural ethos. How is it possible, we must ask, for a contemporary interpreter to connect accurately and meaningfully with the mind and worldview of the ancient authorities? Two of the important pioneers in hermeneutic theory, Friederich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey, located the solution to the problem of temporal and cultural distance in the *psychological* realm. Schleiermacher posited a 'particular-subjective dimension' alongside a 'universal-objective dimension' in attempting to define the interpretive task.<sup>21</sup> In interpreting an ancient text, he contended, it is not enough to work solely on philological and semantic analyses (the objective level). The interpreter must also attempt to discern how thoughts are combined in the mind of the author.<sup>22</sup> While this approach cannot produce a critical certainty, it can produce what may be called a 'divinatory' certainty. Divination results in a grasp of the 'internal intellectual activity' of the author.<sup>23</sup> It allows the interpreter to identify with 'the moments of creativity and conception which break into the fabric of the author's everyday life like higher inspirations'.<sup>24</sup> Schleiermacher used the analogy of friendship to illustrate his meaning.<sup>25</sup> Just as we are most successful in understanding the communications of a good friend, so our best interpretations will be of those ancient authors of whom we know a personal style and creative process.

Dilthey was greatly inspired by Schleiermacher's work. He, Dilthey, broadened the sphere of concern, however, to methodology in the human sciences. He wanted to develop an adequate method for psychological, anthropological, sociological and historical research. Here he made use of Schleiermacher's notion of an empathic connection between the present and the past through a meeting of minds. The common experiences we all share in is the

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<sup>21</sup> See F. Schleiermacher, 'The Academy Addresses of 1829: On the Concept of Hermeneutics, With Reference to F.A. Wolf's Instructions and Ast's Textbook', in H. Kimmerle ed., *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 175-214.

<sup>22</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

basis for 'life grasping life'.<sup>26</sup> For Dilthey, the proper subject matter for the human sciences is 'life'. (Here he sets himself over against Hegel's concentration on spirit or mind. 'Hegel constructed metaphysically', he writes, 'we analyse the given.'<sup>27</sup>) 'Life' is an expression of the various *experiences* which characterise human existence at the individual, familial, societal and international levels.

It is through the relationship of experience (*Erlebnis*) to understanding (*Verstehen*) that the temporal and cultural gap is closed. The experiences of the interpreter provide her with a resource for establishing an empathic relationship to the experiences of the historical figures she is studying. It is because we all share in basic human experiences that one person can understand another, even when the other comes from a different historical epoch. Some things never change. Everyone that has ever lived knows what it is to laugh and to cry, to stand firm and to run in fear, to uphold human dignity and to control others oppressively. It is therefore possible for the I to catch hold of the life of the Thou. In a memorable phrase which points ahead to Buber, Dilthey says that '[u]nderstanding is a rediscovery of the I in the Thou'.<sup>28</sup>

Schleiermacher and Dilthey, then, suggest that the temporal and cultural gap can be closed through an imaginative leap into the mind, into the life, of the Other. The condition of the possibility of commonality between contemporary interpreters and historical figures is *shared human experience*. Life in the present reaches back imaginatively to grasp life in the past. Schleiermacher and Dilthey highlight the important role of *relationality* in the hermeneutic task. The first requirement for the interpreter is respect for the particularity and uniqueness of the Other. As the theologian, Tony Thiselton, points out, this implies a listening attitude.<sup>29</sup> This readiness to hear is in turn linked to the Gospel call to self-giving love.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>29</sup> See A. Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self: On Meaning, Manipulation and Promise* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), p. 51.



In Christian theology we often describe approaching the biblical text as *listening in reverent expectancy*, while we view approaching another human *self* as considering their unique personal identity and personal history with care, with attentive respect, or with what the New Testament writers call *agape*. This means *creative regard for the Other; it is a love prompted by will, not by prior 'like-mindedness'*. In Schleiermacher's own words, all understanding, including the interpretation of texts, involves stepping 'out of one's own frame of mind' [emphasis in the original].<sup>30</sup>

Beginning with Nietzsche, there has been a long line of critical thinkers who construe the quest for understanding as an unacknowledged expression of self-interest and will to power. Pastoral theologians need to take this challenge seriously. While we cannot respond to it in depth here, we can at least identify a commitment to empathy and to profound respect for otherness as one important way of restraining the force of vested interest. As we shall see, confirmation is Buber's term for the willingness to embrace the particularity of the other. Pastoral theology needs to be a 'confirming' activity. In approaching the biblical texts, the texts of the social sciences, and 'living human documents', the pastoral theologian is under the call of love to exercise the discipline of 'standing over there' with the other. In an attitude of listening, she needs to engage her imagination and set herself in the frame of reference of the Other.

While acknowledging the important contributions of Schleiermacher and (especially) of Dilthey, Martin Heidegger wants to shift the discussion on hermeneutics to new ground. He posits an altogether different basis for commonality, namely the temporality of *Dasein* (literally there-Being; the term indicates concrete human existence). In a decisive break with the subjectivism of modern philosophy, Heidegger radically identifies being with time. *Dasein* is able to place itself in a mode of existence separated from it by time and cultural

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

ethos because it shares with the figures in the past a common modality of being, that of historicalness.<sup>31</sup>

For Heidegger, understanding is a fundamental *existentiale*, a primary mode of being-in-the-world.<sup>32</sup> The kind of being which *Dasein* has is expressed in and through understanding. In the act of understanding, *Dasein* knows itself as potentiality-for-Being.<sup>33</sup> To exist is to encounter possibilities, and along with these, choices and commitments. Standing before its unique and particular possibilities, *Dasein* is confronted with its radical freedom. It is understanding which delivers *Dasein* into its freedom and its possibility. 'Dasein is such that in every case it has understood (or alternatively, not understood) that it is to be thus or thus. As such understanding it 'knows' *what* it is capable of -- that is, what its potentiality-for-Being is capable of.'<sup>34</sup> Human beings exist in the everyday world in the mode of grasping possibilities. This is the fundamental, the most basic, meaning of understanding. To see a piece of timber (that which is *ready-to-hand*) is to see the possibility of a house. Whereas for Dilthey understanding is grounded in 'life grasping life', for Heidegger it is oriented to the grasping of possibilities. Beyond involvement with the 'equipment' or 'gear' (*Das Zeug*) of everyday life, there is a concern for Being itself. *Dasein*, one might say, lives by insight: it sees possibilities for entities in Nature, for equipment, and, most importantly, for itself.

In authentic existence, *Dasein* sees itself as a futural being. It sees its existence as *thrown projection*. Thrown into the world (it did not ask to be born), it is projected towards a potentiality-for-being which is nonbeing (it cannot evade death). In an act of *resoluteness*, *Dasein* grasps its death as its ownmost possibility. It chooses that which was given to it, that which it inherited.<sup>35</sup> The moment in which one is able to choose the thrown projection which characterises one's existence, Heidegger calls the 'moment of vision'.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. H-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), p. 232.

<sup>32</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 183.

<sup>33</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 435.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 437.

The key categories developed by Heidegger -- temporality, possibility and vision -- are of prime importance in the task of locating the place of hermeneutics in pastoral theology. The futural dimension, as we have seen, is absolutely central in Heidegger's analysis. Death is the end-point for *Dasein's* temporal projection. Futurity is also of crucial importance for the life of the Christian community. We live in an eschatological frame: we look to the coming of the Kingdom or Realm of God in all its fullness. In the meantime, we seek to co-operate with God in God's world-transforming activity. The critical question is always: What new thing is the Lord doing in our midst? Individuals and communities of faith are (or should be) constantly struggling to interpret the signs of the times. We want to discern -- and most often it will be only very dimly -- the future God is leading us towards. In order to build towards that future, it is necessary to identify principles, strategies and action plans which will contribute to God's saving work in the world. Guided by Gadamer's hermeneutic theory, Charles Gerkin reaches a similar point. (Gadamer built his theory around Heidegger's temporal orientation.) Gerkin observes that beyond the challenging task of attempting to live faithful to our covenantal obligations, we (the Christian community) must attempt the equally demanding work of developing '*a fresh vision of our future as made possible by the redemptive activity of God*' [his emphasis].<sup>37</sup>

What is true with regard to a vision of the future for communities of faith is also true for individual believers. A question of vital importance for our research in this thesis is: How does one grow in the capacity to be present to others? Often it is the case that a person is inspired by another's capacity to make herself available and sets about emulating it. Training in active listening is a significant turning point for many in their journey into presence. Both these examples point to personal vision, to the way one sees oneself, others, and relationships.

In the introduction, another important answer was suggested. It also incorporates a strong 'visional' perspective. When a person is shamed by his

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<sup>37</sup> C. Gerkin, *Widening the Horizons*, pp. 73-74.

distorted ways of being-with-others, his conscience is activated and he may then enter a period of critical self-examination. This process of introspection Marcel calls contemplation. In contemplation, one sees two modalities of being: the actual self and the potential self. In this case, the potential self is the self freed from behaviours which produce distortions in the interpersonal sphere. Through personal commitment and divine grace the person begins to live as a new self, a self with a higher capacity for presence.

The process which we have been describing with reference to the particular case of presence can, of course, be extended to other areas in the Christian life. Sanctification, it could be said, is grounded in a moment of vision in which one grasps a potential self, a new way of being in the world, one which conforms more closely to Christ.

In this sense, it is true to say that both sanctification and corporate participation in the God's saving work are hermeneutic activities. To see a future under God, to grasp a new way of being in the world -- these are fundamental expressions of the desire to live faithful to Christ. The question that arises here, however, is the question of how one goes about breaking out of conditioned, limited, comfortable perspectives. As Hans-Georg Gadamer has observed, we all necessarily find ourselves in a 'situation'.<sup>38</sup> All of us share in a familial, social, cultural and intellectual tradition. Some of us share in a religious tradition. Our traditions condition the way we think and act. There are ways of viewing self, life, the world which we never seriously consider simply because they belong to another tradition. How we see our world may look very different if we open ourselves to the values, commitments and presuppositions of others. In opening ourselves to different world-views, we establish for ourselves an *horizon* for our own worldview.<sup>39</sup> To have an horizon means that one is able to judge the relative value of ideas and values. One has the benefit of *perspective*. A merging of horizons allows an interpretation of the past, the present, and the future which has a higher degree of wisdom than that which comes from working with only one particular horizon.

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<sup>38</sup> See H-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 245.

<sup>39</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 269.

The concept of the merging of horizons has an application, I believe, in the interpersonal sphere. More specifically, it can be applied to our particular area of interest. It may be that a person, call him John, is locked into a defective form of presence; he has become habituated to it and is scarcely even aware of it anymore. He cannot gain the distance from which to see the destructive nature of his interpersonal style. In relating to a friend, however, his distorted style of presence is brought into contact with her hurt, her anger, and ultimately her criticism. Here, then, is a fusion of two horizons: a distorted presence encounters a critical response. John is shaken out of his habitual, unexamined mode of being-with. He is now able to gain a perspective on his interpersonal style. A new way of being present comes into view. Through the interaction with the ideo-affective horizon of his friend, John's relational pattern has been interpreted and the possibility of growth opened up.

On the level of the local community of faith, the question of the merging of horizons becomes much more complex. There are, as we have already observed, four horizons which need to be fused: the central themes in the Christian witness, the perspectives of the social sciences, the needs, concerns and values of the surrounding community, and the current caring practices of the congregation. In order to catch something of the vision God is projecting for the congregation, it is necessary to correlate these four funds of information.

We will not, however, engage in a congregational study. Our particular concern is with the way in which ministers and pastoral counsellors attempt to be fully present to those in their care. Our correlational work has a very specific form. We are attempting to merge three horizons of thought: *the biblical-religioethical*, *the philosophical-dialogical*, and *the psychological-psychotherapeutic*. The approach we will use to guide us is the revised correlational method developed by David Tracy for fundamental theology. We turn now to a consideration of how we plan to go about correlating the three horizons of thought indicated above.

## **OUR CORRELATIONAL TASK**

Tracy's approach represents a revision of the Tillichian correlational method. In his theological reflection, Paul Tillich aimed to correlate the Christian message with the cultural situation.<sup>40</sup> A theological system, according to Tillich, needs to on the one hand state its perception of the truth of the Christian message, and on the other to bring a fresh interpretation of that message to the contemporary shape of the cultural landscape. It is, of course, very difficult in practice to maintain the tension between the two poles. Either elements of the truth are lost in the attempt to fit the mould of the current cultural thought patterns, or theological thinking proceeds without adequately addressing the questions arising out of the cultural situation.<sup>41</sup>

Tillich sees in the kerygmatic theologians (such as Luther and Barth) an emphasis on eternal truth over against the relativities of the human situation.<sup>42</sup> There is an attempt to maintain the power and integrity in the eternal message in the face of the vicissitudes and shifting perspectives in the contemporary culture. While on one level this is laudable, without a 'courageous participation' in the various cultural self-interpretations, Tillich points out, there is a danger that theology will establish an 'exclusive transcendence'. Kerygmatic theology must therefore be complemented by an apologetic theology, i.e. an 'answering theology'. The theologian taking up the apologetic task seeks to answer the questions implied in the situation with the resources of the eternal message. Apologetic theology involves the attempt to step onto the common ground established by the cultural self-interpretations with the intention -- emphasised in kerygmatic theology -- of grounding all its statements in the eternal message. Its method 'tries to correlate the questions implied in the situation with the

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<sup>40</sup> See P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (London: Nisbet & Co., 1953), pp. 3-8.

<sup>41</sup> It is important to realise that what Tillich means by the 'situation' is not the psychological and sociological 'mood' prevailing in contemporary society. 'Situation' does not refer to current psychological and sociological trends. Rather, it refers to the scientific, artistic, economic, political and ethical forms in which the contemporary interpretations of human existence are expressed. That is, the situation is the human's creative self-interpretation. It is this self-interpretation which generates the questions which the theological community must attempt to answer.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.



answers implied in the message'.<sup>43</sup> This method of correlation attempts to overcome the potential errors in both the apologetic and kerygmatic approaches to theology. 'It does not derive the answers from the questions as a self-defying apologetic theology does. Nor does it elaborate answers without relating them to the questions as a self-defying kerygmatic theology does. It correlates questions and answers, situation and message, human existence and divine manifestation.'<sup>44</sup>

Tillich is right in his contention that theology cannot afford an 'exclusive transcendence' which fails to grapple with the creative self-interpretations generated by culture. He is also correct in insisting that all theological statements addressing cultural expressions need to be grounded in the eternal message (the exact shape of this message is, of course, a hermeneutic issue). The problem with his *statement* of theological method -- he seems to have carried out his theological reflection differently -- is that it does not allow for the possibility that culture may offer perspectives which cause theology to re-form its statements of the message. Seward Hiltner was acutely aware of this, working as he did to establish the way pastoral theology should be formulated in the light of psychological and therapeutic perspectives. He argued, against Tillich, that a full two-way exchange of commitments is required: 'We believe that a full two-way street is necessary in order to describe theological method. If we hold that theology is always assimilation of the faith, not just the abstract idea of the faith apart from its reception, then it becomes necessary to say that culture may find answers to questions raised by culture.'<sup>45</sup> Hiltner wanted to find a more adequate term than 'correlation' to describe this 'two-way street' between faith and culture.<sup>46</sup> The term 'dialectic' points to the tension or opposition in the relationship. He was concerned, though, that the connotation of tension it carries may suggest that differences are substantive when often they are only superficial. 'Intervolve' has the advantage of communicating the key idea of faith and culture involved with one another; it has the disadvantage,

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> S. Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 223.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 223.

though, of being awkward. The best he could suggest was 'amphidetic'. An amphidetic inquiry is one that is bound all around. While Hiltner's search for a more adequate term seems less than successful, he did grasp the fundamental concept of a mutually critical correlation. He saw that for faith to be relevant it must engage in a 'constant and discriminatory dialogue with culture'.<sup>47</sup>

David Tracy offers a rich description of the nature of this 'discriminatory dialogue'. A critical correlative approach will involve 'the dramatic confrontation, the mutual illuminations and corrections, the possible basic reconciliation between principal values, cognitive claims, and existential faiths of both a reinterpreted post-modern consciousness and a reinterpreted Christianity'.<sup>48</sup> As has been indicated above, there are two principal sources for this correlational work, namely Christian texts and interpretations of ordinary human experience. It is the task of theology to show the adequacy of the major Christian symbols and themes for describing the totality of human experience.<sup>49</sup> Tracy, like Hiltner, shows that Tillich's method does not actually call for a correlation between results from investigations of both cultural interpretations and faith claims.<sup>50</sup> Instead, it asks for a correlation of questions generated by cultural analyses with answers provided in the Christian message. If, Tracy points out, the cultural expressions are taken seriously, their answers to their own questions will be analysed critically. Christianity claims that its message contains the answers to all questions thrown up by human existence. A critical theology must, therefore, compare the Christian answers with those from all other sources. What is needed, then, is a method capable of correlating the questions and answers from both sources for theological reflection. The questions and answers provided by a reinterpreted Christianity need to be critically correlated with the questions and answers contained in a reinterpreted cultural consciousness.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>48</sup> D. Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. 32.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 46.



A genuinely correlational theological method will acknowledge not only the correctional power in contemporary cultural consciousness, but also in the Christian tradition. Certain current formulations of the theological task seem to carry an overly pessimistic estimation of the constructive potential within the Christian tradition. Elaine Graham, for example, devotes a great deal of space to describing the insights of Critical Theory and the normative power in the notions of alterity, difference and situated knowledge, but finds it unnecessary to search for biblical and theological themes which may either illuminate or correct these postmodernist perspectives.<sup>51</sup> Implied in her approach is a conviction that the Christian tradition really has little capacity to either creatively challenge or to enrich the theories of the postmodernists. She is critical of the narrative approaches developed by Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Gerkin because they identify 'the Christian tradition as definitively binding upon contemporary practice'.<sup>52</sup> Rosemary Radford Reuther is challenged for her insistence that the insights and perspectives developed in the experience of Women-Church are not completely novel, but may be linked to a commitment to justice, mutuality and equality contained within the scriptural tradition. Graham is concerned that Reuther may actually believe that this 'golden thread' in the tradition validates and authorises the practices of Women-Church.<sup>53</sup> Graham's view is that '[t]he norms of history and tradition become embodied in the accrued experience of the past, and attain binding status *only insofar as they validate current purposes*' [emphasis added].<sup>54</sup> On this view, primacy is assigned to contemporary consciousness and its expression in certain actions. There seems to be behind this commitment an inordinate fear that a normative interpretation supplied by the central Christian narratives may oppress, bind, or distort. Thus, Graham adopts a very 'low' view of the authority of the tradition. The role of tradition is 'indicative' rather than definitive.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See E. Graham, *Transforming Practice*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

It is impossible, I contend, to pursue a genuinely correlational approach with this pessimistic view of the tradition. The possibility of classic Christian themes confronting and correcting post-modern consciousness is all but ruled out in advance. Behind the use of the word 'indicative' and the notion that the tradition is only binding to the extent that it validates contemporary purposes lies a loss of confidence in its -- the tradition's -- 'truthfulness,' in its capacity to rightly interpret reality. In Graham's book, *Transforming Practice*, there is actually very little attempt at correlation between central Christian themes and the themes of postmodernity. She makes extensive use of ideas such as 'ideal speech situation' (Habermas), 'situated knowledge' (Haraway), alterity and difference because she believes that they promote justice, freedom and mutuality. While one can see here some possibilities for correlating postmodern values and central Christian concerns, Graham chooses not to do so. She seems rather to be content to simply borrow the perspectives of the postmodernist thinkers without any real attempt to demonstrate affinities with the Christian witness..

Pastoral theologians use the conceptualisations of postmodern philosophers, sociologists, and psychotherapeutic theorists because they believe that these thinkers have something very important to say which can be used to renovate the practices of the Christian church. In choosing particular theories to work with, we sense that they have affinities with the deepest values and intentions in the Christian witness. We would not make the decision to work with them otherwise. No doubt, Graham is convinced that in shaping our practices around certain postmodernist concepts which have a justice orientation, we are conforming to Christ at a very deep level. She may well be right. However, what the critical correlational method demands is that we make the affinities between cultural self-interpretation and the Christian message as explicit as possible. This is what I am aiming at in my work in this thesis..

*Correlating the Key Concepts in Our Research with the  
Christian Witness*

The three major concepts we will be working with are availability, confirmation, and shame. At this point, let us attempt to identify the cultural questions and answers associated with these three notions, and also to indicate some of the ways in which we will be endeavouring to ground them in the Christian message.

Let us begin with the contributions from Marcel and Buber. Though they had their own particular emphases, their own unique ways of phrasing the questions, a query they had in common relates to the *instrumental ethos* of modernity. Modern persons, they lamented, are obsessed with and dominated by a need to produce, to utilise, to possess, and to consume. The modern society interprets people, life, the world in terms of production and utility. People today live through *having* and have lost touch with the exigency for *being* (Marcel). Many have allowed the It-world to take over; they relate to others as things (Buber).

Their solution to the problem, in general terms, was the nurturance of a new way of being with others: a creative, confirming, life-enhancing presence. For Marcel, to be fully present requires a commitment to extend oneself, to dispose of oneself, for the sake of the other. Buber reflected that to be genuinely present to another one must be prepared to confirm her, to struggle with her as she reaches out for her God-endowed potential.

There is no doubt, moving now to the last of our key concepts, that shame has become a major question for contemporary society. '[M]any psychologists', writes Robert Karen, 'now believe that shame is the preeminent cause of emotional distress in our time.'<sup>56</sup> Given that a number of writers are suggesting that we are now living in a narcissistic age,<sup>57</sup> it is important to recognise that this toxic emotion is closely linked to narcissism.<sup>58</sup> Among the

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<sup>56</sup> R. Karen, 'Shame', *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 1992), pp.40-70, p. 40.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979), and D. Capps, *The Depleted Self: Sin in a Narcissistic Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

<sup>58</sup> A number of theorists have identified shame as a prominent feature in narcissistic personality disorder. See H.B. Lewis, 'Shame and the Narcissistic Personality', in D. Nathanson ed., *The Many Faces of Shame* (London: The Guilford Press, 1987), pp. 93-132; H. Kohut, 'Forms and

symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder are inferiority feelings, low self-esteem, and a propensity for embarrassment.<sup>59</sup> In the 1950s and early 1960s psychoanalysts and psychotherapists began to notice a change in the kinds of disorders being described by patients. No longer were there the large numbers of neurotic patients. Patients beset with obsessive and compulsive behaviours were being replaced by patients suffering with character disorders. Therapists began to observe an increase in narcissistic personality disorders, the least severe of the so-called 'borderline conditions'. These conditions, as the name suggests, sit on the border between neuroses on the one side and psychoses on the other.

Now it is important to recognise that narcissism is a *social phenomenon* as well as a pathological condition. Christopher Lasch identifies what he calls a narcissistic culture.<sup>60</sup> What the psychiatrists and psychotherapists were dealing with in their rooms was widely manifest in a milder form in the society. 'On the principle that pathology represents a heightened version of normality, the pathological narcissism found in character disorders of this type should tell us something about narcissism as a social phenomenon. Studies of personality disorders that occupy the borderline between neurosis and psychosis....depict a type of personality that ought to be immediately recognizable, in a more subdued form, to observers of the contemporary cultural scene...'<sup>61</sup>

There seems to be good evidence that shame and narcissism are dominant features in the modern society. Further, shame is commonly viewed as an exclusively negative emotion. This is understandable, given its potential for high emotional toxicity. Current research links shame to aggression, addictions, obsessions, pathological narcissism, depression and a number of other

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Transformations of Narcissism', in P. Orstein ed., *The Search for the Self*, vol. 1 (New York: International Universities Press, 1978), pp. 427-460, idem, *The Analysis of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971), pp. 144, 192, and idem, *The Restoration of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1977), p. 241; A. Morrison, 'Shame, Ideal Self and Narcissism', in A. Morrison ed., *Essential Papers on Narcissism* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), pp. 348-371; L. Wurmser, 'Shame: The Veiled Companion of Narcissism', in *The Many Faces of Shame*, pp. 64-92; and R. Hutch, 'Confessing the Dying Within', *Journal of Pastoral Care* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1994), pp. 341-354.

<sup>59</sup> See H. Kohut, 'Forms and Transformations of Narcissism', in *The Search for the Self*, vol. 1, pp. 427-460, p. 428.

<sup>60</sup> See C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*.

<sup>61</sup> Lasch, *ibid*, p. 38.

psychiatric disorders.<sup>62</sup> Even when it is disassociated from mental pathology, it is seen as an emotion one must overcome. In a society in which self-confidence, assertiveness and free expression are cherished by many, shame will be commonly viewed as an unhealthy source of inhibition and debilitation.

Contemporary men and women have been throwing up shame as a question, as a problem, that needs to be dealt with. One influential answer from the psychotherapeutic community is that it can be handled through acceptance and affirmation. The essence of Heinz Kohut's treatment of narcissism (we will look at it in more detail in the next chapter) is that through empathy and positive 'mirroring' (prizing, admiring, affirming, approving) the shame-prone person is able to lay down self-esteem regulating structures in her psyche.<sup>63</sup>

In our research, we will acknowledge shame's toxicity; but we will also identify its positive role. The pastoral theologian and psychotherapist, Carl Schneider, coined the term 'discretion-shame' to describe just such a positive function.<sup>64</sup> Shame offers an innate protection against depersonalisation and violation in a society in which privacy is increasingly not respected. In personal conversations and in intimate acts we naturally exercise discretion to avoid shame and embarrassment. Building on Schneider's idea, James Fowler links shame and morality.<sup>65</sup> When we are in a situation where we are acting unworthily, there is an innate discretionary mechanism (the shame affect) which aims at preventing a more serious breach in our relationships with others. Shame, then, is associated with conscience. When we feel shame, our conscience is stimulated and we have the opportunity to turn away from the unworthy course of action. This relationship between shame and conscience will be exploited in our research as we describe shame's role in moving a person towards genuine presence.

The task before us is to indicate how these three central notions -- availability, confirmation, and shame -- will be correlated with the key themes

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<sup>62</sup> See R. Karen, 'Shame', p. 40.

<sup>63</sup> See H. Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self*; idem, *The Restoration of the Self*; and idem, *How Does Analysis Cure?* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984).

<sup>64</sup> See C. Schneider, *Shame, Exposure, and Privacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), p. 18.

<sup>65</sup> See J. Fowler, *Faithful Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), p. 105.

in the biblical and theological tradition. Don Browning, following Tracy, notes that the correlation between culture and faith can be one of *identity, analogy* or *dissimilarity*.<sup>66</sup> Browning points out that most of the psychotherapeutic psychologies analysed in his book, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies*,<sup>67</sup> have an analogous relation to the Christian witness.

Which category or categories, we ask, apply in our case? Let us start with the observation that the key terms in biblical anthropology are sin, guilt, forgiveness, grace, acceptance, love and justice. Availability and confirmation are not classical categories in Christian anthropology. That there is a very close link with gospel values such as love, compassion, grace and acceptance is immediately obvious, however. In fact, in chapter 5 the argument will be that availability can be *identified* with the biblical notion of compassionate love. In chapter 6, we will work with the Jonah story to ground confirmation biblically. God's way of dealing with Jonah will be construed as an act of confirmation. Out of love for the prophet, God struggles with him to help overcome his tendency to self-assertion. Confirmation is rooted in love. An *analogy*, then, is drawn between the counsellor's confirming dialogue with a client and that of God with Jonah.

We will also use the category of analogy as we seek to deepen our theological understanding of availability in the latter part of chapter 5. Marcel, as we shall see, develops what may be called a triadic structure in establishing the links between disposability and belonging. Disposability can be construed as: *I belong to you; you belong to me; we belong to Christ*. Given the fact that fidelity and belonging are key in Marcel's thought, it seems natural to suggest a link with the biblical notion of covenant. One immediately thinks of the paradigmatic covenantal declaration in the book of Exodus: 'I will be your God, and you will be my people'.

With reference to the notion of shame, we will observe that Donald Capps argues that a relationship of identity exists with that of sin.<sup>68</sup> In what is a

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<sup>66</sup> See D. Browning, 'Mapping the Terrain', p. 22.

<sup>67</sup> D. Browning, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

<sup>68</sup> See D. Capps, *The Depleted Self*.



narcissistic culture, he argues, persons are more likely to experience a sense of 'wrongfulness' in terms of shame rather than guilt. This changed cultural situation requires a revised theology of sin. Sin, Capps contends, needs to be construed today in terms of the self-victimisation which is associated with shame proneness. In chapter 11 we will challenge this attempt at correlation. Our argument will be that rather than identify shame with sin, it is more appropriate to explore its affinities with the traditional notion of conscience. Shame, as was intimated above, can be interpreted positively; it is closely associated with the 'discretionary' function of conscience.

What is of capital importance in seeking to draw such analogies is that the links suggested are strong, clear and precise. Others should not be left wondering how the particular element in the psychotherapeutic or philosophical theory under consideration really fits with what is supposed to be the corresponding theological notion. Making the connections with the author may require mental exertion, but it should not involve mental gymnastics! It is hoped that our attempts at drawing analogies demonstrate an appropriate degree of clarity, logic and precision.

In our research we are using concepts and ethical principles which have strong affinities with the Christian witness. It is recognised, though, that a critical evaluation of contemporary philosophical and psychotherapeutic systems is essential; it sometimes reveals fundamental dissimilarities.<sup>69</sup> Along with appreciative appropriation, critique is essential if we are to avoid an unwitting fall into values dissonance. That is, unless we are careful, we may find ourselves

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<sup>69</sup> For good examples of such critical evaluation see D. Hedman and L. Kruus, 'An Evaluation of Transactional Analysis as a Tool and Method in Pastoral Counseling', *Pastoral Psychology* 35, no. 3 (Spring 1987), pp. 172-186; and M. McMinn, 'RET, Constructivism and Christianity: A Hermeneutic for Christian Cognitive Therapy', *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 13, no. 4 (1994), pp. 342-355. In the first article, the authors argue that TA's celebration of the autonomy of the Adult and of the life of the 'self-reliant-king' clashes with Christianity's commitment to trust and service respectively. McMinn begins with a positive evaluation of constructivism, namely that in its focus on the inner phenomenal world of the client it importantly suggests a role for the therapist as co-interpreter with the client of her life story. The major problem, however, McMinn points out, is that constructivism can lead to 'ethical individualism'. In the Christian tradition, the seat of truth is not located solely within the self; biblical teaching, correctly interpreted, represents an authority outside the self.



working with implicit ethical commitments which clash with the normative interpretation of life advocated in the Christian tradition.

### ***'Interpretive Inquiry' and 'Biblical Grounding'***

The way one goes about establishing analogies may, I suggest, take one of two basic forms, namely, what Peter Homans calls 'interpretive inquiry' and what we will call 'biblical grounding'. In an interpretive study, one attempts to read out of a psychological theory its implicit religio-ethical commitments. Or one engages in the reverse task of uncovering hidden psychological themes in a theological system. Homans declares in *Theology After Freud* that his dual aims are the identification of the psychological infrastructure in the theological idea of transcendence, on the one hand, and an 'iconic' reading of Freud (attending to his study of cultural images, symbols and myths) which places his thought on the level of transcendence, on the other.

More recently, Don Browning has attempted to 'uncover the ethical and metaphysical' horizons in some of the major schools of psychotherapeutic thought.<sup>70</sup> His argument is that these schools have unwittingly developed their own systems of symbols and norms for interpreting self, life, and world. These systems he calls 'cultures'. In analysing these cultures, Browning exposes the implicit ethical and metaphysical principles in the modern psychologies.

In our research, however, we will be attempting to ground rather than to excavate, to integrate rather than to interpret. Our approach may be characterised as *biblical grounding*. It has already been noted that we will be arguing for a relationship of identity between availability and the biblical notion of compassion. It was also mentioned that we will be suggesting that there is an analogous relationship first, between pastoral availability and covenanting, and secondly, between therapeutic confirmation and God's confrontation of Jonah. At various other places, stories depicting Jesus' dialogical style will be used. For example, references will be made to his encounter with the woman at the well and with the woman who anointed his person.

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<sup>70</sup> See D. Browning, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies*.

In his survey of attempts by pastoral theologians to relate the Bible to the theory of pastoral care, Stephen Pattison makes the criticism repeatedly that the authors do not indicate specifically what motivates their integrative work.<sup>71</sup> Included in the survey are such important figures as Alastair Campbell, Howard Clinebell, Donald Capps and William Oglesby. Nowhere in their work do we find a discussion on the crucial issue of the authority of the Bible. It is thus unclear exactly why these pastoral care theorists believe it is important to ground their constructions in the Bible. It could be assumed that they consider that the Bible has a normative function in the life of the Church, and that therefore it is necessary to demonstrate an affinity between its central message and the particular psychological and counselling theories being discussed. However, this assumption is, with one exception,<sup>72</sup> not explicitly stated. With this in mind, it will be well to state here that driving my attempt to relate the theories I work with to the Bible is my conviction that it is authoritative in matters of faith and practice. While there are influential voices in biblical studies and in systematic theology arguing that we should approach the scriptures as a valuable and indispensable resource but refuse to be bound by them, there are also constructive attempts to re-interpret biblical authority in terms of *followability* (R. Thiemann) and the *authorisation* (W. Brueggemann) by the scriptures to live in obedience to God's call to a life of healing, liberation, reconciliation, peace and justice. On this view, it is to the *praxis* of the faith community that we should look for an authentication of the authority of the scriptures. Those who argue that it is time to drop talk of biblical authority, on the other hand, point to, amongst other things, intractable problems associated with the doctrine of inspiration. For example, if one moves away from a biblicist position of plenary inspiration and adopts a more moderate commitment to partial inspiration, what are the criteria for establishing what is in and what is out and who sets those criteria? One takes the point. Other serious difficulties for a 'high' view of the Bible could be readily identified. It is

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<sup>71</sup> See S. Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care*, chp. 6.

<sup>72</sup> Pattison notes that Oglesby does declare his conviction that the Bible is authoritative for faith and practice. See *ibid.*, pp. 127-128.

becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a commitment to the notion of biblical authority. Nevertheless, the approaches which focus on discipleship offer, I believe, a very promising lead for those who wish to provide an adequate and convincing affirmation of the normative status of the scriptures.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> There is no doubt that it has become increasingly difficult to sustain the conviction that the scriptures are normative for the life of the Church. The advent of a scientific method and its influence on biblical study through the historical-critical approach, confusion over ethical issues (especially those related to sexuality), and the new pluralism in theology have combined to create an environment in which, for some at least, the option of rejecting the notion of biblical authority is an attractive one. There are calls to treat the Bible as 'foundational' but not authoritative (R. Scroggs), as an 'indispensable resource' but not binding (M. Wiles), and as 'historical prototype' rather than as 'mythical archetype' (E. Schüssler Fiorenza). (See R. Scroggs, 'The Bible as Foundational Document', *Interpretation* 49, no. 1 [1995], pp. 17-30; M. Wiles, 'Scriptural Authority and Theological Construction: The Limitations of Narrative Interpretation', in G. Green ed., *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], pp. 42-58, p. 51; and E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1984], pp. 10-15.) The Bible, it is contended, is a first attempt -- to refer to Schüssler Fiorenza's metaphor -- and as such, it needs to be refined and improved upon in the light of modern scientific, philosophical, biblical and religio-ethical research. To stay strictly within the theological and moral parameters it establishes is to allow oneself to be controlled by what is in some respects an out-dated, culture-bound pattern of life and thought.

Of course, many advocates of scriptural authority would agree that some of the norms and doctrines promoted in the Bible are indeed culturally determined and therefore not binding on contemporary Christians. They argue for partial rather than plenary inspiration. There is on this view 'a canon within the canon'. Thus, it is possible to adhere to the idea of biblical authority while, for example, accepting evolution and rejecting patriarchy. There are, of course, some serious problems associated with this approach. What, for example, are the criteria for deciding which parts are in and which are out? (We have already suggested that one important criterion is cultural determination.) Even when an adequate set of criteria are in place, there is still the problem of selectivity. People will use the criteria differently according to their particular commitments, presuppositions, and sensitivities.

Working with the traditional categories seems inevitably to lead to an impasse. With this in mind, some scholars are now attempting to shift the ground of the debate. They are choosing to side-step the thorny issues of inspiration and revelation. Instead, they set the debate in the context of *discipleship*.

The narrative theologian, Ronald Thiemann, argues that the focus in the debate should be on 'followability' (see his 'Radiance and Obscurity in Biblical Narrative', in G. Green ed., *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], pp. 21-58). For Thiemann, the Bible is a complicated and ambiguous but ultimately coherent narrative which invites the reader to inhabit a world which is 'the one true reality' (op. cit., p. 28). The biblical story persuades rather than coerces those who engage with it to respond to the promise it contains. The authority of the Bible should be construed in terms of its claim that its promise is trustworthy and the lifestyle it promotes followable. In sifting through the myriad of plots and sub-plots, one is able to identify a unitary theme: redemption in Christ and identification with those living on the margins. Here is the promise of the Bible. Associated with the promise is the call 'to follow Jesus' invitation to faith and discipleship [and] to embark on a journey of self-denial, crossbearing, and death' (op. cit., p. 35).

The Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann, approaches the issue in a similar way (see his 'Biblical Authority in the Post-Critical Period', in D. Freidman ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* V [New York: Doubleday, 1992], pp. 1049-1056). He too works with the idea of discipleship. However, he goes further and argues that it is the way the community lives the promise that authenticates the Bible's authority. The focus should be shifted, argues

Now to the question of the shape of our integrative work. Our approach to biblical grounding is modelled on the work of Donald Capps. Mention was made above of the fact that we will at one point challenge his correlational work. Nevertheless, for the most part Capps' integrative endeavours show strength and clarity. There are two features of his work which, I suggest, give it precision and strength. First, Capps is able time and again to identify the right points in each system -- the psychotherapeutic psychology and the biblical story or tradition -- at which to attempt a correlation. The most difficult task, perhaps,

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Brueggemann, from rational defence of the notion of inspiration to looking at the evidence of communal faithfulness. That is, we must move from the realm of authority into the sphere of *authorisation*. The question is, of course, authorisation to do what? Brueggemann offers an answer similar to Thiemann's. The Christian community is authorised to live in obedience to the God who is acting in the world for liberation, unity, healing and justice (see Brueggemann, op. cit., p. 1054). It is to the *praxis* of the faith community that we should look for an authentication of the authority of the scriptures. This is a praxis shaped by both 'the norm of commandment' (we are commanded to live faithfully in God's way) and the 'norm of deliverance' (the oppressed are given permission to resist evil and seek deliverance).

The way in which I would attempt to construct the notion of biblical authority would follow this line of faithful discipleship. Attempts to shape new theories of inspiration and revelation seem eventually to reach an impasse. I am aware, however, that there are also problems associated with the authentication-through-praxis approach. Take, for example, Brueggemann's reference to 'the norm of commandment'. While it is clear that we are commanded to show mercy and to seek justice, what does this mean in specific terms? Some would argue, for example, that the requirements of mercy and justice demand a dropping of the biblical prohibition on homosexual practice. Perhaps they would appeal to the fact that the biblical writers were working without the benefit of psychological and biological knowledge as a justification for setting aside this command.

Here is not the place to attempt to answer either this or the other difficult questions that have been raised. The issue of the nature and the function of the scriptures is exceedingly complex. No doubt, more questions have been posed than answered. What I have been trying to do is simply to identify some promising leads for the task of shaping an adequate understanding of the notion of the authority of the Bible. Along the way, I have perhaps indicated what drives the dialogical work I do in the following chapters.

While it is probably right, as Pattison argues (see the main text above), that readers are entitled to know what motivates the biblical grounding that a writer engages in, in practical terms it will usually make no difference whether the integrative work is set within a Bible-as-foundational document or a Bible-as-authoritative perspective. As we have seen, Robin Scroggs advocates the former view. He also stresses that the New Testament (at least) is due great respect and that anyone who wishes to call herself Christian needs to actively engage with it. As the foundational document, the New Testament 'is *absolutely indispensable* in learning what it means to be Christian. [It] should be studied, preached, and set in dialogue with our contemporary struggle to be faithful to God in Christ [his emphasis]' (op. cit., p. 25). Clearly, a pastoral theologian aligning himself with this view would want to pursue integrative work and take it very seriously. Much of the biblical grounding that pastoral theologians do -- this is certainly true of my work in this thesis -- does not involve contentious themes or doctrines. The only time one's convictions *vis-à-vis* biblical authority really become a factor is when one gets into a controversial area such as human sexuality or Jesus' healing ministry. Having said that, I think it is just as well that I have indicated where I stand and have therefore established clearly the context for the dialogue I set up between intersubjective and psychotherapeutic theories on the one hand and biblical themes on the other.

in biblical grounding is to find the right pairing of ideas with which to begin. This Capps does particularly well. The second thing he does well is to work with a relatively high degree of precision. That is to say, he does not usually content himself with a vague linking between psychotherapeutic and biblical concepts. To point out, for example, that the Incarnation has a link with empathy (in assuming the form of flesh God was able to get inside our world) may be interesting, but the connection lacks specificity. Capps works with the component parts in each system rather than with high-level concepts such as empathy and Incarnation. There is in his work a sharp focus.

A good example of the first feature is found in *Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care*. There he seeks to link Erikson's thought to the Wisdom tradition (chapter 5). Capps observes that both Erikson's schedule of virtues and his stages of ritualisation culminate in wisdom. This, then, constitutes a good reason to explore the possible affinities between life cycle theory and the wisdom of ancient Israel. The starting points for this task he identifies as *order* and *development*. Here, as I believe the following description shows, he makes a good choice. These are the two key metaphors in each system. To indicate the place of order in Erikson's theory Capps goes to the *epigenetic principle*. Life cycle theory works with the assumption that everything that grows does so according to a ground plan. This plan guides development so that each part has its particular time of ascendancy, with all parts eventually coming together to form a functioning whole. The epigenetic principle thus points to the order in all creation. To advance his argument, Capps notes that among the wisdom books Proverbs is the most confident that there is an order in the world of creation. It assumes a fundamental order in the natural world, in the social world and in the psychological or inner world. After analysing Proverbs' approach to discerning order in the world, Capps comes to this conclusion: 'Proverbs and Erikson share a common belief in the world order and base it on similar factors.'<sup>74</sup>

He moves then to the idea of *development*. The question is asked: Is there anything in Proverbs to match the developmental approach in life cycle

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<sup>74</sup> D. Capps, *Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care*, p. 102.



theory? Capps argues that the book's emphasis on the development of moral character, along with its use of the metaphor of the journey of life, suggests a basic affinity in this area as well.

In order to illustrate the second praiseworthy feature in Capps' integrative work, precision, we turn to his book, *Reframing: A New Method in Pastoral Care*. There he begins his attempt to give the technique of reframing a biblical grounding by looking to the parables.<sup>75</sup> He points out that through his parabolic teaching Jesus attempted to put the thinking and valuing of his listeners in a new frame. He taught in a way that shook people out of their habitual, unexamined, comfortable ways of thinking about themselves, their world, and God. Capps analyses a number of parables in some depth to make this point. He wants, though, to give his work yet more precision. In his analysis of the healing ministry of Jesus,<sup>76</sup> he makes use of two important concepts associated with reframing, namely *prescription* and *paradoxical intent*.<sup>77</sup> (To illustrate these two concepts at once, reference may be made to a typical instruction issued in brief therapy. A person who is embarrassed by his tendency to sweat excessively under pressure may be told [a prescription] that when he finds himself in an anxiety-producing situation he should visualise the sweat absolutely pouring out of him, to the point where he is literally in a pool of sweat.) In moving from the general idea of reframing to these specific techniques, Capps is sharpening the focus of his work.

In the healing of the ten lepers (Lk 17:11-19), observes Capps, Jesus prescribed an action. 'Go and show yourselves to the priests', he said. The lepers were healed en route. This prescription was based on the concept that it is better to expose rather than to try to conceal infirmities.

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<sup>75</sup> See Capps, *Reframing*, pp. 56-63.

<sup>76</sup> It is important to recognise that Capps is not attempting to reduce the healings of Jesus to the level of psychology. He stresses that the point of his analysis is not that the effect of the healings can be attributed to reframing (see *Reframing*, p. 67). For the Gospel writers, the significance of the healings lay not in the reframing embodied in them, but rather in the fact that they were signs of the presence of the Realm of God in their midst. It is nonetheless interesting, Capps suggests, to observe the way in which Jesus utilised reframing techniques in his healing ministry.

<sup>77</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 63-68.

Capps finds a place for paradoxical intent in Jesus' healing of the Gerasene demoniac (Mk 5:1-20). As Jesus comes near to the man, he says to the demons, 'Come out of this man!' In response, the demon-possessed man cries out, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus?' The demons' denial of Jesus' right to have anything to do with them, Capps observes, plays right into Jesus' hands. 'This attempt by the demons to prove that Jesus has no control over them is, in fact, the reframing and the healing. Thus, the paradox here is that Jesus does not prescribe the healing, but allows the demons to do it for him. The causes of the illness are thus the source of the cure.'<sup>78</sup>

The danger in working at this level of specificity is that one will be tempted to twist and turn the material to make it suit one's correlational purposes. At times, Capps seems to be guilty of this failing. In his work on narcissism, *The Depleted Self*, Capps construes Jonah as a narcissist and God as an 'autonomous authority'.<sup>79</sup> That is, Jonah is shame-prone and God exercises authority without love. Capps is aiming for precision -- he makes use of a number of the component concepts in the theory of narcissism -- however in doing so he seems to stretch the Jonah story out of shape. There is no clear evidence in the text that the prophet is especially prone to shame and embarrassment; and Capps' attempt to 'rehabilitate' God by construing the story as Jonah's nightmare seems suspect.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>79</sup> See Capps, *The Depleted Self*, p. 147-162.

<sup>80</sup> Capps suggests, first, that Jonah ran from his calling to prophesy to the people of Nineveh because of his intense fear of embarrassment and shame. To be sure, the narrator does not provide us with a clear explanation for the prophet's flight; a degree of speculation is called for. However, in their conjectures biblical scholars usually point to Jonah's fear of being labelled a false prophet by his fellow Israelites (see, for example, J. Limburg, *Jonah* [London: SCM, 1993], pp. 42-43; and R.B. Salters, *Jonah and Lamentations* [Sheffield: Academic Press, 1994], pp. 59-60). This is an obvious and logical suggestion, given the fact that God decided to have mercy on Nineveh and refrained from bringing the destruction Jonah prophesied. It is reasonable to argue that Jonah was afraid that God would relent, casting him, Jonah, in a very bad light. On the other hand, it is not so evident that it is reasonable to contend that Jonah was afraid of embarrassing himself in front of the Ninevites. True, the central issue in both accounts is shame, but it is shame of two quite different varieties. It is one thing to refer to the shame associated with having one's reputation as a prophet torn to threads (what prophet would not fear that?). It is quite another to build an interpretation on a supposed propensity for self-consciousness and an associated intense fear of shame and embarrassment in public settings (not everyone suffers from this, and there is no clear indication in the story that Jonah did).

Capps also argues that God functions in the story as an 'autonomous authority'. An autonomous authority is one that is without love. Shame is used as a means of maintaining



The interpretations Capps offers in *The Depleted Self* are certainly creative and suggestive. What is worrying is that he does not seek to ground his interpretations in Old Testament scholarship. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to do the kind of creative work required when attempting to correlate biblical stories and themes with specific psychotherapeutic concepts without a degree of speculation. Even so, if we are to avoid stretching the biblical material beyond acceptable limits we need to anchor our reflections in biblical scholarship. Capps usually does this. Unfortunately though, in his work with Jonah he has cut himself free from scholarly moorings and allowed himself to drift into heavy speculation.

In summary, specificity and precision in correlating psychotherapeutic psychology with biblical stories and themes is important. Here the work of Donald Capps is, for the most part, a helpful guide. We must be careful, though, not to bend and twist the biblical material to fit our correlational aims.

Above, we have concentrated on the ethical, interpretive, and correlational dimensions in pastoral theology. An attempt has been made to deal adequately with the difficult methodological questions associated with the work of the pastoral theologian. There are still, however, a number of questions concerning the methodology employed in this thesis which need to be addressed. These are as follows. Why the use of case studies and how are they used? Which orientation to counselling and therapy am I aligned with? Finally,

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control over a subordinate. Instead of praising Jonah and explaining why he relented in relation to Nineveh, he burdens his subordinate with a call for justification: 'Do you do well to be angry?' In causing the plant to grow, and in then arranging for its demise the next day, God manipulates Jonah's emotions.

Could the God of the Bible, even if it is the Old Testament version, really act in such a manipulative, cruel way? Capps wants to interpret the whole episode as a bad dream, as the stuff of nightmares. The conflict portrayed in the story is 'all in Jonah's head' (*The Depleted Self*, p. 160). It is a conflict reflecting 'a hopelessly divided self'. Jonah's salvation lies in recognising that he is in a bad dream, and in waking up so that he can be free from this God who acts as an autonomous authority.

The suggestion that the Jonah story should be interpreted as a bad dream lacks scholarly support. Old Testament scholars argue over what genre to assign to the book (see, R.B. Salters, *Jonah and Lamentations*, chp. 6). The competitors are history, fable, allegory, legend, parable, midrash, and didactic story. No one, however, has yet classified it as a dream. It is category that Capps needs to deal with the notion of God as 'autonomous authority', but it seems impossible to find a justification for it in biblical scholarship.

why Buber and Marcel as the sources of dialogical thought? These questions will be dealt with in the next chapter.

## 2. Further Methodological And Introductory Questions

Having attempted in the previous chapter to answer the central questions concerning the nature of pastoral theological work, there remain other important questions to address. Throughout this thesis, extensive use will be made of case studies. It is necessary, then, to indicate both why the case study approach was chosen and how the studies will be used. Here I will contrast my research method with a qualitative approach.

Then there is the question of where the style of counselling I advocate is located within the range of options suggested in the contemporary psychotherapeutic literature. I will indicate below that the relational approach I work with is aligned with an emerging orientation to counselling and psychotherapy which is found in adherents of a relatively wide range of schools of therapeutic thought. Regardless of whether the commitment is to the techniques and theories of Gestalt therapy, existentialist therapy, psychoanalysis, or some other school of therapy, the same core belief comes through. Those committed to a relational approach to therapy identify the interpersonal encounter, the experience of presence, between therapist and client as the most important factor in facilitating healing and growth.

Finally, there is the question of our choice of Buber and Marcel to inform our understanding of genuine presence. It is recognised that there are other important dialogical philosophers. Emmanuel Levinas is the most prominent among them. However, it will be suggested below that it is difficult to see how his complex and unusual dialogical thought could be used in any extensive way to inform the practice of pastoral care and counselling.

Our task, then, is to attempt to justify the methodological choices which have been made. We begin with the decision to use case studies to ground the theory.

## **WHY CASE STUDIES AND HOW ARE THEY TO BE USED?**

Case studies are used very extensively by theoreticians in pastoral care and counselling to demonstrate how the ideas they are proposing work out in practice. However, recently there have been suggestions made concerning an alternative approach to research in pastoral care, one which makes use of empirical methods.<sup>1</sup> In empirical research, the two basic approaches are the quantitative and the qualitative. A quantitative approach involves the use of measurement tools (such as a survey) to generate data in a form amenable to statistical analysis. The aim is to test the hypothesis one has formulated. The quantitative approach is only suitable when one is attempting to measure concrete, definable behaviours and attitudes. For example a survey could be used to find answers to questions such as: How many times on average in a twelve month period do Church of Scotland members visit their minister to discuss personal problems? Or: What percentage of regular attendees (attending once per month or more) at Uniting Church worship support the ordination of homosexuals? In the context of pastoral research, an experimental design might be developed to test the hypothesis that hospital patients suffering from a gynaecological problem prefer to receive pastoral support from a woman rather than from a male. In relation to an issue as subtle and difficult to conceptualise as presence, though, questionnaires and other survey techniques have no application.

A qualitative approach to presence, on the other hand, may yield some interesting findings. In qualitative research the aim is to interpret the meaning of a particular human experience. Typically, methods such as interviews, focus groups and participant observation are used. One could imagine that conducting interviews with ministers and/or psychotherapists in which one inquired about the moments in counselling during which they felt they were most compassionate, available, and empathic would enhance our understanding of presence. Conversely, talking with counselees who had been hurt through counselling presents as a potentially fruitful avenue of research. Reflecting with

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, L. VandeCreek et al, *Research in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* (np: Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, 1994).

such persons on the experience of suffering a counsellor who tended to be inattentive, dismissive or nonempathic could very well enhance our understanding of the links between distorted presence and shame.

While I can see the potential benefits associated with qualitative research on presence as a feature of pastoral care and counselling, a different approach will be taken in this thesis. The intention is to develop a comprehensive theory of presence using the best insights available from dialogical philosophy and applying this theory to the practice of pastoral care and counselling. Engaging in empirical research, despite the benefits attaching to it, necessarily limits the amount of time one has to interact intellectually with schools of dialogical thought. Choosing a style of research is often guided by personal inclinations. The particular interest I have is mining the subtle, rich and complex ways Buber and Marcel attempt to interpret the life of dialogue for insights which will inform the practice of pastoral care.

Having developed a theory of genuine presence in the act of care, it is necessary to connect it with practice. In this task, use will be made of the 'tried and true' method of the case study. A case study approach to research may be understood in two ways. First, a series of case histories may be analysed to produce 'case-law'.<sup>2</sup> That is, in studying a series of clinical records theory is generated. This is, of course, the method by which most of the psychotherapeutic psychologies have developed. As clinicians have reflected on what was going on in their therapeutic relationships, notions such as id, ego and superego, and Parent, Adult and Child, to name but a few, have emerged. In this thesis, limited use of this approach will be made. In chapter 9, we will study a case report offered by Irvin Yalom<sup>3</sup> in order to glean some insights about the relationship between failures in counsellor availability and shame reactions in counselees. Also, in chapter 10 we will see that a descriptor for a disconfirming behaviour found in some counsellors was developed through a study of a recorded clinical history. The notion of 'reductionism' (the counsellor 'shrinks')

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<sup>2</sup> See D. Bromley, *The Case-Study Method in Psychology and Related Disciplines* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1986), p. 2 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See I. Yalom, *Love's Executioner and Other Tales of Psychotherapy* (London; Penguin Books, 1987), chp. 3.

the experience of the counsellee to fit the mould of his particular psychotherapeutic theory) arose out of reflection on the journal of Anaïs Nin.<sup>4</sup>

The second way the case study can be used is to show a particular theory in action. We will use this approach extensively. Many articles and books in the pastoral care field use case studies to demonstrate the theory being advocated. What makes for an effective use of case study material is a close match between the theory and the case report. That is, the way the theory works out in practice should be clearly evident in the case study.

We have discussed how the counselling theory we will develop is to be grounded in pastoral practice. There is still the question, though, of which existing school of counselling theory it fits into.

### ***WHERE DOES OUR APPROACH TO COUNSELLING FIT?***

The existentialist therapist, Irvin Yalom, tells a story which illustrates well his convictions about the nature of psychotherapy.<sup>5</sup> As a student, he went with a group of his friends to visit an old Armenian lady to learn the art of producing fine cuisine. Yalom would assiduously follow her recipes, but he could never reproduce the wonderful taste sensations he experienced at the home of his tutor. One evening, while waiting at her table to receive his meal, he noticed that as the young female servant brought the food to the table, she quickly and as inconspicuously as possible threw in a range of condiments. There was the answer to the puzzle! The extra touch he was missing out on came from what the servant girl added in between the kitchen and the table. He offers this experience as a psychotherapeutic parable. While, he observes, the psychotherapeutic profession likes to attribute its successes to highly technical factors such as strategic interventions, the development and resolution of transference, and the analysis of object relations, ‘when no one is looking, the therapist throws in the “real thing”’.<sup>6</sup> It is easy to list but difficult to define the ‘extras’ which contribute so substantially to client improvement. Included in this collection of therapeutic qualities are the following: ‘compassion,

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<sup>4</sup> See A. Nin, *The Journals of Anaïs Nin, 1931-1934*, G. Stuhlmann ed. (London: Peter Owen, 1966).

<sup>5</sup> See I. Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), pp. 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

“presence”, caring, extending oneself, touching the patient at a profound level.....[and] wisdom’.<sup>7</sup>

What Yalom presents here is a conviction which unites a group of theorists and clinicians with various psychotherapeutic pedigrees into a loose school of thought which I would term ‘relational therapy’.<sup>8</sup> Carl Rogers was a pioneer in this ‘school’. He argued that the way the therapist is present to the client is the really critical factor in therapy. Importantly, in his understanding of what constitutes genuine presence in the therapeutic relationship he was significantly influenced by Buber, referring to him as one of his favourite thinkers.<sup>9</sup> He described the experience in therapy of a ‘deep realness in one [meeting] a deep realness in the other’ as an I-Thou moment.<sup>10</sup> Rogers identified three key attitudes in the project of establishing a healing relationship, namely acceptance, genuineness (or congruence) and empathy.<sup>11</sup> It is absolutely essential, he contended, that the therapist communicate acceptance or unconditional positive regard to the client. She, the client, must know that everything she is feeling -- aggression, anger, guilt and lust along with more positive affects -- is accepted by the therapist. This accepting, prizing attitude provides the client with a unique opportunity to really understand herself.

Acceptance, however, must not be confused with ‘phoniness’. In order for the therapist to establish himself as trustworthy, he must be ‘dependably real’. ‘Genuineness means that the therapist is openly being the feelings and attitudes flowing within at the moment.’<sup>12</sup> There must be, in other words, a congruence between what he is presently feeling at ‘gut level’ and what he expresses to the client.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> In my discussion of the relational orientation in psychotherapy, I do not attempt to include all possible representatives. Rather, it is sufficient, I believe, to identify a few major figures in the various schools. For more comprehensive surveys, see M. Friedman, *The Healing Dialogue in Psychotherapy* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1985), chps 2-9, and R. Hycner, *Between Person and Person: Toward a Dialogical Psychotherapy* (Highland NY: The Gestalt Journal, 1991), chp. 7.

<sup>9</sup> See C. Rogers, *A Way of Being* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980), p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> C. Rogers, *Freedom to Learn* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1969), p. 232.

<sup>11</sup> See C. Rogers, ‘A Client-centered/Person-centered Approach to Therapy’, in H. Kirschenbaum and V. Land Henderson eds., *The Carl Rogers Reader* (London: Constable, 1990), pp. 135-152.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 135.



Empathy, lastly, is the capacity to think and feel oneself into the inner world of the client. Imaginatively, the therapist is able to begin, at least, to see the feelings and personal meanings as the client does. Rogers held that the therapist who is sensitive and attuned can even grasp meanings just outside the client's awareness.<sup>13</sup>

With an orientation to helping persons engage honestly with their potentialities, to experience their existence as fully as possible, it is to be expected that at least some existentialist therapists would also find a place here. Alongside Yalom, we find Rollo May, James Bugental and Jim Lantz.<sup>14</sup> In order to get the flavour of this approach, I will highlight key features in the approaches of May and Bugental.

Rollo May characterises therapy in terms of an encounter between therapist and client aimed at helping the latter '*experience his existence as real*' [his emphasis].<sup>15</sup> For her part, the therapist needs to be fully 'present'. That is, she needs to facilitate a 'total relationship', one which operates on a number of levels.<sup>16</sup> The levels include 'realness', friendship, *agape* and *eros*.

Bugental also identifies the 'presence' of both therapist and client as the heart of therapy.<sup>17</sup> 'Looking back now', he writes, 'it is surprising to me how long I overlooked the fundamental importance of presence to therapeutic work. It is even more surprising to me how many therapists and therapeutic systems also overlook it. All too often, therapists seem to be so attentive to the content of what is being said and to their prior conceptions about client dynamics and needs that they don't notice the distance that exists between themselves and their partners.'<sup>18</sup> The art of therapy consists of reducing that distance to the point where there is a real meeting, a sharing in presence. 'Accessibility' and 'expressiveness' in the client are indicators that she is really present in the

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<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>14</sup> See J. Lantz, 'Mystery in Family Therapy', *Contemporary Family Therapy* 16, no. 1 (Feb. 1994), pp. 53-66, and *idem*, 'Marcel's 'Availability' in Existential Psychotherapy with Couples and Families', *Contemporary Family Therapy* 16, no. 6 (Dec. 1994), pp. 489-501.

<sup>15</sup> R. May, *The Discovery of Being* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983), p. 156.

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> See J. F.T. Bugental, *The Art of the Psychotherapist* (New York: Norton, 1987), esp. chapters 1-4.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

therapeutic relationship.<sup>19</sup> The former term refers to openness to the ‘press’ for change and growth coming from the therapist; whereas the latter identifies a genuine, honest sharing of subjective experience.

Given that significant use will be made of his work in chapter 6, it is particularly important that we mention here the British psychotherapist, Robert Hobson. He takes an eclectic approach to therapy; however his background is Jungian. The stress he places on relationship in therapy is evident in the name he gives to his approach, namely the *Conversational Model*. Therapist and client, alone and together, develop a ‘feeling-language’:

*Dialogue* entails the recognition of the other person as an experiencing subject. In a simultaneous acting and being acted upon, knowing and being known, there is a mutual creation of a personal feeling-language. ‘I and you’ becomes ‘I- Thou’. Empathy, a one-way apprehension of what Joe Bloggs is experiencing, moves towards a mutual understanding in which Joe and I are at once alone and together.<sup>20</sup>

According to Hobson, healing begins when the client is able to share those images of pain, anxiety and alienation which arise in the heart. It is the therapist’s dialogic presence, creating with the client a mutuality which encompasses individuality and communion (aloneness-togetherness), which facilitates this movement into *feeling-images*.

In the psychoanalytic tradition, mention could be made of the self psychology of Heinz Kohut<sup>21</sup> and the research into the place of empathic presence in psychoanalysis by Stolorow, Brandchaft and Atwood.<sup>22</sup> Heinz Kohut, as we noted in the previous chapter, is a leading theorist and practitioner in the treatment of narcissistic personality disorder. The narcissistic personality, according to Kohut, suffers from feelings of emptiness and depression, of not being fully real, and of shame and inferiority. He contends, based on his clinical

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<sup>19</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> R. Hobson, *Forms of Feeling: The Heart of Psychotherapy* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985), p. 194.

<sup>21</sup> See H. Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971); *idem*, *The Restoration of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1977); and *idem*, *How Does Analysis Cure?* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984).

<sup>22</sup> See R. Stolorow et al., *Psychoanalytic Treatment: An Intersubjective Approach* (Hillsdale, N.J.: The Analytic Press, 1987).

experience, that what these depleted selves need most is to admire ( to 'idealize') and to be admired ('mirrored').

The disorder can be traced, he holds, to large-scale empathic failures on the part of parents (they reject the child's attempts at idealization or they fail to mirror adequately). In therapy, Kohut stresses empathy and positive mirroring (prizing, approval, admiration). As the mirror and idealizing transferences are mobilised, the empathic, approving stance of the therapist facilitates the laying down of self-esteem regulating structures in the client.

Stolorow et al build on the insights of Kohut; indeed, they contend that the empathic presence of the analyst is the critical factor in effective analysis. They reject the view of classical psychoanalysis in which the analyst is seen as a detached, objective observer engaged in the 'archaeological' work of excavating archaic repressed material. Instead, they construe the analytic encounter as a dialogue between two subjectivities. Rather than interpreting analysis through a reference to the intrapsychic world of the analysand on the one hand and the interpretive skill of the analyst on the other, Stolorow et al think in terms of an 'intersubjective field' set up between the two partners in the therapeutic project.

They reject the old 'rule of abstinence' (according to this rule, the analyst must refrain from providing any gratification of the patient's instinctual urges as this militates against the attempt to bring the repressed material into consciousness). In its place, they put 'sustained empathic inquiry'.<sup>23</sup> Such a stance, they suggest, establishes the analyst as 'an understanding presence with whom early unmet needs can be revived and aborted developmental thrusts reinstated'.<sup>24</sup>

Maurice Friedman<sup>25</sup> and Richard Hycner<sup>26</sup> have developed what they call a 'dialogical' approach to therapy. It is inspired by Buber's teaching, particularly his understanding of 'healing through meeting'. The dialogue between therapist and patient Buber characterises this way:

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> See M. Friedman, *The Healing Dialogue in Psychotherapy*; idem, *Dialogue and the Human Image: Beyond Humanistic Psychology* (London: Sage, 1992); and idem, 'Buber's Philosophy as the Basis for Dialogical Psychotherapy and Contextual Therapy', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1998), pp. 25-40.

<sup>26</sup> See R. Hycner, *Between Person and Person*.

In a decisive hour, together with the patient entrusted to and trusting in him, [the psychotherapist] has left the closed room of psychological treatment in which the analyst rules by means of his systematic and methodological superiority and has stepped forth with him into the air of the world where self is exposed to self. There, in the closed room where one probed and treated the isolated psyche according to the inclination of the self-encapsulated patient, the patient was referred to ever-deeper levels of his inwardness as to his proper world; here outside, in the immediacy of one human confronting another, the encapsulation must and can be broken through, and a transformed, healed relationship must and can be opened to the person who is sick in his relations to otherness--to the world of the other which he cannot remove into his soul.<sup>27</sup>

Informed by this vision, Friedman describes 'dialogical psychotherapy' as 'a therapy that is centered on the *meeting* between the therapist and his or her client....as the central healing mode, whatever analysis, role playing, or other therapeutic techniques or activities may also enter.'<sup>28</sup>

Hycner is a Gestalt therapist who declares an interest in the relationship between the intrapsychic and the interpersonal. He argues, following the Jungian therapist Hans Trüb (Trüb himself being significantly influenced by Buber), that intrapsychic conflict or neurosis is really a 'flight from meeting'.<sup>29</sup> In dialogical work, the therapist aims to be both a real person and a 'proxy' for the world. That is, she uses the therapeutic relation to repair the dialogical bridge between the client and the community.

These therapists, then, cover a wide spectrum of psychotherapeutic theory. They indicate, moreover, that they happily use the techniques in which they were trained. What indicates their dialogical orientation is the conviction that *the therapeutic relationship is primary*. While they all recognise the benefits in using technical interventions when it seems appropriate, they are convinced that the most potent factor in promoting improvement is the quality of the relationship with the client.

The approach to counselling we will take fits into this relational 'school'. What we are endeavouring to do in our research is to describe as fully

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<sup>27</sup> M. Buber, *A Believing Humanism*, trans. by M. Friedman (London: Humanities Press International, 1990), p. 142. First published in 1967.

<sup>28</sup> M. Friedman, 'Buber's Philosophy as The Basis', p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> See R. Hycner, *Between Person and Person*, p. 56.

as possible the personal qualities and dialogical skills which enable a counsellor or pastor to make a strong contribution to the quality of the pastoral relationship.

### **WHY MARCEL AND BUBER AS THE SOURCES OF DIALOGICAL THOUGHT?**

The last question we need to address is the choice of Marcel and Buber as sources of dialogical thinking. The two other major figures in dialogical philosophy are Franz Rosenzweig and Emmanuel Levinas. While both these thinkers offer wise discussions of the relational dimension in human existence, the use of their thought for our purposes would be problematical. Rosenzweig's insights were never extended far enough to suggest appropriation in a theory of pastoral care. With reference to Levinas' unusual and sometimes obscure thought, secondly, it is only at one point -- as far as I can see -- that we can make contact with an idea which has direct relevance to the pastoral relationship.

Rosenzweig, a friend and colleague of Buber, discusses in his *magnum opus*, *The Star of Redemption*,<sup>30</sup> the central tenet of dialogical thought, namely that the human subject is not its own foundation and needs others in order to be itself. The I of the monologue, observes Rosenzweig, is not yet an 'I'; it is self-understood because it is self-addressed. 'Only in the discovery of a Thou is it possible to hear an actual I, an I that is not self-evident but emphatic and underlined.'<sup>31</sup> Rosenzweig, however, does not develop this existentially important line of thought. For that, we must turn to Buber's *I and Thou*.

In his early work, Levinas argues that sexuality, paternity and death introduce a duality into human existence.<sup>32</sup> We may grasp important elements in the meaning of alterity through these three categories. As interesting as this approach to the Other is, it does not take us very close to the particular dialogical concerns we have. However, in his recent work Levinas develops an

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<sup>30</sup> F. Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. by W. Hallo (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985). First published in 1921.

<sup>31</sup> Rosenzweig, *ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>32</sup> See E. Levinas, *Time and the Other [and Additional Essays]* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987). 'Time and the Other' first appeared as 'Le temps et l'autre' in J. Wahl ed., *Le Choix, Le Monde, L'Existence* (Grenoble-Paris: Arthaud, 1947).

idea that is of first importance in an ethical analysis of intersubjectivity, and that is *responsibility*.<sup>33</sup> In his book, *Otherwise Than Being*, responsibility is connected with the idea of substitution. To take responsibility for the other is to substitute her for oneself. Levinas uses the unusual and evocative image of the hostage to communicate the meaning of substitution.<sup>34</sup> In submitting to one's calling to be a hostage, one is freed from ennui, from enchainment to ego. As we shall see later, the connections with Marcel's idea of availability and Buber's notion of responsibility are quite strong. It is important to realise, though that substitution as Levinas describes it should not be thought of in terms of compassion, love or empathy. It precedes any act of the will, any decision to love. It is 'diachronic', 'preoriginal'. That is, before an individual chooses to live for-the-other, she has been claimed by the Good (God) for-the-other. Levinas' notion of responsibility/substitution, then, establishes the primordial base for what Marcel and Buber refer to as disposability and responsibility respectively.

While Rosenzweig and Levinas have made their own distinctive and important contributions to dialogical thinking in this century, the above discussion indicates that they do not offer us enough to build a theory of pastoral presence. Indeed, while scores of psychotherapeutic and pastoral care theorists refer to Buber and Marcel (the former more frequently than the latter), the other two seem not to rate a mention.

We have endeavoured in the last two chapters to describe and to justify the methodological choices and commitments which shape our research. The groundwork has been done, adequately it is hoped, in preparation for the task of developing a theory of pastoral presence which is oriented both to dialogical thinking and the shame dynamic.

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<sup>33</sup> See Levinas, 'Diachrony and Representation', in *Time and the Other*, pp. 97-120, p. 110 ff; and *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by A. Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981).

<sup>34</sup> See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 123.

**Part 2: Presence in Pastoral Care  
and Counselling**



## Introduction

The major aims in this second part of the thesis are twofold. First, we want to develop an understanding of the nature of genuine presence through an exploration of the conceptualisations of Marcel and Buber (chapters 3 and 4 respectively). The two key notions we will work with, as we have already seen, are *availability* and *confirmation*. However, we shall also discuss other important and related concepts. With reference to Marcel, these will include the ideas of presence as a grace, participation, and contemplation. Much of the thrust of Marcel's thought is captured by the term 'participation'. He calls for a whole-hearted, authentic sharing in being, in life, in the life of the other. It is not possible, though, to teach someone how to fully share herself: it is a grace. If a person has the grace, however, moments of profound contemplation lead her into a deeper expression of presence.

The concepts related to confirmation are the I-Thou relation, inclusion and responsibility. Again, one thought flows into the next. Buber began his reflections on dialogue with the famous notion of the meeting between the I and the Thou. Even a wordless acknowledgement between two passing strangers can be confirming. At a deeper level, one listens for the claim the other is making on one and attempts to respond faithfully and courageously (responsibility). In order to really hear that call, to hear it in its fullness, one must be able to swing over into the inner world of the other, even as one remains firmly anchored in one's own experiencing (inclusion). From one's own inner universe of ideas, beliefs and values one reaches out to confirm the inner universe of the other.

The second major aim in this second part of the thesis is to describe the two fundamental moments in pastoral care that we are working with. The foundational moment is the extension of oneself in the service of support and healing. In chapter 5, we will argue that the affinity *disponibilité* has with the biblical notion of compassion indicates its foundational role. Disposability, further, is expressed in acts of care through *belonging*. For Marcel, to belong to the other means that one is prepared to substitute her freedom for one's own. It



will be argued that this conceptualisation establishes a covenantal basis for pastoral care.

The second fundamental moment in pastoral care is a commitment to struggle with the other to help him realise his God-given psychological, spiritual and moral potentialities. In chapter 6, confirmation will be construed in terms of the facilitation of a process in which a counsellee reclaims disavowed polarities or sub-selves. A two-stage model will be proposed. In the first stage, the aim is to help the person acknowledge disowned selves. Facilitating an inner dialogue focused on positively integrating the rejected selves is the goal of the second stage.

Finally, the explicitly moral dimension in confirmation will be picked up in chapter 7. It will be argued that a greater emphasis on stimulation of conscience is required in the theory and practice of pastoral care. The link between conscience and responsibility will be established. Here, the notion of what we will call *first-* and *second-order* responsibility will be developed. First-order responsibility refers to those responses which are commonly embraced, conventional, in the family, the church, and the society. Creativity and conscientiousness define second-order responsibility. Pastors and counsellors, it will be suggested, need to promote both as they each have a role to play.

In this chapter, we will also give attention to the need persons feel for what Buber calls *reconciliation*. The pangs of conscience result in a feeling that one should do something to repair the damage one has done to the social order-of-being. An important role for the pastor or counsellor, I will suggest, is helping a person find appropriate ways to heal the wounds he has inflicted.

Hopefully, the broad outlines of our argumentation are now clear. In filling in the detail, we will begin with Marcel's interesting and challenging contribution to our understanding of what it means to be fully present to the other.

### 3. Presence as Grace and as Availability: The Contribution of Gabriel Marcel

Presence is fundamentally a gift of the self. Gabriel Marcel has observed that it is not so much the content of the communication of a person that is stimulating and revelatory, as the fact that she gives herself through that communication. For Marcel, presence is not a skill one learns, but rather a grace.

What one brings to a genuine encounter is not first and foremost an ensemble of communication techniques but one's-self<sup>1</sup> and, to be more precise, the depth one has to share. The depth in the self develops through a whole-hearted engagement with others, with life, with God. The whole of Marcel's philosophy can be understood as an attempt to describe what a genuine participation in being really means. At first, Marcel contrasted participation with being a spectator. He came, however, to see that this bipolar understanding of engagement is inadequate because it fails to take account of *contemplation*. Contemplation is one of participation's 'most intimate modes'.<sup>2</sup> Without inwardness there is no possibility of establishing the self in depth. And where there is no depth there is no possibility of a meeting in the full sense of the term. For Marcel, then, there are indissoluble links between engagement, contemplation, depth and encounter. Engagement with one's-self in contemplation is oriented to engagement with the other. The depth that I am, the grace that I am, ultimately only has meaning in the context of my capacity to give of myself to the other. This receptivity or permeability to the claim of the other Marcel calls *disponibilité*. There is no exact equivalent in English, however it is translated as availability or disposability.

This engagement with the other characterised by availability, which is at the heart of Marcel's philosophy, stands in stark contrast to the approach to

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<sup>1</sup> 'One's-self' is the term Marcel uses to refer to the self of the individual. We will follow his usage.

<sup>2</sup> Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, vol. I (London: The Harvill Press, 1950), p. 120.

commitment taken by another very important figure in French existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre.<sup>3</sup> For Sartre, authentic engagement with the claims of one's existence means assuming total responsibility for the free choices that define the project of one's life. While Marcel would agree in general terms with Sartre's insistence that the individual is free to choose her future, the aspect of freedom that the former is particularly interested in is the liberation that comes when a person wrests herself free from the constrictive grip that is self-enclosure. I am free when I freely substitute the other's will for my own. In freely disposing of myself for the other I am liberated. This particular expression of availability Marcel refers to as *belonging* to the other.

His investigation into belonging is part of his project of understanding the real meaning of *fidelity*. The problem of committing oneself to the other first exercised Marcel's mind when he wrote the entries to the continuation of his journal of metaphysical reflections (published in *Being and Having*). He was attempting to understand how one can genuinely make a promise to the other when one's disposition toward him may change. For example, one visits a sick friend and one feels filled with compassion. A second visit is promised. However, when the time appointed for the subsequent visit comes one finds that the feeling of compassion one felt so strongly earlier is now gone. One is now in the unhappy position of being reduced to a kind of play-acting.

Later, Marcel reflected on the authenticity of commitment by contrasting fidelity with *constancy*. Constancy is a counterfeit form of fidelity in which one is driven by one's own sense of honour and obligation rather than by a spontaneous desire to dispose of one's-self for the sake of the other.

The aim of this chapter is to use these metaphors developed by Marcel, namely grace, inwardness, openness, belonging, and fidelity (along with its counterpart, constancy), to begin building our understanding of genuine presence. Our discussion of Marcel's teaching on presence and availability is structured as follows. The idea of participation opens our description and sets the scene for what follows. A presentation of the notion of presence as grace is

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<sup>3</sup> O. Bollnow also contrasts Marcel's understanding of existential commitment with that of Sartre. See his 'Marcel's Concept of Availability', in P. Schlipp and L. Hahn eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1984), pp. 177-199, p. 179.

followed by a discussion of availability. Availability is described in terms of openness, fidelity and belonging.

### **ENGAGEMENT WITH LIFE: PARTICIPATION**

It is instructive to set Marcel's understanding of engagement or commitment -- key terms for the existentialist philosopher -- over against that of Jean-Paul Sartre. Whereas Sartre sees engagement as bearing the burden of one's radical freedom and choice, Marcel construes it as entering into the depth dimension of life through togetherness. In a word, Sartre focuses on subjectivity; Marcel thinks in terms of intersubjectivity.

Sartre insists that freedom is the original foundation of all decisions and actions. Causes, passions and volitions are all grounded in this original freedom.<sup>4</sup> I project myself towards my future; the trajectory of this projection is determined by me alone.<sup>5</sup> Sartre is of course aware of the obvious objection to his insistence on the absolute freedom that grounds human decision and action. It seems the case that rather than a person *making* herself she is *made* by climate, race, class, heredity, acquired habits, and so on.<sup>6</sup> He is nonetheless insistent that 'everything which happens to me is *mine*'.<sup>7</sup> He uses the example of being conscripted into war to make his case. 'If I am mobilized in a war, this war is *my* war; it is my image and I deserve it. I deserve it first because I could always get out of it by suicide or by desertion.....For lack of getting out of it, I have *chosen* it.'<sup>8</sup> The facticity of my existence means only that 'I am condemned to be wholly responsible for myself'.<sup>9</sup>

For Sartre, then, engagement is the total acceptance of one's condemnation to the freedom of choosing one's-self. All attempts to distract oneself from this burden constitute bad faith. I may choose to live as if all the 'guard-rails' which come to me from the outside -- alarm clocks, sign-boards, regulations, social mores and the like -- determine my existence, but this is a

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<sup>4</sup> See J-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by H. Barnes (London: Methuen & Co., 1957), p. 444.

<sup>5</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 450.

<sup>6</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 482.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 554.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 554.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 556.

flight from the demands of authenticity. A sincere approach to my existence is grounded in the recognition that I alone determine the meaning of my life. I, the individual, choose myself. This, for Sartre, is authentic engagement with the claims of human existence.

Marcel's term for engagement with being, with life, is *participation*. The all-important contrast with Sartre's understanding is that for Marcel participation is set within the context of intersubjectivity. Participation in being is not primarily the commitment to bear the burden of one's personal freedom, responsibility and choice, but rather *the discovery of depth through togetherness*. Marcel recognises that *contemplation*, 'one of participation's most intimate modes', is essential if one is to reach the depth dimension of life. Further, without this inwardness, there can be no genuine meeting. At the heart of an encounter is the discovery of depth together, and how can two people who live on the surface ever hope to descend to the inner meaning of their existence?

In his earliest exploration of participation (in the continuation of his journal of metaphysical reflections), Marcel works with the idea of being present at an improvisation.<sup>10</sup> He wants to contrast participation with being a spectator by referring to the self-commitment that characterises the former modality. The concept that he works with in his reflections is the *totum simul*, the intelligible whole. The idea is often used in textual analysis. One must be able to assemble the meanings of the parts into an intelligible whole in order to grasp the text's meaning. Marcel begins by observing that if one is able to recognise the unity of the improvisation one is in fact participating. The only way to constitute the various individual actions as a whole is to in some way get 'on the inside'. He goes a step further and suggests that it is not inconceivable that the participation contributes in some way to the improvisation itself. The more effective the participation the more one is actively involved in the improvisation, and the less one is able to treat it as an object of study. One is not a detached, analytical observer but a person who is fully immersed in the drama.

He observes, on the other hand, that one can turn oneself into a pure spectator. The risk here is that the *totum simul* will appear as a pure spectacle,

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<sup>10</sup> See Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. by K. Farrer (London: Dacre Press, 1949), pp. 16-20.



even a spectacle without meaning. The meaning in the improvisation is only available to one when one is actively engaged with it, when one participates in 'the creative intention that quickens the whole'.<sup>11</sup> For the spectator, there is a rift between him and the *totum simul*, and more seriously, within himself.

In the first series of his Gifford Lectures of 1949-1950, Marcel again takes up the idea of participation.<sup>12</sup> He suggests that one begins to grasp the idea of 'sharing, taking part in, partaking of' by looking at the lower end of a graduated scale of participation. Consider the cake that is brought in at a birthday party. I claim my share of it; I participate through consumption. There are other forms of consumption. I can, for example, claim my share of a collection of photographs through 'consuming' them visually.

Participation need not of course, Marcel observes, have the meaning of ownership. If we think of participation in a service or ceremony, it is a mental engagement. Rather than grasp objects, one participates in an idea (in worship, this would be God). We are beginning to move to a deeper form of participation, what Marcel calls 'submerged' participation.<sup>13</sup> He is referring to that participation with a reality, idea or value that is so intimate and all-involving that one's very being is defined by the participation. Marcel points to the relationship between a peasant and the soil.<sup>14</sup> The peasant's soil is linked to his inner being. The expression of his inner self through his relationship with the soil involves both his acts and his sufferings. '[E]ffective participation transcends the traditional opposition between activity and passivity; participation can be considered now as active, now as passive, according to the point of view at which we place ourselves.'<sup>15</sup> What I take Marcel to mean at this point is that while sometimes the peasant will act upon the soil -- with tilling implements for example -- at other times he will simply enjoy the feel of it under foot, or the smell that reminds him that he belongs to the earth.

Participation, then, involves receptivity. For Marcel, however, receptivity is not equivalent to passivity. Receptivity involves a certain prior

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> See Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, vol. I, pp. 111-139.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 115ff.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

ordering of one's feelings and mind. Here we are reminded of the fact that one receives a guest in a room, in a house, in a garden, but not out in the woods. That is, one extends hospitality in a space representing one's centre, one's own proper place. Marcel suggests that participation is closely associated with the idea conveyed in the French language by *chez*, as in the expression *chez soi*.<sup>16</sup> It does not come over so clearly in English, but 'when one says "at Smith's", for instance, that does imply that Smith is at his own centre, and that I can be aware of him as being at his own centre, not at mine, and also that Smith, to be Smith adequately, does need his own proper place that he can be at.'<sup>17</sup> It is this sense of welcoming, of inviting others into one's own prepared place of reception (to receive *chez soi*) that leads Marcel to suggest that the receptivity associated with participation is not something passive but rather constitutes an act.

A spectator, on the other hand, does not so much act as exercise her curiosity.<sup>18</sup> Consider a member of the audience at a play. She feels none of the anxiety, still less the anguish, that is associated with self-commitment. To be sure, there is a certain emotional engagement with the actors and the story they present. Her emotions are superficially similar to those of the people really committed to the story, but she is aware that there is no practical outcome for those emotions. She 'makes as if to participate without really participating' and thus enters into a 'half-serious voluntary self-deception'.<sup>19</sup>

Marcel's purpose in contrasting *homo particeps* with *homo spectans* is to highlight the importance of the self-commitment that is lacking in the latter mode of being. He realises, though, that the inadequacy in this bi-polar typology of the modalities of human existence is that it fails to take account of *contemplation*. Contemplation is one of 'participation's most intimate modes'. Contemplation is 'a turning inwards of our awareness of the outer world'.<sup>20</sup> There can be no contemplation 'without a kind of inward regrouping of one's resources, or a kind of ingatheredness; to contemplate is to ingather oneself in the presence of whatever is being contemplated, and this in such a fashion that

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<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>18</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

the reality, confronting which one ingathers oneself, itself becomes a factor in the ingathering.’<sup>21</sup> It is not possible to effect this inner regrouping when the reality that is confronting me is interpreted as a mere spectacle. All one sees in this case is an outer show; there is no desire to penetrate to an inner meaning. Nevertheless, it is true, observes Marcel, that a spectator (as a member of an audience at a play) can be emotionally engaged.<sup>22</sup> There is in this case a level of participation. He may reflect on the inner meaning of the drama that is unfolding before him. That is, he allows the story to act as a stimulus for contemplation. Marcel uses the prepositions *in front of* and *inside* to tease out the distinction between being a spectator and contemplating. A spectacle is in front of me, facing me, before me. Yet, to the extent that the reality confronting me is something more than a spectacle for me, it must also be within me, inside me.

To get at the full meaning of contemplation, though, we must go beyond the spatial imagery -- external/internal, outside/inside -- to the notion of *togetherness*.<sup>23</sup> Marcel uses the example of the contemplation of a landscape. As I make spiritual contact with the landscape, there is a certain togetherness established between us. There is an inner regrouping of my resources, and the contact I have made with the landscape is a factor in this ingatheredness. Through my contemplative act the opposition between inner and outer worlds has been overcome.

It is through contemplation that one reaches the depth dimension in human existence. Since Marcel understands the ultimate meaning of intersubjectivity as discovering depth together, it is to be expected that he would say that ‘there cannot be an encounter or a meeting in the fullest sense of the word except between beings endowed with a certain inwardness’.<sup>24</sup> The blind cannot lead the blind to safety and neither can those who live on the surface of life find the way down to its inner meaning. Discovering depth together means, says Marcel, that there is a *shared secret*.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>22</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>23</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>25</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 192.

In order to develop the idea of the shared secret, Marcel uses the example of a shy young man at a fashionable cocktail party.<sup>26</sup> The young man is concentrating on himself, gripped by an inner tension that separates him from others. We may imagine, says Marcel, that a man comes up to him to put him at ease. At first, the young man does not engage with the other fellow in a direct way, does not relate to him as a *you* but rather as a *him*. 'Why is *he* talking to me? What is *he* after?' The young man is on his guard and so he cannot really be *with* the other guest. It is 'the relationship expressed by the preposition *with* that is eminently intersubjective'.<sup>27</sup> Contrast this with the world of objects. A chair is beside or under the table, but it is not *with* the table.

In any case, let us now suppose, suggests Marcel, that the ice has been broken. The other guest says, 'I knew your parents.' A bond has been established and there is a relaxation of the tension in the young man. '[I]t is as if something gripped tight together inside him were able to loosen up. He is lifted out of that stifling here-and-nowness in which....his ego was sticking to him as an adhesive plaster sticks to a small cut.'<sup>28</sup> Now the two men are on a journey. They are linked together by a shared secret.

There is a unity in intimate relationships forged through a shared secret. On a mundane level, there are shared experiences, jokes, understandings which others are not privy to. If another person endeavours to join in she may feel like an intruder. On a deeper level, there may be 'a really incommunicable experience....about which the initiated feel that others, who did not share it in the flesh, have no right to speak'.<sup>29</sup>

In this way, Marcel arrives at the conclusion that the ultimate significance of the notion of the secret is *discovering depth together*.<sup>30</sup> Depth, he suggests, can be understood in terms of both spatial and temporal images. When two people begin to move into the region of the depths of human existence they catch a glimpse of a vast expanse that cannot be grasped by the mind. (Here we see a theological turn in Marcel's reflections.) It is as though one is standing at

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<sup>26</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 176ff.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 192.

the mouth of the ocean and one 'catches a sudden bewildering glimpse of the whole broad dazzle of the sea'.<sup>31</sup> One senses that a promise is being made, a promise of the revelation that awaits, but one can only now catch a glimpse of it. Paradoxically, however, this 'dazzling *yonder*' is not felt to be elsewhere, but within reach. '[W]e should have to describe it as a distance, yet we also feel it is intimately near us -- "Near, and hard to catch hold of", says Hölderlin, "is God"....'<sup>32</sup>

In terms of time, the deep thought, or the profound notion, is one that 'pushes well ahead'.<sup>33</sup> It takes time to reach the depths. Just as in the previous image we gazed out onto the vast expanse of ocean before us, now we project into a revelatory future. A deep thought unfolds according to its own temporal rhythm; it cannot be forced. It is not just futurity, however, that is determinative of depth. Past and future are indissolubly linked in the discovery of profundity. Reaching back into the past and out into the future, gazing into the *yonder* which promises so much -- here we find ourselves within grasp of the eternal.

[I]n the dimension of depth the past and the future firmly grasp hands; and that they do so in a region which, from the relative points of view of all my heres-and-nows, and all your heres-and-nows, would have to be described as the absolute Here-and-Now, and this region where the *now* and the *then* tend to merge, as the *near* and the *far* did in our previous illustration, would and could be nothing other than Eternity....<sup>34</sup>

Participation in being, in life, is the discovery of depth in togetherness.

Ultimately, it is a participation in Being-Itself, in God.

### **PRESENCE AS A GRACE**

As we have just seen, the depth dimension in life emerges through communion. Communion is more profound than communication. In an important passage from the first volume of *The Mystery of Being*, Marcel distinguishes these two forms of being present to another. He refers to the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>33</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

situation where one is sitting in a room with another person, but somehow the other fails to make his presence felt. While one can communicate with him, there is no communion. There is, though, the opposite experience. A person really does make his presence felt, and it is stimulating and revelatory. I discover something in myself that I had not seen before. It is worth quoting Marcel's analysis at some length:

We can.....have a very strong feeling that somebody who is sitting in the same room as ourselves, sitting quite near us, someone whom we can look at and listen to and whom we could touch if we wanted to make a final test of his reality, is nevertheless far further away from us than some loved one who is perhaps thousands of miles away or perhaps, even, no longer among the living. We could say that the man sitting beside us was in the same room as ourselves, but that he was not really *present* there, that his *presence* did not make itself felt. But what do I mean by presence, here? It is not that we could not communicate with this man.....Yet something essential is lacking. One might say that what we have with this person, who is in the room, but somehow not really present to us, is communication without communion: unreal communication, in a word. He understands what I say to him, but he does not understand *me*.....By a very singular phenomenon indeed, this stranger interposes himself between me and my own reality, he makes me in some sense also a stranger to myself; I am not really myself while I am with him.

The opposite phenomenon, however, can also take place. When somebody's presence really does make itself felt, it can refresh my inner being; it reveals me to myself, it makes me more fully myself than I should be if I were not exposed to its impact.<sup>35</sup>

It is not possible, Marcel observes, to teach someone how to make her presence felt. It would be like attempting to teach a person to be charming. We should not regard charm and presence as simply identical.<sup>36</sup> Charm, nonetheless, is one of the ways in which a person makes her presence felt. Marcel reflects systematically on the nature of charm in his *Metaphysical Journal*.<sup>37</sup> It is a grace; it 'appears to decline with the decline of the gratuitous element in behaviour, or when a person's attention is more and more taken up with precise and specifiable ends'.<sup>38</sup> If one tries to will charm, the result is a tension that militates against one's attempt to be charming. It cannot be forced or

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>37</sup> See Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, trans. by B. Wall (London: Rockliff, 1952), pp. 300-301.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.



manufactured; it is 'the presence of the person round what he does and what he says'.<sup>39</sup> It is not possible to isolate the quality or qualities which constitute a charming person. Charm is beyond conceptualisation; it is that elusive factor that makes for what Marcel elsewhere refers to as a *lively* person.<sup>40</sup> (This latter term probably captures Marcel's intention better for contemporary readers; we tend to think of a 'charming' person as somewhat false.) The really alive person has a 'taste for life' and showers it around him; so that quite apart from any talents possessed or achievements recorded his presence is creative. For Marcel, charm cannot be considered as merely incidental to human existence. He makes the bold claim that charm can be linked 'with all that is most metaphysical in the personality, with the quality which is irreducible and incapable of being objectivised -- the quality which is doubtless only another facet of what we call existence'.<sup>41</sup>

Charm is one way a person makes her presence felt, one way in which communion is facilitated. While the experience of communion is real and is easily identified when it happens, it is very difficult to conceptualise. It is not possible through an analysis of an experience of communion to isolate the words, phrases and gestures that produced it. The revelatory and stimulating qualities of communion, observes Marcel, come not so much from the content of the words, from the style of the gestures, of the other, but from he himself who says the words, who makes the gestures.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, communion, and the presence that is associated with it, is *a grace*. Presence is beyond knowledge, beyond teachable techniques. 'It would be obviously utopian to hope that one can teach a man the art of making himself present to the other. One can teach only gestures and grins. This art is truly a grace; and inversely not to possess it is a disgrace.'<sup>43</sup> The non-objective character of presence does not mean, however, that it is simply a subjective reality. It is, in fact, more appropriate to

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>40</sup> See Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, I, p. 139.

<sup>41</sup> Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, p. 301.

<sup>42</sup> See Marcel, 'Presence and Immortality', in T. Busch ed., *The Participant Perspective: A Gabriel Marcel Reader* (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1987), pp. 245-264, p. 256.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

speak of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is 'essentially an openness'.<sup>44</sup> An openness to the claims of the other is what Marcel calls *disponibilité* or availability.

### **PRESENCE AS AVAILABILITY**

As Otto Friedrich Bollnow has observed, Marcel's identification of availability as a virtue constitutes a genuine discovery in the field of ethics.<sup>45</sup> Availability, however, does have close links with *agape*, a virtue which has of course received a great deal of attention in theological ethics. Thinkers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Anders Nygren, Reinhold Niebuhr and Gene Outka have all provided in-depth ethical analyses of *agape*.<sup>46</sup> They focus on issues such as equal regard -- the ethical requirement that love be impartial -- and the relationship between self-love and self-giving (or, as some insist, self-sacrifice). Marcel, though, has his own way of approaching the giving of one's-self. He asks questions such as: What does it mean to promise to be there for the other? (the question of fidelity) and: What does it mean to say to the other, 'I belong to you'? Fidelity and belonging are grounded in openness, being permeable, to the call of the other.

#### ***Availability as Openness***

Marcel develops the link between receptivity and disposability in an essay in *Creative Fidelity* entitled 'Phenomenological Notes on Being in a Situation'.<sup>47</sup> To exist with others, he observes, is to be exposed to influences. It is not possible to be human without to some extent being permeable to those influences. Permeability, in its broadest sense, is associated with a certain lack of cohesion or density. Thus, the fact of being exposed to external influences is linked with a kind of *in-cohesion*. I am 'porous', open to a reality which seeks to communicate with me. 'I must somehow make room', writes Marcel, 'for the other in myself; if I am completely absorbed in myself, concentrated on my

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. O. Bollnow, 'Marcel's Concept of Availability', p. 182.

<sup>46</sup> See G. Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) for an overview of the various ethical treatments of *agape*.

<sup>47</sup> See Marcel, 'Phenomenological Notes on Being in A Situation', in *Creative Fidelity*, trans. by R. Rosthal (New York: The Noonday Press, 1964), pp. 82-103, p. 87ff.

sensations, feelings, anxieties, it will obviously be impossible for me to receive, to incorporate in myself, the message of the other. What I called incohesion a moment ago here assumes the form of disposability...'<sup>48</sup>

Disposability, then, is closely associated with receptivity. As we saw above, receptivity involves a readiness to make available one's personal centre, one's ownmost domain. We receive others in a room, in a house, or in a garden, but not on unknown ground or in the woods. Receptivity means that I invite the other to 'be at home' with me. A home receives the imprint of one's personality; something of myself is infused into the way my home-space is constructed. Contrast this with 'the nameless sadness' associated with a hotel room; this is no-one's home. To share one's home-space is disposability or availability because '[t]o provide hospitality is truly to communicate something of oneself to the other'.<sup>49</sup>

The meaning of hospitality can also be broadened to include receiving into one's-self the appeal of another for understanding and compassion.<sup>50</sup> When I open myself to the call of the other to be with her in her pain and confusion, I am able to spontaneously feel with her. The intonation of my words, my facial expressions, perhaps my tears, say to her that I am with her in her suffering. Contrasted to this responsiveness, however, there is an indisposability which Marcel refers to as an 'inner inertia' or 'spiritual asthenia'.<sup>51</sup> The distress of the other is experienced as something alien; I simply cannot receive it into my ownmost sphere. To illustrate this fundamental lack of responsiveness, Marcel contrasts the mundane scenario of a person asking for information which is not at one's disposal with the case of a person appealing to one's sympathy.<sup>52</sup> In the first case, I must respond to a concrete question such as, What is the population of Rome? I go through my 'file' of information and find that there is nothing

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>50</sup> It is interesting to observe that Henri Nouwen also thinks of hospitality as a healing power (see his *The Wounded Healer* [New York: Doubleday, 1972], p. 91ff.) Hospitality in a ministry of pastoral care, suggests Nouwen, involves *concentration* and *community*. Thus, one needs, first, to be able to pay attention to one's guest without intention. That is, one disposes one's-self (to use Marcelian language) through refusing to entertain thoughts of what one can get from the other. And secondly, one offers community by sharing in the common human struggle with fear, loneliness, anxiety and confusion (woundedness as a resource in healing).

<sup>51</sup> See Marcel, 'Belonging and Disposability', in *Creative Fidelity*, pp. 38-57, p. 50.

<sup>52</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

available in relation to this question. Marcel then moves to the appeal for understanding.

Here again I must furnish a response but it will be of a completely different kind; it could turn out that this response which involves my feeling is not within my power to draw out of myself. I do not succeed in summoning forth the sympathy which is entreated. I would have wished it to be otherwise and it is painful to deceive my questioner, but what can I do? I can only utter certain formulas I have in mind which are part of my repertory and seem to suit the present circumstances; perhaps I can find it possible to give them a sympathetic intonation, but in any case I am only reading something out of a catalogue; this reaction is relevant only to having as in the case of the file above; it has nothing in common with that positive human sympathy to which the other person appeals and which I really do not feel. The suffering of the other person is alien to me and I do not succeed in making it my own.<sup>53</sup>

The only way to break out of this 'self-obsession', according to Marcel, is by 'submerging oneself suddenly in the life of another person and being forced to see things through his eyes'.<sup>54</sup> One cannot break out of this 'inner inertia' on one's own; it is through the presence of another person that this 'miracle' is accomplished. The miracle does not, of course, happen automatically; one must be open, responsive, to the appeal of the other.

We are, however, still left with the questions, Why am I non-responsive to the suffering of the other? Why do I feel opaque, non-permeable?<sup>55</sup> Marcel believes that nonavailability is associated with the tendency to see one's existence in terms of possession. I will treat myself as indisposable 'just so far as I construe my life or being as a having which is somehow quantifiable, hence as something capable of being wasted, exhausted or dissipated'.<sup>56</sup> In this attitude, I become like a person who knows that his small sum of money must last a very long time. I become afflicted with an anxiety and a concern which discourage self-giving. These negative affects are 'reabsorbed into a state of inner inertia'.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp. 50-51.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>55</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

If I think of my emotional resources in terms of having, in terms of a non-renewable resource to be jealously guarded, I will find it almost impossible to promise myself to the other. Marcel is very interested in the problem of making a commitment to be there for the other. He wants to establish the metaphysical base for fidelity. However, here his focus is not so much on the issue of emotional 'stinginess' as on the change in feeling states which is so often associated with the lapse of time between promising and delivering the promise.

### *Availability as Fidelity*

In the continuation of his journal, Marcel concerns himself with the metaphysical problem of committing one's future.<sup>58</sup> He notes, first, that all promises are 'partly unconditional'.<sup>59</sup> I cannot make a commitment to another person without setting aside certain variables. Suppose I promise to go and see a person tomorrow. I cannot commit myself to a continued experience of the desire I feel now, nor can I guarantee that I will not be attracted by a rival opportunity. Marcel believes that there is an important distinction to be made between the committal in itself and one's future feeling state. To highlight these considerations, Marcel presents the case of a promise to re-visit an invalid friend. It is a

promise moved by a wave of pity: he is doomed, he knows it, he knows I know it. Several days have gone by since my visit. The circumstances which dictated my promise are changed; I have no room for self-deception about that. I should be able to say -- yes, I even dare assert -- that he still inspires the same compassion in me. How could I justify a change in the state of my feelings, since nothing has happened since which could have the power to alter them? And yet I must in honesty admit that the pity I *felt* the other day, is today no more than a theoretical pity. I still judge that he is unhappy and that it is right to be sorry for him, but this is a judgment I should not have dreamed of formulating the other day. There was no need. My whole being was concentrated into an irresistible impulse towards him, a wild longing to help him, to show him that I was on his side, that his sufferings were mine. I have to recognise that this impulse no longer exists, and it

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<sup>58</sup> See *Being and Having*, pp. 41-54.

<sup>59</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 42.

is no longer in my power to do more than imitate it by a pretence which some part of me refuses to swallow.<sup>60</sup>

There seems to be here an inescapable dilemma. The self I am today feels compassion, but the self I will be tomorrow may not. Thus, all commitment to being there for the other seems to depend on committing the self-I-am-not. One is reminded of Sartre's depiction of human reality as having to not-be what it is and to be what it is not.<sup>61</sup> The present is a flight towards the self I have to be but am not. Indeed, Marcel seems to be thinking of Sartre when he states that 'a consistent phenomenism...asserting that the ego coincided with its immediate present, ought to exclude even the possibility of commitment; for indeed, how could I bind someone else, a someone whom, by definition, I cannot know because he does not yet exist?'<sup>62</sup> For Sartre, I can only commit myself to choosing myself; any faith in the power of commitment to the other is misguided because of the constant threat that tomorrow will bring the nihilation of my promise. In bad faith, we attempt to distract ourselves by pretending that we can avoid the anguish of our freedom. We apprehend the breaking of a promise, like any reversal, as 'needing to be mentioned merely as a reminder, as not concerning me'.<sup>63</sup> Through a self-deception, we come to think of the possible we have ruled out (breaking the promise) as belonging to another person. 'Such then is the totality of processes by which we try to hide anguish from ourselves; we apprehend our particular possible by avoiding considering all other possibles....The chosen possible we do not wish to see as sustained in being by pure nihilating freedom, and so we attempt to apprehend it as engendered by an object already constituted, which is no other than our self, envisaged and described as if it were another person.'<sup>64</sup>

It is at this point that we see the stark contrast between the two existentialist philosophers. Characteristically, Sartre adopts a rather gloomy perspective on human existence, whereas Marcel's thought is built on a foundation of hope and joy. While the former sees the attempt to abstract from,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-48.

<sup>61</sup> See Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 123.

<sup>62</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, p. 42.

<sup>63</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 41.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 43.



to discount, a falling away from one's commitment as bad faith, the latter locates it 'at the very core of [one's] promise' and sees it as giving the promise 'its peculiar weight and worth'.<sup>65</sup> Marcel rejects the idea of the basic fidelity being fidelity to myself. If this is the case, I betray myself through a self-deception. I deny myself, 'not my being but my becoming; not what I am today but what I shall perhaps be tomorrow'.<sup>66</sup> He points to the fact that the way to overcome the problems associated with splitting the 'I' into present-I and future-I is to focus on fidelity to a *unity*.

This unity is just me; it is a single unvarying principle....which insists on its own continuity. The fidelity is no longer to a life-process, a 'becoming', for this is meaningless, but to a *being* which I can see no possibility of distinguishing from myself. And so I escape from the mirage of a tomorrow which loses its colour as it sharpens its outlines.<sup>67</sup>

For Marcel, this line of thought provides the way out of what seems to be the impossibility of being sincere and faithful at the same time. The supra-temporal identity of the subject is the basis for making it a point of honour to fulfil a commitment. Creative fidelity means the capacity to relegate the possibility of breaking a promise to the status of *temptation*.<sup>68</sup> When I commit myself, I 'grant in principle that the commitment will not again be put in question'.<sup>69</sup> To adopt this point of view is not to fall into self-deception or bad faith, but rather to engage with one's integrity as a person.

Fidelity, Marcel suggests, should be contrasted with *constancy*.<sup>70</sup> Constancy may be thought of as 'the rational skeleton of fidelity'.<sup>71</sup> Being constant is a way of relating which can be defined in terms of 'perseverance in a certain goal', in terms of 'immutability'.<sup>72</sup> While these elements also enter into fidelity, there is another all-important factor in being faithful, namely, *presence*.

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<sup>65</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, p. 49.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>68</sup> See Marcel, 'Creative Fidelity', in *Creative Fidelity*, pp. 147-174, p. 162.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>70</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 153-156.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153. We encounter here what I think is a terminological difficulty. To be constant in a relationship is actually a virtue. However, Marcel uses the term in a pejorative sense. A term such as 'counterfeit fidelity' conveys his meaning more accurately.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

Presence casts off 'the feeling of *staleness*, of *rancidity*' which taints a purely formal adherence to the obligations of a promise.<sup>73</sup> As we have seen, it not easy to objectify the meaning of a presence which is stimulating and life-giving. The best way to describe it is to say that the other makes me feel as if he is really *with* me.

Constancy is oriented to one's-self. *I* need to feel satisfied that *I* have been a trustworthy, reliable friend. I want to feel as if my conscience is clear. There is in my mind an ideal of what a good friend is, and I wish to avoid the distress, the shame, that comes with a sense of falling short of that ideal. Marcel gets right to the core of the distinction between constancy and fidelity when he says, 'I am constant for myself, in my own regard, for my purpose, -- whereas I am *present* for the other, and more precisely: for *thou*.'<sup>74</sup>

Consider this scenario. I am careful to fulfil all my obligations and I may feel justified in making the judgement that I have been a faithful friend to X. But how can I really think that I can give myself the title, 'faithful friend'? The real question, Marcel points out, is, How does the situation seem to X?

Assuming that X learns in some way or other that I have behaved towards him in a *conscientious* way, it is likely that he will release me from this obligation at least in his conscience; there is then the possibility that he will say to me with an intonation that can have infinite variations: "Don't think you are obligated to me..." To be sure, he knows that my conduct has been irreproachable; however, or rather because of this very thing, something has been shattered within him; we can even say that in his view a certain value has been lost and that what remains is only straw--and it is here that we see the problem of fidelity dawn, strictly speaking.<sup>75</sup>

A formal commitment to obligations, a doing-for without the spontaneity and spark of being-with, is only the empty shell of fidelity. The genuinely faithful person says in her heart not the soulless words 'I will do for you what honour requires', but rather the fully committed, 'I belong to you'.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

### *Availability as Belonging*

We seem to be on dangerous ground in speaking about *belonging* to another person. It seems as if I must disenfranchise myself in giving myself away. Do I not in this act give up my personal autonomy? Marcel is acutely aware of the pit-falls associated with conceiving of disposability in terms of belonging. He begins his analysis<sup>76</sup> with the case of servanthood. If I assert, he says, of a servant 'he belongs to me', I treat him as a thing acquired, as something to be disposed of as I wish.<sup>77</sup> Everything changes, though, if I declare to another person, 'I belong to you'. 'Jack, I belong to you', means 'I am opening an unlimited credit account in your name, you can do what you want with me, I give myself to you'.<sup>78</sup> As the moral theologian, Robert Gibbs,<sup>79</sup> observes, the use of the name, 'Jack', is important here. I am speaking to a unique person, to a *thou*. The claims associated with belonging can only be communicated in the first person.

The fact that I give myself to you does not mean that I am your slave. I establish my freedom in the very act of freely giving myself to you. '[T]he best use I can make of my freedom is to place it in your hands; it is as though I freely substituted your freedom for my own; or paradoxically, it is by that very substitution that I realize my freedom.'<sup>80</sup> (Here we are reminded of Jesus' teaching on gain through loss. See, for example, Mk 8:35; Mk 9:35; Jn 12:24.)

Another important dialogical philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, also identifies the fundamental role of substitution in giving oneself to the other.<sup>81</sup> There is an inescapable election by the Good (ultimately designated by Levinas as God) to responsibility for the other; that is, to a substitution of oneself for the other.<sup>82</sup> Like Marcel, he sees in substitution the path to genuine freedom. To deny the call to responsibility for the other is to deny oneself. To-be-for-another, substitution, is indeclinable. That is to say, the election by the Good to

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<sup>76</sup> See Marcel, 'Belonging and Disposability', in *Creative Fidelity*, pp. 39-57.

<sup>77</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>79</sup> See R. Gibbs, 'Substitution: Marcel and Levinas', *Philosophy and Theology* 4 (Winter 1989), pp. 171-185, p. 174.

<sup>80</sup> Marcel, 'Belonging and Disposability', p. 40.

<sup>81</sup> See E. Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by A. Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), esp. chapter 4.

<sup>82</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 119.

responsibility constitutes me in my subjectivity; a denial of the call is ultimately a denial of my self. Substitution is not anti-freedom, is not bondage, but rather a liberation, it 'frees the subject from ennui, that is, from enchainment to itself, where the ego suffocates in itself'.<sup>83</sup>

While Marcel refers to a substitution of the other's freedom for my own, Levinas speaks in terms of what seems a more radical substitution, namely of *myself* for the other. As Gibbs points out, though, ultimately there is very little difference between the two notions: '[I]f the other's freedom is taken not only as his rational or moral will, but as his life, his sin, his faults, then Marcel's substitution is much closer to Levinas's.'<sup>84</sup> What Gibbs neglects to mention in an interesting comparison of the two thinkers is something which is, to my mind, of crucial importance, namely, that while Marcel thinks of substitution as a conscious decision, for Levinas the election by the Good to responsibility for the other is antecedent to any rational process. Before any conscious decision involving the will, I have been chosen for responsibility. The title of Levinas' book is *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*. Time is essence,<sup>85</sup> beings, entities, exist in the temporal stream. The Good, however, exists beyond essence, is otherwise than being, is outside the temporal flow. The Good chooses me before I choose it.<sup>86</sup> I am chosen for responsibility for the other in a 'diachrony', 'in a time without beginning'.<sup>87</sup> That is, responsibility precedes every free commitment, every act of the will. The Good has a 'pre-originary hold' on me.<sup>88</sup> 'There is', argues Levinas, 'a paradox in responsibility, in that I am obliged without this obligation having begun in me, as though an order slipped into my consciousness like a thief...'<sup>89</sup> What Levinas has achieved, I think, is to establish the ground, the pre-originary constitution, of disposability. Prior to any conscious commitment on my part, I am elected by the Good, by God, to-be-for-the-other. I am called to give to the other *in spite* of myself. Given that my very self is constituted in and through responsibility, I have no

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>84</sup> Gibbs, 'Substitution', p. 181.

<sup>85</sup> See Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, p. 31.

<sup>86</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

choice but to break out of the complacency and contentment of being-for-myself. This being torn out of my enjoyment of myself is a pain: 'Pain', writes Levinas, 'penetrates into the very heart of the for-oneself that beats in enjoyment, in the life that is complacent in itself, that lives its life. To give, to-be-for-another, despite oneself, is to take the bread out of one's own mouth, to nourish the hunger of another with one's own fasting.'<sup>90</sup> Marcel refers to a conscious decision to freely substitute the other's freedom for my own; Levinas points to an election to being-for-the-other which is prior to volition and decision, to a giving *despite oneself*. Responsibility is the pre-originary hold the Good has on us. What this means is that the only way to be free, to be true to one's self-as-it-is-constituted, is to be at the other's disposal -- *disponibilité*. Responsibility or substitution, as Levinas defines it, establishes the ground, the pre-originary constitution, of availability.

Though Marcel can assert that to give oneself freely to the other is to be free indeed, he feels the need to establish how it is possible that one can substitute the freedom of another for one's own without a disenfranchisement. In order to freely give one's-self, one must have some authority over the self that is given. That is to say, if I am to dispose of myself I must belong to myself.<sup>91</sup> In an attempt to understand what it means to speak of a belonging to self, Marcel develops the highly original notion of the self as constituted by an older and a younger brother.<sup>92</sup> He begins with the (inadequate) idea that I treat myself as an object belonging to the subject I at the same time am. The difficulty here is that 'I' is the very negation of objectivity. In adopting the formulation 'object belonging to the subject I at the same time am', one is really saying that the 'I' can be treated as a 'him', which is of course meaningless in this context. It is evident, then, that the 'I belong to myself' must be *personalised*. In this way, I can say that 'I have custody over myself or I am a trustee of myself'.<sup>93</sup> Belonging to myself means that I am responsible for myself, and this seems to suggest that I am two persons. It is as if I am at once the older and the younger brother of myself. Marcel has in mind two orphaned

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>91</sup> See Marcel, 'Belonging and Disposability', p. 41.

<sup>92</sup> See *ibid.*, pp 42-46.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

brothers; the older one being responsible for the younger one. When one begins to think this way, it is possible to construct a relational triad in which mutual availability and personal autonomy can co-exist. The components in this triad are these: *I belong to you; you belong to me; I belong to myself*.<sup>94</sup>

In a more conventional fashion, the theologian, Alistair McFadyen, arrives at the same conclusion in his Christian theory of personhood and relationships.<sup>95</sup> Crucial to the formation of personhood is what McFadyen calls 'being centred'. The centring of one's experience in the self is what constitutes autonomy. Being centred is defined as the 'achievement of organising one's life from an organisational locus within oneself; the ability to refer the features of the world to oneself and one's own location, so that the possibilities for action may be focussed on as they relate to oneself and so be self-ascribed'.<sup>96</sup> I refer my experience of the world to my personal centre and thereby ensure that my actions are self-ascribed. This is another way of stating Marcel's idea that 'I belong to myself'. The normative pattern for dialogue, in McFadyen's schema, is built on the understanding that 'we are properly centred as persons only by being directed towards the true reality of other personal centres: we become truly ourselves when we are truly for others'.<sup>97</sup> In Marcel's language, I avoid the self-constricting egoism potentially associated with the 'I belong to myself' when I simultaneously assert that 'I belong to you' and 'You belong to me'.

McFadyen points to the fact that in a Christian understanding mutual giving in a relationship is grounded in the presence and power of Christ. It is our faith in Christ and the grace of his sustaining love which allows us to risk ourselves with others: 'The otherness of other people, including their brokenness, does not pose a threat of disintegration for those who live in the knowledge that they are upheld as integral beings in the presence of Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and in the love and acceptance of God and/or others: who are, in other words, empowered by the Spirit, conformed to Christ

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>95</sup> See A. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chapter 5.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 312.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 151.



and called into responsibility before God and others.<sup>98</sup> In Marcel's terminology, belonging to others is grounded in a belonging to Christ.<sup>99</sup> He acknowledges that there may be an initial revolt against Christ's claim that I belong to him. It seems as if Christ is exerting a tyranny over me. But, says Marcel, what frees this claim from any possibility of tyranny is the fact that, in a sense, Christ is not really someone else but 'more internal to me than myself'.<sup>100</sup> His right is exercised not in terms of power but of love. If I can but overcome my unproductive resistance to what seems a tyrannical claim, I am set free from the strangulating grip of egoism.

[W]ho am I to pretend that I do not belong to You? The point really is that if I belong to You, this doesn't mean: I am Your possession; this mysterious relation does not exist on the level of having as would be the case if You were an infinite power. Not only are You freedom, but You also will me, You arouse me too as freedom, You invite me to create myself, You are this very invitation. And if I reject it, i.e. Thou, if I persist in maintaining that I belong only to myself, it is as though I walled myself up; as though I strove to strangle with my own hands that reality in whose name I believed I was resisting You.<sup>101</sup>

I belong to myself; I belong to Christ; I belong to you; you belong to me. With these statements, Marcel creatively constructs an understanding of availability which holds together personal autonomy and freedom on the one hand, and genuine giving of the self to others and to Christ on the other. Christ is the ground of the free act in which I substitute your freedom for mine, just as you substitute mine for yours. If this is a slightly clumsy way of putting it, one might prefer to say that in Christ we come to realise that we cease to belong to ourselves and so we 'transcend one another in the very heart of *our love*'.<sup>102</sup>

### **A FLAW IN THE NOTION OF AVAILABILITY?**

It may seem on the surface that associated with the idea of disposability is a necessary failure in self-love. As we have seen, Marcel occasionally makes extravagant statements such as, 'I am opening an unlimited credit account in your name; you can do what you want with me; I give myself to you.' It seems

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>99</sup> See Marcel, 'Phenomenological Notes on Being in A Situation', pp. 99-101.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

that he is here asking us to open ourselves to be 'used up' by others. This, of course, has no place in a constructive Christian love ethic. Feminist writers have made us especially aware of this fact. They have highlighted for us the damage that has been done in the past to untold Christian women as they have sacrificed themselves to their families and to others in living out the distorted interpretation of *agape* promoted so freely in many of our churches. In recent times, we have witnessed a concerted effort by moral theologians and by pastoral theologians such as Don Browning to replace the older notion of Christian love as self-sacrifice with the idea of 'equal-regard'.<sup>103</sup> In living by the principle of equal-regard, a person seeks to integrate a healthy love of self with her love of neighbour. One has an equal regard for self and for others. The theological rationale is as follows. One is called to love each and every person without exception because each one is created in the image and likeness of God and is someone Christ died for; one is called to love oneself for precisely the same reason. Now because one values self and others equally, one will consider the needs of the other, but one will not submit to his attempts at exploitation.

Marcel, in his statement that in belonging to the other one gives him the right to do what he wants, seems to be advocating a submission to exploitation. The statement, however, must be taken in the context of a mutual commitment to belonging. The unreserved offering of self -- 'I belong to you; do with me as you will' -- assumes an identical intention from the other. Further, Marcel does include a discussion on the role of self-love within his reflections on disposability as belonging. His treatment ends with a statement which is clearly, I believe, in support of the principle of equal-regard. To begin with, he defines self-love as a 'charity towards oneself'.<sup>104</sup> The self is to be thought of as 'a seed which must be cultivated, as a ground which must be readied for the spiritual or even the divine in this world'.<sup>105</sup> This nurturance requires patience. Harshness

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<sup>103</sup> See G. Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), esp. pp. 9-16 and 290-291; L. Janssens, 'Norms and Priorities in a Love Ethics', *Louvain Studies* 6 (Spring 1977), pp. 207-238; D. Browning, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 150-160, and idem, 'Altruism and Christian Love', *Zygon* 27, no. 4 (Dec. 1992), pp. 421-436; and S. Post, 'Communion and True Self-Love', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 (Fall 1988), pp. 345-362.

<sup>104</sup> See Marcel, 'Belonging and Disposability', in *Creative Fidelity*, p. 46.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

towards the self stunts growth. But in being patient one is also 'lucid' in relation to the self. That is, self-love does not come with a licence to overlook one's moral failings and defects. Self-love, properly understood, incorporates both 'distance from and nearness to the self'.<sup>106</sup> In maintaining distance from ourselves we are able to see clearly the areas we need to work on to strengthen our capacity for love. Nearness to ourselves means that we have a 'contact with ourselves that we should always have with our fellow-men'.<sup>107</sup> That is, we should show the same charity to ourselves as we do to our neighbours. It seems to me that this is precisely the notion contained in the principle of equal-regard.

Despite his occasional extravagant statement *vis-à-vis* self-giving, Marcel does not advocate self-sacrifice. He understands, I suggest, the importance of self-valuing and of rejecting attempts by others to make use of one.

### **CONCLUSION**

A fundamental concept in any existentialist philosophy is engagement or commitment. For Marcel, engagement means participation. Participation has an intersubjective focus. I participate in being, in life, when I discover depth with the other. If I am going to establish a dimension of depth in myself I must engage in contemplation, a high form of participation. Contemplation, we have seen, is a kind of 'ingatheredness' in which I establish a 'togetherness' with the reality confronting me. In the absence of inwardness, there is no possibility of encounter in the fullest sense of the term. Those who float across the surface of life cannot possibly penetrate its inner meaning. The contact with others they initiate is necessarily without that dimension of depth which characterises genuine meeting.

A genuine meeting, communion, takes place when the other makes her presence felt. It is very difficult to identify precisely what it is that produces this experience. It is not so much the words a person speaks as *she herself* who is speaking them that is stimulating in an encounter. In this way, we have learned

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

to think of presence as a grace. It is beyond knowledge and the teaching of techniques.

We have also seen that Marcel has developed his own unique concept to describe genuine presence, namely *disponibilité*. To be available to the other is to be open, permeable, to his claims. I receive the other *chez soi*. I open my sphere of ownness, my personal centre, to him.

Being available also means that I commit myself to being there for the other. We have observed that Marcel struggles to understand how in promising oneself one can maintain sincerity. I promise to visit a friend who is seriously ill. The time for the visit arrives and I am unable to feel the compassion I felt when I made the promise. Now my attempt to be with my friend in his distress has the feeling of play-acting. At the core of this problem is the fact that in a promise I seem to be binding someone who I am not (i.e. the self I will become). We have discovered, however, that there is a way out of this dilemma, namely, that fidelity is possible because, having made a commitment, one can decide never again to put it into question. Any thought of a reversal is relegated to the rank of a temptation.

We have also learned to distinguish fidelity from constancy. Fidelity is grounded in presence, in a genuine being-with-the-other; whereas constancy has an egocentric orientation. I fulfil my obligations to the other to ease my conscience, to satisfy my desire to live up to my sense of honour. The person who is constant feels he has gone far enough when he can say, 'I have fulfilled all my obligations to you', whereas the faithful friend extends himself to the point of saying, 'I belong to you'.

It seems dangerous to speak in terms of 'belonging' to another person. Does this mean I become her slave? Marcel has provided us with a thoughtful and creative analysis which constructs disposability in such a way that the demands of both self-valuing and self-giving are met. This analysis has four components: I belong to Christ, I belong to myself, I belong to you, you belong to me. It is because we belong to each other and to Christ that we can say that 'we transcend each other in the very heart of *our love*'.

## 4. Presence as I-Thou Relation and as Confirmation: The Contribution of Martin Buber

The purpose of this chapter is to use Martin Buber's dialogical philosophy to add to our understanding of what constitutes genuine presence. An ontology of the other can either start with subjectivity or with relation. While existentialist thinkers such as Sartre and Heidegger<sup>1</sup> locate authentic

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<sup>1</sup> The fact that Heidegger interprets the mode of life of *Dasein* (left untranslated and means human being; literally 'there-being'; indicates that human existence is always in-the-world as opposed to enclosed within a subject) as primarily Being-with may seem to indicate that it is inappropriate to characterise his understanding of existence in terms of self-being, in terms of the relation of an individual to her own being (see *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson [London: SCM Press, 1962], pp. 149-169 for his analysis of Being-with). The salient fact, however, is that the being-with-others of *Dasein* is construed by Heidegger in terms of a 'fall' into the 'they'. Like Kierkegaard's 'crowd', the 'they' is the 'everyday-averageness' which rounds off, so to speak, the sharp edges of human existence. The fall into the 'crowd' is a falling away from the challenges associated with authentic existence. In everyday life, one absorbs oneself in the daily round of activities in an attempt to suppress the anxiety into which one has been 'thrown'. One is anxious because one must live 'ahead of oneself' (p. 236). Confronted, on the one hand, with the self one can potentially be through choice and commitment, and on the other with the end to the self (death), one lives essentially in a state of *care* (see *BT*, pps. 225-312). It is from the force that this fundamental *existential* (characteristic of existence) exerts that one flees through a capitulation to the call of the 'they'. Authentic existence, on the other hand, is characterised by a willingness to allow anxiety to grasp hold of the self. In allowing anxiety to become a real factor in one's existence, one is confronted with 'one's ownmost potentiality' for life and for death. Anxiety has the power to draw a person out of the crowd in order that he might become a self, an *individual*. '[W]ith that which it is anxious about', Heidegger writes, 'anxiety discloses *Dasein* as *Being-possible*, and indeed as the only kind of thing which it can be of its own accord as something individualized in individualization' (*BT*, p. 232). Authentic existence is construed in terms of a willingness of an individual to embrace his ownmost potentiality-for-Being. In the end, he is 'on his own'.

However, a further objection to our characterisation of Heidegger's ontology as fundamentally oriented to self-being may be raised, namely that care is not only concern and devotion vis-à-vis one's ownmost potentiality but also care-for-others, 'solicitude' (see, for example, *BT*, pp. 157-158). Heidegger, for example, observes that social work is grounded in *Dasein's* state of Being as Being-with (*BT*, p. 158). Despite the surface indications, however, we do not find here a genuine dialogical interpretation of human existence. Dialogue, as we shall see, is constituted by an *I* entering into a direct, immediate relation with a *Thou*. In solicitude, on the other hand, one meets the other not as a *Thou* but rather as a *she* or a *he* (cf. Buber, 'What is Man?' *Between Man and Man*, trans. by R. Gregor Smith [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1947], pp. 118-205, p. 175). Heidegger's conception of care-for-the-other is grounded not in the immediacy of the I-Thou encounter, but in a relationship in which a person with the skill and inclination to help fills a lack in the life of another person. This fact may not seem obvious given the approach that is dominant in contemporary welfare work. The fact that today there are a significant number of individuals in the helping professions who shape their caring relations with others around a commitment to personal presence and mutuality can be attributed in fact to the influence of personalist philosophies such as Buber's; it is not the style of care that Heidegger envisages when he describes solicitude.

existence in self-being, in communication with the self, Buber orients his thinking around the sphere of the 'between'. It is out of the I-You relation that real life emerges. Though Sartre and Heidegger developed their thought in their own distinctive and independent ways, they both used Husserl's transcendental subjectivity as a point of departure. For Husserl, the primordial reality is the transcendental subject who projects or intends a world. Buber, on the other hand, finds originality in relation. As a category of being, as a readiness, relation exists as the *a priori*. The innate You reaches out for its realisation in the meeting with the other. In order to sharpen our understanding of Buber, his thought on relation will be compared and contrasted with Husserl's intentionality schema.<sup>2</sup>

In reading *I and Thou*, one is, on the one hand, captivated by the power of the vision, and on the other, frustrated by the abstract nature of the language. Where, one asks, is the concrete guidance for the person wishing to learn the way of genuine presence? During the twenties and thirties Buber began, in fact, to flesh out the bare bones of his philosophy of the interhuman. It was during this period that he developed his thought on the nature of genuine dialogue. He identified confirmation as one of the key elements in dialogue. Confirmation is grounded in an acknowledgement of otherness. As I enter into dialogue with the other, I accept her uniqueness and particularity and struggle with her in the release of her potential as a person.

Confirmation depends on a capacity for *inclusion*. Inclusion, or 'imagining the real', is the attempt to grasp the thoughts, feelings, and wishes of the other while maintaining one's own concreteness and particularity. Through inclusion one is able to catch hold of otherness. This grasp of the particularity of the other is the first step in confirmation.

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On the surface it may seem that Heidegger's notion of human existence as essentially being-with-in-care takes him very close to Buber's dialogical approach. However, while it is true that Heidegger posits that a person is oriented to others through solicitude, his analysis is ultimately shaped around the understanding that in the essentiality of his existence the human person is alone. When he finds the courage to separate from the crowd, he becomes the One-Alone: an individual self carrying the burden of living toward his ownmost potentiality for being and not-being.

<sup>2</sup> M. Theunissen has carried out a highly nuanced investigation of the relationship between Buber's ontology of the between and Husserl's intentionality schema. See his *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber*, trans. by C. Macann (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984), chps. 7 & 8.



Confirmation is closely related to *responsibility*. Responsibility refers to a readiness to listen for the call of the other and to follow through on it. The responsible person is the one who, first of all, tunes in to the claim the other is making, and then, aware of what is being asked, applies her resources to the task of responding. Confirmation refers to a particular kind of claim, namely, a call for help in the realisation of inner potential.

Anyone familiar with person-centred therapy will immediately see in Buber's formulations of inclusion and confirmation close connections with Carl Rogers' concepts of empathy and acceptance (or unconditional positive regard) respectively. In fact, the two entered into a dialogue over their respective theories during an American Midwest conference on Buber in April of 1957.<sup>3</sup> Below we will attempt to fix points of convergence and divergence in the thought of Buber and Rogers in order to identify the unique contribution the former makes to psychological thought and therapeutic practice.

### **THE I-THOU RELATION**

A person sits in quiet, contemplative mood gazing at a lake surrounded by snow-capped mountains. Two strangers seated beside each other on a busy commuter train exchange glances in a moment of mutual confirmation. A person shares with her friend thoughts and feelings which are deep and intimate. It is in moments such as these that the I-You world is constituted. In these 'peak' experiences there has been a genuine meeting. Surrounding these fleeting moments of communion is a sea of ordinary, mundane, everyday reality. It may seem, as one interpreter suggests,<sup>4</sup> that Buber establishes a contrast between the extraordinary, 'spiritual' world of the I-You and the ordinary, routine, drab world of the I-It. The polarity, though, that Buber is really interested in is, on the one hand, the actualising power of immediacy and, on the other, the

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<sup>3</sup> See M. Buber and C. Rogers, 'Dialogue Between Martin Buber and Carl R. Rogers', in M. Buber, *The Knowledge of Man*, trans. by M. Friedman and R. Gregor Smith (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965), pp. 166-184.

<sup>4</sup> See K. Plant, 'The Two Worlds of Martin Buber', *Theology* 88, no. 2 (July 1985), pp. 282-287. Plant suggests that the I-Thou world 'could plausibly be regarded as an escapist world, with religious belief forming an escape from everyday hardships, drudgery and drabness' (p. 285). It is this 'residue' of the ordinary and the mundane which makes up the I-It world (p. 284).

depersonalising effect of an instrumentalist ethos. A direct relation is humanising; objectification produces a soul-destroying sense of alienation.<sup>5</sup>

Tönnies had already located the fundamental problem of modern life in the shift from organic, voluntary communities (*Gemeinschaft* or community) to depersonalised, contract-oriented social structures (*Gesellschaft* or association).<sup>6</sup> The modern capitalist and industrial society is founded on the canons of efficiency, production, and goal-setting. Not only material goods but persons also become objectified; they become things which can be used to achieve a purpose. This instrumentalist ethos and its alienating effects must be countered, Buber believes, through the actualising power of communion. In *Daniel*, Buber contrasts *orientation* with *realisation*.<sup>7</sup> The former describes the rational, technocratic, goal-oriented mode of consciousness rampant in the modern industrialised society. Realisation refers to the pure life experience in which two persons come to each other with their whole being. In genuine community it is 'immediacy which....makes it possible to live the realizing as real'.<sup>8</sup> Buber is under no illusions about the extent of the problem facing his society. In an early essay entitled 'Productivity and Existence'<sup>9</sup> (1914), he laments the fact that the technological, production-oriented ethos has permeated even the sphere of human creativity. There is no longer any immediacy between author and reader. A sense that the author is holding back her essential being is disturbing for the reader. The former seems only intent on producing more and more books. 'The overvaluation of productivity that is afflicting our age has so thrived and its par-technical glance has set up a senseless exclusiveness of its own that even genuinely creative men allow their organic skills to degenerate into an autonomous growth to satisfy the demands of the day.'<sup>10</sup> Buber's teaching on

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. L. Silberstein, *Martin Buber's Social and Religious Thought: Alienation and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), pp. 104-122. Silberstein traces the theme of actualisation vs. alienation through a wide selection of Buber's early writings.

<sup>6</sup> See F. Tönnies, *Community and Association*, trans. by C. Loomis (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), pp. 37-116, esp. pp. 37-41. First published as *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* in 1887.

<sup>7</sup> See Buber, *Daniel: Dialogues on Realization*, trans. by M. Friedman (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), pp. 74-78.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> See Buber, *Pointing the Way*, trans. by M. Friedman (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), pp. 5-10.

<sup>10</sup> Buber, *ibid.*, p. 8.

the I-You world needs to be set in the context of his deep concern over the alienating effect of an instrumentalist mentality.

### **I and Thou**

In the utilitarian ethos of the modern society, life with others is construed in terms of a subject-object split. The other is viewed as an object, a thing, to be used and manipulated. Buber, however, imagines a new way of speaking in an attempt to reshape modern consciousness. In place of the language of atomisation -- I, You, It, She, He -- he offers the word-pairs I-You and I-It.<sup>11</sup> A word-pair is immediately suggestive of communion. The one who speaks the word You appears as a *person*, a person-in-relation.<sup>12</sup> He is aware of his subjectivity, but he does not think of himself as an subject over against an object. Only *egos* construct themselves in terms of the over-against. Setting apart, possession, experience and use -- these are the categories the ego uses to shape her life in the world. She lives in the sphere of goal-directed activity.<sup>13</sup> She wants, perceives, feels, uses something. The person, on the other hand, is conscious of himself as being-with, as participating in being. Being-with is unmediated.<sup>14</sup> In the relation nothing is allowed to get in the way. Preconceptions, purposes, and goals prevent communion; they have no place in the world of the You.

There are persons and there are egos. Indeed, we all partake to a greater or lesser extent in both poles of existence. The I of humanity is twofold. The I of the I-You is different from the I of the I-It.<sup>15</sup> Apart from the relation, the I does not exist. 'There is no I as such but only the I of the basic word I-You and the I of the basic word I-It.'<sup>16</sup> It is my attitude to the other which establishes her as either a You or an It. Anyone or anything can become an object. There is nothing that cannot become a You. My comportment to the other will either

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Silberstein, *Martin Buber's Social and Religious Thought*, p. 127.

<sup>12</sup> See Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. by W. Kaufmann (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1970), p.112.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>15</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

generate presence or objectivity. It is my attitude which constitutes either a You-world or an It-world.

In the transcendental-phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl, the idea of an attitude constituting a world also has a prominent place.<sup>17</sup> Husserl contrasts the natural with the transcendental attitude.<sup>18</sup> In the former, the world is naively accepted as existing. The person in the natural attitude lives immersed in the world around him. Everyday he uses the things in this world to enable him to achieve his particular purposes. The person of science likewise adopts this naive attitude in carrying out her experiments and in constructing her theories. This taken-for-granted world, however, is not the place where apodictic evidence -- evidence which precedes all other evidence -- is to be found. Apodicticity is reached through a phenomenological *epoché* in which acceptance of the reality of the world is suspended. Through this phenomenological reduction the philosopher is led back to the primordial plane of existence, namely, the stream of consciousness. Descartes' *ego cogito* is the originary human act. Actually a third term needs to be added so that we have *ego cogito cogitatum*. Consciousness is always consciousness of something. Whenever I think I always have a *cogitatum* before me. This primordial world is the world of the transcendental ego. It is the transcendental ego who constitutes, projects, *intends* the world. 'Everything that is exists for me only as the intentional objectivity of my *cogitationes*. Intentionality as the fundamental characteristic of my psychic life designates a genuine peculiarity which belongs to me as a human being, as it belongs to every human being by virtue of his purely psychic inwardness.'<sup>19</sup>

Intentionality refers, first, to the *synthetic capacity* of the pure ego. I walk into one room of a house, and then into the next, and then into a third room, and so on. In a synthetic act I am able to perceive the rooms not as separate, isolated entities but rather as multiplicities which together form a

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. M. Theunissen, *The Other*, p. 291.

<sup>18</sup> See E. Husserl, *The Paris Lectures*, trans. by P. Koestenbaum (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), pp. 6-33; and idem, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. by D. Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), pp. 15-55.

<sup>19</sup> Husserl, *Paris Lectures*, p. 31.

whole -- house. The transcendental ego has the power to unite a multiplicity of perceptions to constitute an object as an identity.

A second characteristic of intentionality is *horizontality*. Every object presented to consciousness has a perceptual horizon constituted by the variety of perspectives possible for the subject. In every act of making a particular aspect of an object present there is the presupposition of the co-presence or 'appresence' of other aspects. When I look at the front of the house it is present, while the back is only appresent. I project the back as also part of the house, though it is not currently present to perception. If I walk around to the back, that which was only appresent is now present. Intentionality, then, encompasses all actual and potential perceptions.

According to Husserl's thought, the transcendental ego constitutes all sense and being. Everything is for me 'the thought of my thinking'.<sup>20</sup> There is a parallel in Buber's thought. There we find the idea that an individual, through the form of his address, constitutes either an It-world or a You-world. While this kind of parallel does in fact exist, in the end, as Michael Theunissen has demonstrated,<sup>21</sup> dialogicalism is actually the *counter-project* of transcendental subjectivity. For Husserl, the primordial reality is the transcendental ego. Transcendental reductions lead us back to the originary I, the mid-point of the world of sense and being. Everything that exists is a correlate of the pure ego's *cogitationes*. For Buber, on the other hand, the primordial reality is the sphere of the between. 'In the beginning', he writes, 'is the relation....as the category of being, as readiness, as a form that reaches out to be filled, as a model of the soul; the *a priori* relation; *the innate You*' [emphasis in the original].<sup>22</sup> A person becomes an I through a You. It is only in the relation that I become a real person. Emmanuel Levinas expresses clearly this contrast between the thought of Husserl and Buber: 'Man [according to Buber] must not be construed as a

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<sup>20</sup> Husserl, *ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> See Theunissen, *The Other*, chp. 8.

<sup>22</sup> *I and Thou*, p. 78.

subject constituting reality but rather as the articulation itself of the meeting....Man does not meet, he is the meeting.’<sup>23</sup>

In entering the I-You world, there is a release from the schema of intentionality.<sup>24</sup> ‘Whoever says You does not have something for his object. For wherever there is something there is also another something....Whoever says You does not have something; he has nothing. But he stands in relation.’<sup>25</sup> In the relation no thing, no object is intended or constituted. No purposes, perceptions, imaginings are allowed to come between the I and the You. There is simply the immediacy of presence. It is only in the It-world that intentionality operates.<sup>26</sup> The immediacy of the moment has been lost and now all I have are representations. The person with whom I shared a moment of presence and wholeness is now split apart in analysis and judgement. I constitute her as a bundle of predicates.<sup>27</sup> The person I was speaking *to* a moment ago I now speak *about*.

We address others directly on the one hand, and we talk about them on the other. Language establishes the interpersonal sphere. This becomes clear when we contrast relations with other persons with relations in two other spheres. Buber refers, first, to a relation with *nature*, but this operates on the ‘threshold of language’.<sup>28</sup> When I talk to a dog, for example, I may receive a response but never a reply. Second, in the relation with ‘*spiritual beings*’ (the immaterial entities of art, knowledge and example) there is a ‘demanding silence’.<sup>29</sup> The form ‘calls out’ demandingly to the artist -- to use that example

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<sup>23</sup> E. Levinas, ‘Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge’, in P. Schilpp & M. Friedman eds., *The Philosophy of Martin Buber* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 133-150, p. 140.

<sup>24</sup> See Theunissen, *The Other*, p. 316.

<sup>25</sup> *I and Thou*, p. 55.

<sup>26</sup> While in general I greatly appreciate the depth and perception in Theunissen’s analysis, I cannot accept his contention that in Buber’s dialogicalism the It is also released from the intentionality schema. According to Theunissen, the It that is present is not an intentional object but ‘*what is present itself*’ (*The Other*, p. 316; his emphasis). Thus it can be said, he thinks, that the It makes itself ‘independent of the representing and judging act’ (op. cit, p. 327). But it is precisely, I think, the act of representation which produces the conversion from You to It. The You with whom a moment ago I shared only the immediacy of the relation, is now constituted by me as a collection of predicates, an It. I represent her to myself as, say, the person with beautiful curly hair, a quirky sense of humour, and a sharp mind.

<sup>27</sup> See *I and Thou*, p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.



-- to be actualised. It is through the relation between the form and the artistic mind that a work is generated. Relations in the interhuman sphere, in contrast, are distinguished by the capacity of language to create address and response. In the interpersonal domain 'language is perfected as a sequence and becomes speech and reply. Only here does the word, formed in language, encounter its reply. Only here does the basic word go back and forth in the same shape; that of the address and that of the reply are alive in the same tongue...' <sup>30</sup> Language enables reciprocity. There is in the human relation an essential similarity between asking and answering, assertion and counter-assertion, loving and being loved. 'My You acts on me as I act on it.' <sup>31</sup>

While Buber uses language to set the interhuman apart from the other two spheres, he also stresses the power of silence in the I-You relation. He refers often, for example, to the glance silently exchanged between strangers. 'Speech can renounce all the media of sense, and it is still speech.' <sup>32</sup> In fact, Buber is somewhat ambivalent about the role of language. It is possible, he observes, to say You with one's lips while treating the other as an It. <sup>33</sup> The spoken word can so easily be distorted and misused. Almost without realising it, one utters the word which objectifies the other. It is difficult to address the other in such a way that his freedom is absolutely guaranteed. Marcel expresses the matter well: 'Only silence....leaves the Thou its freedom, and subsists with it in unobtrusiveness; then, spirit no longer announces itself, but *is*.' <sup>34</sup>

The moment in which the spirit simply 'is' never lasts long. Speaking-to inevitably passes over into speaking-about. There is always and necessarily a swing between presence and objectivity. 'The human being who but now was unique and devoid of qualities, not at hand but only present, not experiencable, only touchable, has again become a He or She, an aggregate of qualities, a quantum without shape.' <sup>35</sup> Buber does not, however, use the concept of the It-world in a pejorative sense. The swing from actuality to latency is inevitable, as

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>32</sup> Buber, 'Dialogue', in *Between Man and Man*, pp. 1-39, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> See *I and Thou*, p. 85.

<sup>34</sup> G. Marcel, 'I and Thou', in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, pp. 41-48, p. 46.

<sup>35</sup> *I and Thou*, p. 69.

it should be. The world of the It is an ordered one. It is reliable; it has 'density and duration'; one can turn again and again to that which has been analysed, catalogued and stored away.<sup>36</sup> It is only when the sphere of objectivity is allowed to assume a mastery, thereby pushing immediacy and communion to the margins of human co-existence, that it becomes a demonic force.

Buber characterises this movement from presence to objectivity as a swing from the present to the past. '[I]nsofar as a human being makes do with the things that he experiences and uses, he lives in the past, and his moment has no presence. He has nothing but objects; but objects consist in having been.'<sup>37</sup> In the directness of the encounter with the other the partners are caught up in a moment of actuality of being. It is not a point in time that is experienced but the 'actual and fulfilled present'.<sup>38</sup> In order to describe, analyse, or use something I must be able to 'look back on it', so to speak. I need some temporal distance in order to be able to formulate categories.<sup>39</sup>

The I of the I-You relation is not only released from temporality in the immediacy of presence, but also from the system of spatial co-ordinates we use to locate the elements in the physical world. It is only the world of the It which is set in a spatio-temporal-causal context.<sup>40</sup> A You measured, analysed, described and catalogued is transformed into an It. It becomes a thing which can be integrated into a space-time grid. The You also appears in space, but only in the context of a direct encounter in which everything else becomes a background rather than a means of measurement. The You appears in time, but only as a fulfilled, actualised presence, not as part of an organised sequence.

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<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>39</sup> It can be shown, however, that this distinction Buber makes between the present and the past is actually a distinction within the present. Theunissen identifies a making present from the past in the act of speaking about, and a 'futural present' when one is speaking to (see *The Other*, pp. 308-309). When I discuss something I re-present it. Every representation is a bringing of an attribute or attributes into present awareness. As I discuss the person I met yesterday, she becomes present in my thought and speech. On the other hand, in speaking to the other I anticipate a response. The present moment of my address is conditioned by the futurity of the response. I have handed myself over to the other and to the reply that he is formulating. My next move is not at this present moment available to me; it can only be shaped around the response that I wait on -- the response which comes from the future. With this in mind, one may say that the distinction between present and past which Buber formulates is really a distinction between a re-presented past and an anticipatory present.

<sup>40</sup> See *I and Thou*, p. 81.

If a major aim for Buber is to offer a way beyond the alienation generated through the instrumentalist ethos dominant in the modern age, it is also a significant purpose of his to show that in every encounter with a You there is an orientation to the absolute You. In the meeting between persons there is also a meeting with God. Extended, the lines of all relationships intersect in eternity. 'Every single You is a glimpse of [God]. Through every single You the basic word addresses the eternal You.'<sup>41</sup>

Every genuine encounter, those in which God is an explicit theme and those in which it is not, orients a person to God. Though a person may repudiate the idea of God, when he addresses with the whole of his being the You given to him he addresses God.<sup>42</sup> In the relation to God, there is both an unconditional exclusiveness and an unconditional inclusiveness.<sup>43</sup> On the one hand, nothing in heaven or on earth, no particular thing or being, retains any importance in the context of this relation. On the other hand, everything is included in it. Entering into a relationship with God does not involve cutting oneself off from the things of this world, but rather locating them in the context of the absolute You. 'Looking away from the world is no help toward God; staring at the world is no help either; but whoever beholds the world in him stands in his presence.'<sup>44</sup> A 'worldly' life cannot separate us from God. Only life in the It-world, in the world of experience and use, is alienating. Whenever we live in the world in truth we live in God.

Buber's vision is the actualisation of God in the world through the community of persons who actualise being through the I-You relation. It is not appropriate or even possible to banish the It-relation from the world. Rather, we are to sound the 'holy basic word' in order to humanise the world of the It. In this vision, all I-You encounters are the radii which lead from all I-points to the centre of a circle.<sup>45</sup> It is this common relation to the centre, to God, which assures genuine community and actualisation of the real in the world.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>42</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>43</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>45</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 163.

### *Distance and Relation*

More than thirty years after the publication of *I and Thou*, Buber investigated a new problem in the idea of relation. In an important essay entitled 'Distance and Relation',<sup>46</sup> he inquired into the condition of the possibility of the encounter between the I and the You. In other words, he was searching for the anthropological foundation of meeting.

Buber refers to the twofold nature of the principle of human life.<sup>47</sup> Human existence involves a twofold movement such that one movement is the presupposition of the other. The 'primal setting at a distance' is the presupposition for entering into relation. That is to say, it is only possible to establish a relation with a being which has been set at a distance, has become 'an independent opposite'.

That this is in fact the case becomes clear when human life is contrasted with life in the animal world. Animals exist in an environment (understood in the sense used in biology). Only those things which immediately concern them, with which they are directly engaged through their needs, constitute their environment. Out of the elements they utilise to meet their requirements, animals construct their realm or 'world'. An animal is totally immersed in its realm of existence. Only the human can imagine a unity which is existing in and for itself. The animal lives only in a segment of the world which exists without an horizon; the human adopts a perspective which allows her to 'grasp a totality'.<sup>48</sup> 'An animal in the realm of its perceptions is like a fruit in its skin; man is, or can be, in the world as a dweller in an enormous building which is always being added to, and to whose limits he can never penetrate, but which he can nevertheless know as one does know a house in which one lives--for he is capable of grasping the wholeness of the building as such.'<sup>49</sup> The human is able to detach 'what is', beings in the world, from herself and so establish them as independent realities. This setting at a distance establishes a world.

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<sup>46</sup> See Buber, 'Distance and Relation', *Psychiatry* 20 (1957), pp. 97-104.

<sup>47</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

In the second movement, the human turns to 'the withdrawn structure of being',<sup>50</sup> and enters into a relation with it. It is only possible to relate to that which is set apart from oneself, existing in and of itself. This view of reality is not obtained simply from the action of 'setting at a distance'. Establishing the independence of the world simply means that objectivity is constituted. It is only when I am fully present in the world, relating to it with my whole being, that I experience the world as whole and one. Buber is quick to point out, however, that the idea of establishing other entities as independent opposites is not the same as the idealist conception of the I who establishes the world<sup>51</sup> (one might add that it is not, therefore, a theory of intentionality). Rather, he means to say only that the human can cut the world away from himself and make it an independent whole; the animal, on the other hand, lives immersed in a realm constituted by things it needs and uses. It is the act of establishing the other as independent opposite which conditions the possibility of entering into relationship. The fact of distance grounds the possibility of human existence. The realisation of the human person is founded in the movement of relation. 'Distance provides the human situation, relation provides man's becoming in that situation.'<sup>52</sup> The movement which creates distance is the fundamental act which makes us human -- beings who are able to enter into relation.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>51</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>53</sup> Nathan Rotenstreich suggests that with this concept of establishing distance Buber points to the human capacity for reflection: '[W]hile introducing the idea of setting at a distance, Buber actually presupposes the fundamental position of reflection even for the sake of mutuality of the human relations. To set at a distance is to maintain a reflective attitude...' ('The Right and the Limitations of Buber's Dialogical Thought', in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, pp. 97-132, p. 111). Rotenstreich finds support for this interpretation in Buber's observation that while an animal is immersed in a realm defined solely in terms of its needs and wants, a human can lift herself out of this basic situation and grasp the world as a totality. This sovereignty, he thinks, 'can be maintained only through reflection' (*op. cit.*, p. 111). It is true that in the reflective process one gains a perspectival distance from the object of one's reflection. The abstractions which are associated with reflection are possible because one is able to mentally 'step back' from the person or thing one is reflecting on. In the immediacy of relation, on the other hand, there is no such 'gap'. However, distance in this sense is not what Buber has in mind in his idea of setting at a distance. His aim is to establish the condition of the possibility of entering into relation. He finds this in the human capacity to constitute others as independent opposites. For the animal, existing as it does in a state of absolute connectedness with its environment, relation is not a possibility. In his reply to Rotenstreich, Buber makes all this clear: 'Man...is the only living being that by its nature perceives what surrounds it not as something connected with it, as it were, with its vital acts, but as something detached, existing for itself. This "first movement," which once constituted man as such, is in no way a "reflective attitude"; it is the primal act, the

### ***Objections to I and Thou***

Over the past eighty years, countless thousands of readers have warmly welcomed Buber's vision of the overcoming of the instrumentalist ethos through the actualisation of the real in relation. A positive evaluation has also been the response of many to his articulation of the encounter with God through encounters between persons. There are, however, a number of quite obvious problems with the way the concept of relation is developed in *I and Thou*.

One such problem is the seeming impermanence of the I-You world. K. Plant observes that as the sphere of the I-You covers the 'extraordinary and the fleeting....we are left with a large residue of the I-It...'<sup>54</sup> Consequently, he thinks, the world of encounter is 'at the periphery and not at the centre of our lives'.<sup>55</sup> Plant, however, finds permanency in Buber's later formulation of the community of the We.<sup>56</sup> The We is the fellowship of those who are capable of truly saying You. It is a community shaped by the dynamic of call and response. This, says Buber, may be found, for example, in revolutionary groups working to conscientise and liberate the oppressed, and in religious groups committed to each other and to service.<sup>57</sup> While it is no doubt true that sharing in the joys and struggles of the on-going life of a community gives to the interhuman sphere the continuity that is absent from the fleeting I-You encounter, it is important to recognise that Buber sees already in the concept of relation a possibility of permanency. That is to say, he differentiates between encounter or meeting, on the one hand, and relation or relationship on the other. Relation is the primary category; there must be a relation before any encounter can take place.<sup>58</sup> Two people must be somehow connected, or at least aware of each other, before the

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primal attitude of man that makes him man' ('Reply to My Critics', in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, pp. 689-744, p. 695).

Clearly, we should reject this interpretation by Rotenstreich in which setting at a distance is linked to the reflective capacity of the human. It is an unwarranted extrapolation and only serves to confuse what is a relatively straightforward observation about the human condition.

<sup>54</sup> K. Plant, 'The Two Worlds of Martin Buber', p. 284.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

<sup>56</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 285-286; and also Buber, 'What is Man', in *Between Man and Man*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>57</sup> See Buber, 'What is Man', p. 178.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. P. Vermes, *Buber on God and the Perfect Man* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994), p. 197.



event that is encounter can take place. This becomes clear when one studies Buber's reply to Marcel's suggestion that encounter or meeting (*Begegnung*) conveys more accurately the meaning he, Buber, has in mind than relation (*Beziehung*).<sup>59</sup> For Marcel, relation (the French word which matches *Beziehung* most closely) has a mathematical connotation, suggesting as it does a connection between data or arithmetical terms. Buber, however, believes that both relation and encounter should be retained in the description of the sphere of the between:

....“*Begegnung*” signifies only something actual. He who remains with a person whom he has just met when this event is past, now meets him no more. The concept of relationship (*Beziehung*), in contrast, opens the possibility--only the possibility, but this really--of the latency. Two friends, two lovers must, to be sure, experience ever again how the I-Thou is succeeded by an I-He or I-She; but is it not often as though the little bird whose wings are crippled in this moment secretly seeks its soaring? And does not an incomprehensible, as it were vibrating, connection manifest itself at times between the moments of Thou? ....

One can only try to overcome the lack of an adequate designation through using the “skeleton word” relationship (*Beziehung*), always according to the context, next to the other, at once more concrete and more limited terms, such as meeting (*Begegnung*), contact, communication; none of them can be replaced by any of them.<sup>60</sup>

While an encounter (*Begegnung*) is necessarily a passing experience, permanency is a possibility in the relationship (*Beziehung*). Some relations, to be sure, are only temporary, but others are ongoing. This is the case with friendships and love relationships. They are characterised over time by latency and actuality. These relations continue in the possibility of the actualisation of being in the partners. The I-She is the chrysalis; the I-You the butterfly.<sup>61</sup>

Emmanuel Levinas points to what is a second potential problem in Buber's treatment of relation. He is concerned that the theory has little or nothing to say about meeting the other in his physical suffering. ‘[I]t may be conjectured’, he writes, ‘that clothing those who go hungry [sic] is a more authentic way of finding access to the other than the rarefied ether of a spiritual

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<sup>59</sup> See G. Marcel, ‘I and Thou’, pp. 44-45.

<sup>60</sup> Buber, ‘Replies to My Critics’, p. 705.

<sup>61</sup> See *I and Thou*, p. 69.

friendship.’<sup>62</sup> Obviously there is some force in Levinas’ objection. Before dealing with it directly, however, I must point out that it is not actually correct to say that Buber’s thought lives in the ‘rarefied ether of a spiritual friendship’. He is not addressing through his dialogical reflections only those persons who by inclination and through circumstance have the luxury of deep and meaningful conversations. Rather, he wants to reach those also who each day must contend with the monotony and depersonalisation of life in the factory or the office. It is here that genuine encounters -- it may be only a confirming glance -- actualise the real and humanise daily existence. ‘Dialogue’, writes Buber, ‘is not an affair of spiritual luxury and spiritual luxuriousness, it is a matter of creation, of the creature, and he is that, the man of whom I speak, he is a creature, trivial and irreplaceable.’<sup>63</sup> And again, ‘...I am not concerned with the pure; I am concerned with the turbid, the repressed, the pedestrian, with toil and dull contrariness and with the breakthrough.’<sup>64</sup>

It is still possible to argue, of course, that there is a greater degree of authenticity attached to meeting the other in the misery of physical deprivation than in the meaninglessness of monotonous, dehumanising toil. There is no doubt that the satisfaction of physical needs is more basic, more urgent, than experiencing communion with others. A hungry person does not have the luxury of reflecting on existential problems; he is driven by a desperate need to fill his belly and to survive. Nonetheless, rather than attempt to establish a hierarchy of authenticity, I am content to say -- as I think Buber perhaps would have -- that whether one meets the other in the guise of poverty or of alienation, what is ultimately important is that one responds to her call with the whole of one’s being. In the case of hunger and deprivation, naturally the most basic fact is that material help must be offered. If, however, the person helped is to maintain her dignity, the physical offering must be accompanied by the spiritual gift of You-saying.

Perhaps the most obvious objection to *I and Thou* is that the complexity of human relations cannot be captured through the I-It and I-You polarity.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> E. Levinas, ‘Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge’, p. 148.

<sup>63</sup> Buber, ‘Dialogue’, in *Between Man and Man*, p. 35.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Silberstein, *Martin Buber’s Social and Religious Thought*, p. 142.

According to Buber, one either says You or It; there are no other possibilities. This seems to oversimplify, and thus distort, the reality of the meeting between persons. In a relationship there are many shades in between presence and objectification.

Equally obvious, is the fact that Buber fails to give specific guidance *vis-à-vis* relationships.<sup>66</sup> *I and Thou* is filled with rather abstract depictions of the I-You relation. Buber refers, for example, to entering the relation 'with the whole of one's being'. It is characterised by 'immediacy' and 'directness'. The other is encountered as a 'unity' rather than as a multiplicity of characteristics. But what, one may ask, do these terms tell us in a concrete sense about how one is to act in a relationship?

In fact, Buber himself dealt with these last two objections. During the twenties and thirties, Buber shifted his emphasis from relation to dialogue. In his description of the latter, he overcomes some of the limitations associated with *I and Thou*. First, he incorporates into his thinking on the interhuman realm various gradations.<sup>67</sup> Reflexion, the tendency to view the other only as an extension of oneself, appears in a variety of guises: self-concern, self-pity, enjoyment of the self, and even self-worship.<sup>68</sup> When speaking about the various forms of perception in the interhuman sphere, Buber presents three possibilities.<sup>69</sup> One can approach the other as a collection of traits (as a scientist), or as a communicative existence (as an artist), or as a word calling for a response (as a partner in dialogue).

We also find in his reflections on dialogue specific guidance *vis-à-vis* genuine relationships. In concepts such as inclusion, responsibility, and confirmation we see the concreteness not found in *I and Thou*.

### ***BECOMING AWARE: THE START OF DIALOGUE***

How one relates to the other is conditioned by the way one perceives her. One can observe or study the other, or one can listen for the claim she makes. The one stance is characterised by keeping-at-a-distance, the alternative by

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. Silberstein, op. cit., p. 142.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Silberstein, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>68</sup> See Buber, 'Dialogue', p. 23.

<sup>69</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

opening-one's-being-to-the-other. For Buber, all dialogue starts with a fundamental awareness of the word the other is speaking.

### *Observing, Looking On, and Becoming Aware*

Buber suggests that there are three basic modalities in the perception of the other.<sup>70</sup> The *observer* operates with a quasi-scientific mindset. She is interested in a careful, analytical study of the other. Her aim is to compile a comprehensive list of traits. For the purposes of observation, the other person is nothing but a bundle of characteristics.

The *onlooker* is not at all interested in traits. Focusing on traits, he thinks, leads one away from one's real purpose. Looking on -- the artistic perspective -- involves trusting one's intuitive powers. That which is really significant about the other will show itself if only one is attentive and receptive.

Neither in observing or in looking on, however, do we find the possibility of being addressed directly by the other. The observer perceives a bundle of traits, the onlooker an existence, but the one who is *aware* perceives a call to action, feels the weight of destiny falling on him:

[I]n a receptive hour of my personal life a man meets me about whom there is something, which I cannot grasp in any objective way at all, that "says something" to me. That does not mean, says to me what manner of man this is, what is going on in him, and the like. But it means, says something *to me*, addresses something to me, speaks something that enters my own life.<sup>71</sup>

In becoming aware of the claims the other is making, one has a moral obligation to respond with all one's being.

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

In hearing a word spoken which carries with it the urgent demand for an answer, one is called to responsibility.<sup>72</sup> One has the feeling of being claimed

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<sup>70</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>72</sup> *Responsibility* is also an important concept in the thought of another major figure in dialogical philosophy, Emmanuel Levinas (see his 'Diachrony and Representation', in *Time and the Other*, trans. by R. Cohen [Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987], pp. 97-120, and *idem*, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by A. Lingis [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff,

and, consequently, that one ought to respond.<sup>73</sup> The claim is characterised on the one side by trust and on the other by loyalty (or disloyalty).<sup>74</sup> The other addresses me from a position of trust, and I can either respond in loyalty or fall into disloyalty. A loyal turning to the other, given the weightiness of the claim, will probably not receive a clear articulation. It is not realistic to expect oneself to be totally composed, ready with a well-rounded reply, able to smoothly commit oneself. But one really does want to let this challenging word penetrate the armour of one's defences. An answer is required; ignoring the claim is not an option. One gropes for words to frame one's response. '[B]ut it is an honest stammering; as when sense and throat are united about what is to be said, but the throat is too horrified at it to utter purely that already composed sense.'<sup>75</sup>

To respond to the other is to confirm her as a person. However, when Buber uses the term 'confirmation' he has a specific response in mind. One must respond to the call from the other to accept her as she is and, beyond that, to help her grow into her potential. The process begins with an attempt to include oneself in her inner world.

## **CONFIRMING THE OTHER**

### ***Inclusion***

In order to become aware of the other and her claim on oneself it is necessary, observes Buber, to include oneself in her inner world. Inclusion is the process of 'imagining the real'.<sup>76</sup> One attempts to imagine what at this moment the other person is thinking, feeling, wishing, perceiving. This can only be

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1981]). What is different about the two treatments, however, is that while Buber locates responsibility in the present of dialogue, Levinas situates it in the 'immemorial past'. According to Levinas' interpretation, the human is *elected* by God (or the Good) to live *for-the other*. Responsibility is prior to choice and deliberation. The Good has a 'pre-original hold' on the human. This election by God, however, does not reduce the human to slave status. The call is 'indeclinable' but it nevertheless comes from an authority which refuses compulsion. In our freedom, we can reject the call, but not without losing our essential humanity. The responsibility described by Levinas constitutes the ontological ground of Buber's 'answerability'. For Levinas, responsibility 'is prior to dialogue, to the exchange of questions and answers' (*Otherwise Than Being*, p. 111). Prior to the claim and the answer is the election to the for-the-other.

<sup>73</sup> See Buber, 'Dialogue', p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> See Buber, 'The Question to the Single One', in *Between Man and Man*, pp. 40-82, p. 45.

<sup>75</sup> Buber, 'Dialogue', p. 17.

<sup>76</sup> See Buber, 'Distance and Relation', p. 103; and idem, 'Elements of the Interhuman', *Psychiatry* 20 (1957), pp. 105-113, p. 110.

achieved through a 'bold swinging, demanding the most intensive stirring of one's being, into the life of the other'.<sup>77</sup>

Inclusion can also be thought of as 'experiencing the other side'.<sup>78</sup> This can be illustrated through somatic references. A man caresses a woman. He feels the touch from two sides -- with the palm of his hand and with her skin.<sup>79</sup> I attempt to experience the pain of the other. As I attempt to imagine her pain -- her particular pain and not simply physical discomfort in general -- the two of us are embraced by a common existential situation.<sup>80</sup>

Through imagining the real one endeavours to move over into the inner world of the other -- his physical experiences, his emotional state, his hopes and fears. To anyone familiar with psychotherapy, this sounds very much like empathy. Carl Rogers was one of a number of psychotherapists to show an interest in Buber's ideas on the interpersonal. For Rogers, empathy is one of the core conditions of therapy. In an early attempt (1957) to define it, he wrote:

To sense the client's private world as if it were your own, but without ever losing the "as if" quality--this is empathy, and this seems essential to therapy. To sense the client's anger, fear, or confusion as if it were your own, yet without your own anger, fear, or confusion getting bound up with it, is the condition we are endeavoring to describe.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the fact that inclusion and empathy may seem to be almost identical concepts, Buber is quick to say that there are in fact important differences between the two. He sees empathy as a process in which one 'transposes' oneself over to the place of the other. This transposition 'means the exclusion of one's own concreteness, the extinguishing of the actual situation of life'.<sup>82</sup> In inclusion, on the other hand, a person does not forfeit 'anything of the felt

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<sup>77</sup> Buber, 'Elements of the Interhuman', p. 110.

<sup>78</sup> See Buber, 'Education', in *Between Man and Man*, pp. 83-103, p. 96.

<sup>79</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>80</sup> See 'Distance and Relation', p. 103.

<sup>81</sup> C. Rogers, 'The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change', in H. Kirschenbaum and V. Land Henderson eds., *The Carl Rogers Reader* (London: Constable, 1990), pp. 219-235, p. 226.

<sup>82</sup> Buber, 'Education', p. 97.



reality of his activity, [and] at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other'.<sup>83</sup>

The 'as if' quality Rogers stresses puts, I think, his understanding of empathy very close to Buber's idea of inclusion. Thinking and feeling herself into the inner world of the client, the therapist is careful not to identify with it. She goes over in her imagination to the other side, but nevertheless maintains her own boundary, her own personal concreteness. In a later (1980) definition of empathy, though, Rogers shows himself to be much less concerned about the possibility of identification. To enter the private world of the client

means that for the time being, you lay aside your own views and values.....In some sense it means that you lay aside yourself; this can only be done by persons who are secure enough in themselves that they know they will not get lost in what may turn out to be the strange and bizarre world of the other, and that they can comfortably return to their own world when they wish.<sup>84</sup>

A clear distinction can be drawn between this definition of the empathic way of being, containing as it does the idea of laying oneself aside, and Buber's description of imaging the real. As we have seen, Buber insists on the importance of maintaining the actual situation of one's life when attempting to enter the experience of the other. For him, there is an important difference between empathy and inclusion. It is not simply a desire for terminological precision which motivates him here. The reason he insists on the maintenance of one's own concreteness is that this is absolutely necessary if one is going to confirm the other in his concreteness.<sup>85</sup> I can only confirm the other in his particularity from my own particular life situation. It is not possible to affirm the other while 'lost' in his world. Rogers also stresses the importance of affirmation or, as he calls it, *acceptance*. He would, of course, agree that in order to communicate unconditional positive regard one must first return to one's own world. In spite of this, it is not the case, as we are about to see, that confirmation and acceptance can simply be equated.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>84</sup> C. Rogers, *A Way of Being* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980), p. 143.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. M. Friedman, *Dialogue and the Human Image: Beyond Humanistic Psychology* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), p. 52.

### *Confirmation as a Step Beyond Acceptance*

For Buber, dialogue is founded on the confirmation of otherness.

Maurice Friedman rightly points out that an affirmation of the uniqueness of another person rests on the human capacity to both establish distance and enter into relation.<sup>86</sup> Buber's notion of confirmation is indissolubly linked to his understanding of the two ontological movements that make us human in distinction to other animals. I can only confirm the uniqueness of the other through first establishing her in her concrete, particular existence. Setting at a distance necessarily precedes affirming uniqueness in relation.

Particularity implies *difference*. To acknowledge the particularity of others I must be able to grasp the breath of potential difference. I become aware 'that this one or that one does not have merely a different mind, or way of thinking or feeling, or a different conviction or attitude, but has also a different perception of the world, a different recognition and order of meaning, a different touch from the regions of existence, a different faith, a different soil...'<sup>87</sup> The challenge is to live in genuine openness to alternative opinions and worldviews without losing the seriousness of the struggle for truth and justice. A debate can go in one of two ways.<sup>88</sup> If I fail to acknowledge the independence and individuality of the other, I engage not in dialogue but in propaganda, manipulation and self-promotion. The desire to influence is expressed through an injection of what I take to be right and true. My aim, whether or not I am fully conscious of it, is to deceive the other into thinking that this view I inject is really something coming from within her, and needing only my assistance to allow it to rise into full awareness.<sup>89</sup> My partner, rather than being allowed the freedom and dignity of otherness, is constituted simply as an extension of my existence. This Buber terms *reflexion*, and it happens

when a man withdraws from accepting with his essential being another person in his particularity--a particularity which is by no means to be

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<sup>86</sup> See M. Friedman, 'Reflections on the Buber-Rogers Dialogue', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 34, no. 1 (Winter 1994), pp. 46-65, p. 58.

<sup>87</sup> Buber, 'Question to the Single One', pp. 61-62.

<sup>88</sup> See Buber, 'Distance and Relation', p. 102.

<sup>89</sup> See Buber, 'Elements of the Interhuman', p. 110.

circumscribed by the circle of his own self, and though it substantially touches and moves his soul is in no way immanent in it--and lets the other exist only as his own experience, only as a "part of myself."<sup>90</sup>

Opposed to this imposition of self, there is what Buber calls *unfolding*.<sup>91</sup> If I confirm the other in her uniqueness I naturally seek for that truth which lies in her as potentiality. Through my sharing of myself and my views I hope for an opening out of this latent truth.

Rogers saw in Buber's understanding of confirmation something quite close to his own view of acceptance. During their dialogue at the Midwest Conference in 1957, he wanted to establish just how Buber saw the relationship between the two concepts. He began by explaining how acceptance works in the therapeutic relationship:

I feel a real willingness for this other person to be *what he is*. I call this "acceptance"....I am willing for him to possess the feelings he possesses, to hold the attitudes he holds, to be the person he is.<sup>92</sup>

Buber responded by commenting that all genuine relationships must begin with acceptance, with communicating to the other that 'I take you just as you are'.<sup>93</sup> However, he also felt compelled to point out that confirmation is actually a step beyond acceptance. Buber shared his conviction that it is possible to see in the other his God-given *potential*: 'I can recognize in him, know in him, more or less, the person he has been (I can say it only in this word) *created to become*.'<sup>94</sup> Seeing the potential is a movement beyond acceptance, and it implies the need to *act* with the other: 'And now I not only accept the other as he is, but I confirm him, in myself, and then in him, in relation to this potentiality that is meant by him and it can now be developed....He can do more or less to this scope but *I can, too, do something*' [emphasis added].<sup>95</sup> Imagining

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<sup>90</sup> Buber, 'Dialogue', pp. 23-24.

<sup>91</sup> See Buber, 'Elements of the Interhuman', p. 110.

<sup>92</sup> C. Rogers, 'Dialogue Between Martin Buber and Carl R. Rogers', in M. Buber, *The Knowledge of Man*, trans. by M. Friedman & R. Gregor Smith (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965), pp. 166-184, pp. 169-170.

<sup>93</sup> Buber, *ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>94</sup> Buber, *ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>95</sup> Buber, *ibid.*, p. 182.

the potential of the other and helping in the realisation of that potential constitute for Buber the critical points of distinction between acceptance and confirmation.

Rogers reacted by asserting that in therapy he accepts not only the individual in his current emotional state but also his potentiality.<sup>96</sup> This unconditional positive regard is the 'strongest factor' in promoting change. Buber found himself unable to find the same level of confidence as his discussion partner in the power of acceptance alone to produce growth. His experience is that often one must struggle with the other *against* himself. The other knows the direction he should take, but for some reason he finds himself moving in another direction, or not moving at all. For Buber, the human can best be understood as a polar reality.

[T]he poles are not good and evil, but rather yes and no, rather acceptance and refusal. And we can strengthen, or we can help him strengthen, the one positive pole. And perhaps we can strengthen the force of the direction in him because this polarity is very often directionless.<sup>97</sup>

It is only possible, according to Buber, to help the other move through his ambivalence on the basis of a distinction between accepting and confirming.<sup>98</sup> This seems right. Given the fact that there is often this struggle between 'yes' and 'no' in the other, a more active approach than acceptance is required. Here Buber's image of 'unfolding' comes into play. I struggle with the other against herself not to impose a direction, but to facilitate a release of that which is latent in her. Friedman captures well the nature of this wrestling with the other while respecting her autonomy and independence:

You'll never be confirmed by me simply by my putting myself aside and being nothing but a mirror reflecting you. Confirming you may mean that I do *not* confirm you in some things, precisely because you are not taking a direction. It is not just that you are wrestling with yourself; I am wrestling with you. There is an added factor here that is not what one calls being *empathic*, which strictly speaking means temporarily leaving my ground to enter into yours. It is not just that I

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<sup>96</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>98</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 183.

am watching you wrestle with yourself; I am also entering into the wrestling....I may not, of course, impose myself on you and say, "I know better than you." It is only insofar as you share with me and as we struggle together that I can glimpse the person you are called to become.<sup>99</sup>

### ***The Moral Context of Confirmation***

Confirmation, as we have seen, is the process of helping another realise his potential. The realisation of the self has psychological, spiritual and moral dimensions. In one place, Buber establishes the moral context for confirmation. In a reflection aimed at mental health professionals, he offers his view that when genuine or 'existential' guilt is overlooked in therapy an opportunity to help the client grow into the person she was created to be is missed.<sup>100</sup> We will look at this side of confirmation in more detail in chapter 7. At this point, it is sufficient to simply note that, first, Buber encourages therapists and counsellors to help their clients to work through their ontic guilt constructively, and that second, he identifies this as a confirming act.

## **CONCLUSION**

As a counter to a distorted presence in which the other is made into a thing, an object, something to be manipulated and used, Buber offers a vision of presence constituted through the saying of You. The one who says You eschews any note of possession or purpose. The other is encountered not as something but as nothing. In the absence of plans, goals and use there is only the immediacy of the relation.

In relations with others, there is also a relation with God. Every You-saying, whether it comes from the mouth of a believer or of an atheist, is an address to the eternal You.

In the development in his thought from relation to dialogue, Buber offers concrete guidance for action in place of the rather abstract language of *I and Thou*. It might seem at first glance, though, that in concepts such as inclusion and confirmation he has nothing to say that we could not learn, perhaps in

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<sup>99</sup> M. Friedman, 'Reflections on the Buber-Rogers Dialogue', pp. 63-64.

<sup>100</sup> See Buber, 'Guilt and Guilt Feelings', *Psychiatry* 20 (1957), pp. 114-129.

greater depth, from the person-centred psychotherapists. We have seen that Buber does in fact show us something we do not find in the concepts of empathy and acceptance. Inclusion involves imagining the inner world of the other, while at the same time maintaining one's own concreteness and particularity. It is only out of one's actual life situation that one can confirm the other. Confirmation is a step beyond acceptance. One *acts* to help the other in the struggle with herself. That is to say, one assists her to find that direction she is saying both 'yes' and 'no' to. This direction about which there is ambivalence refers to psychological, spiritual and moral development. When out of the struggle comes the release of a hidden potential in the other, an overcoming of self-destructive urges and an unfolding of the person God created her to be, genuine presence has been actualised.



## 5. Pastoral Availability: The Foundation For Care

In this chapter, we are concerned with the first, the basic, moment in pastoral care, namely the pastor's capacity for compassion and self-giving. The aim is to demonstrate that availability is the personal quality which is foundational in pastoral care and counselling. The arts and skills of care need a solid base. Without it, the edifice of pastoral care will be very shaky indeed. The base is a disposability which can be described, first, as a deep receptivity to the other's pain and, secondly, as a willingness to substitute the other's freedom for one's own.

Recall that Marcel describes receptivity to the other in terms of permeability or 'in-cohesion'. He uses the suggestive image of welcoming a person into *chez soi* to indicate that receptivity involves a communication of something of oneself. To receive a person *chez soi* is to bring her into one's ownmost sphere, into that home-space where everything has the stamp of one's personality.

Marcel broadens the notion of hospitality to the other to include receiving into oneself the other's appeal for compassion and understanding. This spontaneous, genuine, deep receptivity is set beside an 'inner inertia', a 'spiritual asthenia', which makes feeling with the other all but impossible. Where there is only a limited capacity for compassion there is clearly no basis for effective pastoral care.

The Old Testament writers understand compassion as an expression of an intimate attachment to the other. They identify the seat of this emotion as the womb or the heart. For Paul, compassion is more than the registering of emotion, it is an expression of one's total being at the deepest level. The Greek word he uses, *spláchnon*, originally referred to the 'inward parts of the body', or to the womb.

These two terms from Marcel and from the scriptures, one's home-space and the womb/heart respectively, both point to a deep level of receptivity. In

what follows, an attempt will be made to demonstrate the close correlation between the receptive dimension of availability and the biblical understanding of compassion. This is the first step in the process of establishing availability as the foundational quality in pastoral care.

For Marcel, as we have seen, receptivity is just one dimension in disposability. He also uses the concepts of *belonging* and *substitution* (intimately related to each other) to develop his key idea. 'Belonging' is a rich biblical and theological term. Marcel refers to belonging to Christ -- the key fact in a life of faith. For the Hebrew people, personhood was defined through the belonging established in a covenantal relationship. Using the theology of covenant as a framework, we will attempt to extend our understanding of the foundational role availability has in pastoral care and counselling. An attempt will be made to show how the willingness to substitute the other's freedom for one's own is an important dimension in a covenantal relationship. Moreover, we will be endeavouring to demonstrate that substitution is a foundational quality in pastoral care. This task will involve a discussion of four closely related concepts, namely generosity of spirit, trust, mutuality and servanthood.

While qualities such as empathy, acceptance and compassion are clearly fundamental in pastoral care, our argument is that availability is a rich, comprehensive concept which on the one hand embraces these basic qualities, and on the other adds its own distinctive and unique ideas. We begin our discussion with an exploration of the relationship between receptivity and biblical compassion.

### ***COMPASSIONATE AVAILABILITY AS FOUNDATIONAL IN PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING***

Pastoral counsellors have tended to identify acceptance and empathy as the corner-stones of their work. If pressed for a biblical and theological rationale, they quickly point to the central themes of love and compassion in the Christian tradition. I want to argue here that the foundation of pastoral care and counselling is to be found in a quality which includes but which also goes beyond acceptance and empathy, namely compassionate availability.

Availability involves receiving the other and her hopes and fears, her joys and sorrows, *chez soi*. In the case of compassionate understanding, one draws the pain and distress of the other into one's ownmost sphere. The biblical writers, in describing compassion, use different images -- *viz.*, the womb, the bowels, the heart -- but the idea is very similar. They also identify a deeply personal act in which the hurt the other suffers is experienced in that space which is most intimately one's own. It is this very close link between *disponibilité* and the biblical notion of compassion which, I believe, identifies the former as foundational in pastoral care.

### ***The Biblical Understanding of Compassion***

Dianne Bergant observes that in the cluster of Hebrew words for compassion, *rhm* is the most prominent.<sup>1</sup> It has the primary meaning of 'cherishing', 'soothing', or 'a gentle attitude of mind'. It refers to a tender parental love. The word *rehem*, meaning womb, is also derived from this root. Hence, Bergant concludes that this Hebrew word-group indicates a bond like that between a mother and the child of her womb.<sup>2</sup>

Xavier Leon-Dufour describes the Hebrew notion of compassion, as we would expect, in a very similar way. He suggests that *rhm* 'expresses the instinctive attachment of one person for another'.<sup>3</sup> He observes that this feeling has its seat in the maternal bosom or in the bowels (or, as we would say, heart) of the father. It is a tenderness which drives a person to action on behalf of those in distress.

The New Testament writers often use *éleos* (mercy) when speaking of compassion.<sup>4</sup> A form of the verb *oiktiro* (connoting sympathy) also appears. However, when reference is made to the compassion of Jesus, *splánchnon* is always used. In early Greek usage, the word denotes the 'inward parts' of a

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<sup>1</sup> See D. Bergant, 'Compassion', in C. Stuhlmueller ed., *The Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), pp. 154-157, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> X. Leon-Dufour, 'Mercy', in *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* 2nd edit., updated, trans. by P. Cahill & E. Stewart (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988), pp. 351-354, p. 351.

<sup>4</sup> See D. Bergant, 'Compassion', p. 156.

sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> Later, it was used to refer to the ‘inward parts of the body’, and finally to the womb. We also find the noun form used in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. There it denotes ‘the centre of feelings’ or ‘noble feelings’. Once the verb is used to indicate mere emotion, but it generally refers to the inner disposition which generates acts of mercy. The adjective, *eúsplanchnos* (tender-hearted), denotes human virtue and the disposition of ‘pity’.

The noun appears in three of Jesus’ parables: the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son and the Unmerciful Servant. Of particular interest for our discussion is the way Paul describes compassion. Only the noun occurs in his writings. He uses *splánchna* not merely to express natural emotions but as ‘a very forceful term to signify an expression of the total personality at the deepest level’.<sup>6</sup> It occurs twice in Philemon (vv. 7, 20); reference is made to the refreshing of the *splánchna*. In v. 12 of that letter, Paul says that in Onesimus he is, in effect, coming in person with a claim for Philemon’s love. Phil. 1:8 contains a unique phrase. Paul declares that ‘God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection (*splánchna*) of Jesus Christ.’ The reference is to ‘the love or affection which, gripping or moving the whole personality, is possible only in Christ...’<sup>7</sup>

In these various uses of the word *compassion* by the writers of the scriptures, there are a number of key features. First, the idea of tenderness comes out in a number of places. Secondly, compassion is associated with an instinctive, intimate relationship: it is like the loving, soothing action of a mother or father. Finally, it refers (most clearly in Pauline usage) not just to an emotion, but to the deepest part of one’s personality. This depth dimension is indicated by the cluster of inner parts identifying the seat of the emotion, namely the womb, the bowels and the heart. We moderns naturally take these organismic references as metaphorical. It seems, however, that the Semite view of emotion was very definitely psychosomatic.

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<sup>5</sup> This discussion of *splánchnon* in pre-NT and NT usage is informed by H. Köster, ‘*splánchnon*’ in G. Kittel & G. Friedrich eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, one vol. edit., trans. by G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp. 1067-1069.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 1068.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 1068.

Biblical scholar, Terrence Collins, has carried out a very careful study of a number of Old Testament references to emotional disturbances and concluded that they are not distinguished from physical disturbances.<sup>8</sup> He describes how the Hebrew person views distressing circumstances as producing a physiological reaction in a person, which starts in his intestines and then proceeds to affect the whole body, especially the heart. This physical disturbance is thought of as actually altering the tone of the organ; there is a general 'softening up'. Thus, when a person changes his mind or experiences an alteration in his emotional disposition, there is an associated change in the physical composition of the heart.<sup>9</sup> In Hosea 11:8, for example, the change of heart is characterised by strong emotional overtones of compassion, along with the physical reaction connected with 'becoming hot'. In concluding his investigations, Collins states that the way the Old Testament writers describe the tears associated with both compassion and personal distress is 'expressive of a whole anthropology which is essentially psychosomatic, and which allows no distinction between physiological and emotional disturbances. In the biblical view, "sickness of heart" and "a broken heart" mean exactly what they say.'<sup>10</sup>

This psychosomatic view of emotion, of course, seems odd to us today. We naturally think of the organismic descriptions of emotional reactions in the Old Testament as metaphorical. What these striking somatic references indicate very clearly, nonetheless, is the depth of compassion in the Hebrew people. When a kinsperson was suffering, the empathic reaction was so strong it felt like the very composition of the heart was changing, was 'softening up'.

### ***Availability, Tenderness and Biblical Compassion***

In a study of the foundational role of compassion in pastoral care, the pastoral theologian, Arthur Becker, identifies both the intensity of emotion and the somatic base we have been discussing. For the writers of the scriptures, he observes, compassion entails 'a perception of another's pain, hurt, sorrow,

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<sup>8</sup> See T. Collins, 'The Physiology of Tears in the Old Testament: Part I', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 33 (1971), pp. 18-38.

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

longing, so intense and vivid and organismic that “you feel it in your guts”.<sup>11</sup> Becker goes on to suggest that empathy and acceptance are ‘modern therapeutic correlates of the biblical word’.<sup>12</sup> While it is clear that compassion is a strong component in empathy, it is much less clear that this is the case with acceptance. The distinction between compassion and acceptance I want to draw is grounded in the fact that whereas the former indicates a *personal quality*, the latter refers to an *attitude*. Thus, it may be that a person who manifests only a moderate capacity for tolerance and understanding outside the therapeutic setting may nevertheless be able to be highly acceptant within it. Very simply, in the controlled, limited environment of the 50 minute hour, he can allow himself the luxury of being accepting. After all, he does not have to live with the client!

James Dittes is right, I believe, in his observation that acceptance is ‘built in, not a personal achievement’.<sup>13</sup> Acceptance is a fundamental characteristic of therapy, it is not an emotional response on the part of the therapist. In communicating unconditional positive regard, the therapist does not have to express love or affection (although this may be the case). The act of prizing is not necessarily an indication that the therapist feels a strong affinity with the client. In fact, quite often he will not feel strongly ‘connected’.

Acceptance is not a personal response but ‘the much starker experience of being fully known and trusted and shared with. In emotional tone, it may be more like the relationship at the end of fifty years of a good marriage, rather than at the beginning’.<sup>14</sup> Acceptance is an attitude built-in to therapy rather than a personal quality.

If acceptance denotes an attitude, empathy involves the use of a *skill* or an *art*. Person-centred therapists suggest that of the three core conditions, empathy is the one which is most trainable.<sup>15</sup> Obviously some people have a greater aptitude for this way of being with another person than others. In order to have the potential to reach a high level of empathic in-tuneness, a person

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<sup>11</sup> A. Becker, ‘Compassion: A Foundation for Pastoral Care’, *Religion in Life* 48 (Summer 1979), pp. 143-152, p. 145.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>13</sup> J. Dittes, *The Church In the Way* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1967), p. 100.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>15</sup> See B. Thorne, *Person-Centred Counselling: Therapeutic and Spiritual Dimensions* (London: Whurr Publishers, 1991), p. 40.



needs the personal attributes of perceptivity, imagination and sensitivity. Equipped with these qualities, a therapist is able to hone her skill of moving into the client's inner world of feeling and cognition. Being empathic, says Rogers, 'means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment by moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person....'<sup>16</sup> The capacity to imaginatively get inside another person's inner world of perception is an art or a skill one develops. It is necessary, though, to go beyond imagination and cognition to the level of experiencing. Sensing what the other is thinking and feeling, one shares this experience -- although in an attenuated way. It is here that one's capacity for compassion comes into play.

The key question is this: In seeking to be accepting and empathic, to what extent does the therapist allow herself to engage personally with the client? It is possible to adopt an acceptant attitude and to accurately reflect feelings and thoughts with only a minimum of emotional availability. In this case, acceptance and empathy are reduced to the level of techniques. A genuine commitment to unconditional positive regard and to feeling-with the other, I suggest, is grounded in disposability.

Person-centred counsellors sometimes refer to an experience of self-giving which is beyond empathy and acceptance. Rogers himself talks about a highly personal, one would say almost mystical, dimension in the healing process. In an article written late in his life (it was published in 1986), he says:

When I am at my best, as a group facilitator or a therapist, I discover another characteristic. I find that when I am closest to my inner, intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness in the relationship, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing. Then simply my *presence* is refreshing and helpful. There is nothing I can do to force this experience, but when I relax and be close to the transcendental core of me, then I may behave in strange and impulsive ways in the relationship, ways which I cannot justify rationally, which have nothing to do with my thought processes. But these strange behaviors turn out to be *right*, in some odd way. At those moments it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> C. Rogers, *A Way of Being* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980), p. 142.

<sup>17</sup> C. Rogers, *The Carl Rogers Reader*, H. Kirschenbaum and V. Land Henderson eds., (London: Constable and Co., 1990), p. 137.

This extra dimension in the therapeutic process was not something that Rogers emphasised. He was more interested in those relational attitudes and skills which could be clearly defined and rationally discussed. However, another proponent of the person-centred approach, Brian Thorne, describes how he found himself repeatedly caught up in a similar kind of experience and considered that it was important to describe as closely as possible the nature of this added dimension.<sup>18</sup> He did not want to contradict Rogers' dictum concerning the necessity and sufficiency of the core conditions, but he did want to say that when a fourth quality is present, which he called *tenderness*, something 'qualitatively different' may occur. He was unsure about exactly which word to use to denote this fourth dimension; 'tenderness' was the closest he could get. It is a word 'which means both vulnerable and warmly affectionate, easily crushed and merciful, not tough and sympathetic. It seems to incorporate both weakness and gentle strength, great fragility and great constancy'.<sup>19</sup> The connections with the biblical understanding of compassion, I think, are obvious. We saw above how the Hebrew word group denotes the love in the maternal bosom and in the father's heart. Healthy parental love is gentle and soothing when required, and firm and strong when it needs to be. Parental love also renders a person vulnerable. While one's children sometimes act and speak in ways which fill one with joy and pride, on other occasions their deeds and utterances cut, hurt, and disappoint.

Recall that for Paul compassion is an expression of the whole personality at the heart of one's being. We saw the same element of depth in discussing the Hebrew understanding of the role of the heart or bowels in emotion. In discussing what it means for a person to possess the quality of tenderness, Thorne begins with the involvement of the whole person. To emphasise the point, he covers virtually the whole gamut of bodily expression, personal attitudes and ethical commitments: '[Tenderness] is a quality which irradiates the total person -- it is evident in voice, the eyes, the hands, the thoughts, the feelings, the beliefs, the moral stance, the attitude to things

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<sup>18</sup> See B. Thorne, *Person-Centred Counselling*, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

animate and inanimate, seen and unseen.<sup>20</sup> He goes on to specify the other personal characteristics associated with an experience of tenderness:

Secondly, [this quality] communicates through its responsive vulnerability that suffering and healing are interwoven. Thirdly, it demonstrates a preparedness and an ability to move between the worlds of the physical, the emotional, the cognitive and the mystical without strain. Fourthly, it is without shame because it is experienced as the joyful embracing of the desire to love and is therefore a law unto itself. Fifthly, it is a quality which transcends the male and female but is nevertheless nourished by the attraction of the one for the other in the quest for wholeness.<sup>21</sup>

One of the most striking and touching illustrations of Jesus' compassionate nature is his response to the ministrations of the 'sinful' woman who anointed him (Lk. 7:36-50). Implicit in the narrative is a previous experience of forgiveness. The woman comes with a deep feeling of gratitude moving her whole being. Her thankful heart is bursting as she kneels behind Jesus, weeping. A chain-reaction is set in train. Some of her tears fall onto Jesus' feet. Having nothing to hand to wipe the tears, she uses her hair. Spontaneously, her affection and gratitude is expressed through a shower of kisses on the freshly cleaned feet. Finally, the perfume intended for the head, given her proximity to Jesus' feet, is poured out there.

It is interesting to note the parallels with Thorne's description of tenderness. Contrary to the expectations of his host, Jesus graciously receives the intimate, affectionate contact from this 'sinful' woman. He knows what it is to be misunderstood and rejected. Those in his own town failed to accept his prophetic words and deeds (Lk. 4:14-30). Even the members of his own family thought he was mad and needed to be reined in (Mk 3: 31-34). A person who has been cut and struck down by the pain of misunderstanding and rejection tends to look for the goodness in the other. Jesus is not preoccupied with this woman's sinful past, but instead is deeply moved by her beautiful display of thankful affection. A heart which has suffered reaches out in love to a heart full to the brim with the joy and gratitude of liberation from past hurt and exploitation (Thorne's second descriptor).

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

This intimate meeting takes place on a number of levels: the emotional, the spiritual and the physical (cf. Thorne's third descriptor). First, the woman's tears are not simply the tears of joy of a person liberated from a past of degradation and exploitation. Certainly it is the case that her experience of a new life in which she is able to treat her body respectfully has elevated her mood. It is divine forgiveness, though, which is uppermost in her mind when she comes to express her gratitude. The spiritual dimension of the encounter is primary. Finally, there is the physical dimension. The joy, the relief, the sense of liberation and forgiveness are all gathered together in a bodily expression of gratitude and affection.

This bodily expression of gratitude is perhaps the most striking feature in the story. Wiping a man's feet with one's hair and smothering them with kisses are very intimate, sensuous actions. Alastair Campbell suggests that the reason the sensuous aspect of the anointing is often not fully explored is the result of a tendency to confuse sensuousness with sensuality.<sup>22</sup> 'Sensuousness', he writes, 'is an acceptance and celebration of our senses: sensuality the exploitation of them. Anointing is sensuous, but not necessarily sensual....'<sup>23</sup> Jesus and the woman, I believe, were enjoying an altogether appropriate physical expression of love. Their tactile centres were alive in a celebration of togetherness. For this reason, neither felt any embarrassment or shame (Thorne's fourth descriptor).

Enough has been said, perhaps, to demonstrate the close connection between the biblical understanding of compassion and this fourth quality in the therapeutic relationship, tenderness. I suggest that *availability embraces both tenderness and biblical compassion*. In identifying a dimension in the healing relationship which can be distinguished from the core conditions, Thorne goes beyond attitudes and skills and into the area of *personal qualities*. Tenderness describes the capacity of the therapist to manifest vulnerability, affection and gentle strength. These capacities cannot be learned. Marcel describes the ability to make one's presence felt in this intimate way as a grace. Availability is the

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<sup>22</sup> See A. Campbell, *Moderated Love: A Theology of Professional Care* (London: SPCK, 1984), p. 108.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

grace which shapes every thought, word and action in one's interpersonal encounters. It is the capacity to relate at depth with the other. It describes the integrity and gentleness capable of handling sensitively a 'shared secret', 'a really incommunicable experience'. On some occasions, the shared secret involves a more mundane experience. This is the case in Marcel's illustration of the shy young man at the cocktail party. The young man is caught in the misery of intense self-consciousness; he is unable to communicate and is finding the party an ordeal. A fellow guest, sensing his deep uneasiness, wants to release some of the tension that is within him. In a tender concern for the poor young fellow, he searches for an opening line which will put him at ease. It must be carefully chosen; he could so easily make matters worse. For example, a question, even an innocuous one, may cause the young man to feel threatened. The fellow guest is sensitive enough to find just the right comment: 'I knew your parents'. A bond is established through a shared secret. The tension within the young man is released and the two men can begin a journey together.

This very ordinary, but nonetheless important, moment in which there is a sense of togetherness is identified by Thorne in the more intense setting of therapy. He observes that when tenderness is present in a relationship, there is a profound sense of liberation and wholeness. 'At such a moment', he writes, 'I have no hesitation in saying that my client and I are caught up in a stream of love.'<sup>24</sup> In different words, Thorne is describing what it means to make one's presence felt. For Marcel, a real presence 'refreshes my inner being; it reveals me to myself, it makes me more fully myself than I should be if I were not exposed to its impact'. Here we have two different labels, tenderness and presence/availability, but the experience being described is fundamentally the same. Two people moving in the stream of love: refreshed, liberated, made whole.

This experience of another's presence, I suggest, is grounded in the kind of compassion described by the biblical writers. As we have seen, in the biblical understanding to feel compassion means to take the sorrow and distress of the other into the core of oneself. The seat of the emotion is identified as the womb

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<sup>24</sup> Thorne, *Person-Centred Counselling*, p. 77.

or the heart. Marcel uses a different image in an attempt to describe this absolute openness to the other's appeal for understanding. To receive the hurt and sorrow of the other is to invite her to *chez soi*. If I am to truly be open to the other in her pain, I must take her into my home-space. The heart, the home-space -- these are the places which represent the core of one's being.

Availability is a richly comprehensive concept which describes a radical openness to the other which results in a full giving of the self for him. It captures the essence of Thorne's important notion of tenderness, which is itself a correlate of biblical compassion. There seems to be good reason to posit availability as foundational for pastoral care and counselling.

The centrality of availability in pastoral care distinguishes it from most (but not all) forms of psychotherapy. The core conditions are built-in to the structure of the therapy hour. It is usually and appropriately the case that the therapist does not put his emotional equilibrium at serious risk by entering into a counselling relationship. This is not to say that therapists are on the whole uncaring, or that they are untouched by the vicissitudes in the emotional lives of their clients. The point being made is simply that the relationship between therapist and client is unique in that it is highly structured and carefully delineated. In a parish setting on the other hand, the relationship of care is neither usually nor appropriately so controlled and contained. A pastor meets her people in a variety of settings: in the home, in worship, in bible study, in church meetings, on youth nights, on week-end fellowship camps, and so on. Together they share in a community of faith. They belong together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Over time, deep bonds of fellowship and friendship often develop. In offering care to her parishioners, a pastor will frequently, though not always of course, find herself taking their hurt and sorrow deep into her heart. This is not an act of the imagination alone; the pain is felt 'in the guts'.

I am aware that in speaking this way, it may appear that I am expecting too much from pastors. Sometimes in offering care to a suffering parishioner a pastor will not feel the loving tenderness and deep compassion I have been describing. There may be all kinds of reasons for this. For example, he may be feeling tired or emotionally 'out of sorts'. Or it may be that he does not feel



particularly close to the person (it may even be that there is a serious 'block' in their relationship). It is unreasonable and unrealistic to expect that a pastor will be profoundly available in each and every pastoral encounter. There will be times when he simply has to offer the best care he can, in view of the mitigating circumstances. The aim in our reflections to this point is not to project an image of the effective caregiver as the person with a genius for self-giving. Rather, it is to identify a disposition, a virtue, which relatively ordinary persons have and which allows them to care well for others, namely a receptivity to the pain and distress of the other. The virtue need not and cannot be fully functional, so to speak, on each and every occasion, but it does need to be there. The pastor needs to have a capacity, as the biblical reflections on compassion indicate, to feel the hurt of others 'in his guts' if he is to have a foundation for his practice of care.

In working with the biblical understanding of compassion, a communal setting is implied. The biblical authors reflected on love and mercy in the context of the household of faith (although of course compassion extends beyond it). When two people belong together in community, the hurt of one is taken in by the other. Marcel is acutely aware of this reality; for him, as we have seen, to be available to the other involves belonging to him.

### ***BELONGING AND SUBSTITUTION AS FOUNDATIONAL IN PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING***

We are attempting to build an argument for availability as the foundation of pastoral care and counselling. A solid start has been made by demonstrating the close correlation with the biblical notion of compassion. In what follows, we will look at another dimension of availability, namely substitution. The willingness to take the hurt and sorrow of the other into one's home-space is one cornerstone of care. Another, I will argue, is the willingness to *substitute* the other's freedom for one's own. Disposability, understood in this light, means a generosity of spirit in which one gives according to the need of the other.

Marcel conceived of his philosophical reflections as situated at the threshold of faith. That is to say, he did not attempt to be a theologian, and neither did he wish to limit his work to those of the household of faith. He

wanted to make his thought available to believer and non-believer alike. Occasionally, though, he overtly declares his faith commitment. He says, for example, that 'I belong to you' has a counterpart in 'I belong to Christ'. Here he points to that which is central in the Christian faith, namely living *in Christ*. To live in Christ is to live in the new family he established. The New Testament writers construct the life of faith within a communitarian framework. Here they reflected their religious and national heritage. For the people of Israel, belonging to the community of God was indissolubly linked to the covenant God had established. An exploration of key themes in the biblical notion of covenant will provide a theological orientation for our discussion of the foundational role of substitution in pastoral care.

### *Israel's Experience of Belonging*

'I will be your God, and you will be my people' is fundamentally a declaration of belonging. For the Hebrew, his very personhood was established through the covenant. As Walter Brueggemann expresses it: '[T]he act of claiming is the act of giving life and identity to that person. Before being called and belonging to, the person was not. In the Bible, "person" means to belong with and belong to and belong for.'<sup>25</sup>

There is no doubt that in the Pentateuch the view is that God is sovereign, takes the initiative, in the covenantal process. What is debatable is whether or not the stress is on *obligation* or on *fellowship with God*. Some Old Testament scholars argue that a *berit* always means an obligation or a duty.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the covenant involves on the one hand Yahweh's promise to Israel, and on the other Israel's duty to fulfil the commandments laid down by Yahweh. There are two dimensions in God's dealings with God's people. First, there is God's graciousness expressed through the divine promises. Secondly, there is God's call to be faithful to the divine law. In such a view, there is no room for the idea of a bilateral relationship between God and God's people. This view

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<sup>25</sup> W. Brueggemann, 'Covenanting as Human Vocation', *Interpretation* 33 (April 1979), pp. 115-129, p. 120.

<sup>26</sup> This is the view promoted by E. Kutsch. For a summary of this approach to the theology of covenant, see E. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 89-94.

seems to be somewhat idiosyncratic. Most biblical scholars point to the two-sided nature of the covenant. In a recent study, Ellen Juhl Christiansen carefully follows the horizontal or ecclesiological thread of the covenant through the writings of Judaism and of Paul.<sup>27</sup> She rejects as one-sided the view of the covenant which stresses the duty of keeping the law. The horizontal relationship established by God is founded on an understanding of promises and obligations as 'juxtaposed aspects, as marks of a mutually binding relationship'.<sup>28</sup> Ernest Nicholson makes a similar point in his study of the theology of the covenant. The bilateral nature of the covenant is manifested through two basic facts. First, Israel expressed her response to Yahweh's graciousness through *choice* and *decision*.<sup>29</sup> At Sinai, Israel chose to become a covenant partner with God. Twice over the people gave their commitment to the covenant in response to Moses' reading of the commandments (Ex. 24:3-8). On the plains of Moab, a subsequent generation made their decision and declared that on 'this day' Yahweh had become its God (Deut 26:19). Secondly, there is the fact that not only was the covenant established on God's initiative, but God in fact is a *partner* to it.<sup>30</sup> This means that it is wrong to think that the covenant was viewed as merely the observance, under the threat of curse, of divinely decreed laws. 'Rather, life for Israel was understood as fellowship with Yahweh who had entered a covenant with this people, and the fulfilment of Yahweh's commandments was to be an expression of this fellowship.'<sup>31</sup> It is obviously outside the scope of this work to attempt any resolution of this debate. A categorical rejection, however, of any notion of a two-sided relationship does seem to constitute a radical position. A conservative approach to the theology of the covenant would suggest that the programmatic statement 'I will be your God; you will be my people' does in fact indicate a partnership. On this view, Yahweh called Israel into a mutually binding relationship characterised by the divine promises on one side and by the people's obligations on the other.

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<sup>27</sup> See E. J. Christiansen, *The Covenant in Judaism and Paul: A Study of Ritual Boundaries as Identity Markers* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>29</sup> See Nicholson, *God and His People*, p. 214.

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

### *Covenant and Substitution*

While the word *berit* is most often used in the Old Testament with reference to this vertical relationship, it is sometimes used in the context of horizontal relations. We see this is the special friendship between Jonathan and David: 'And Jonathan made a *berit* with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt' (I Sam. 18:3). Under serious threat from Saul, David calls upon the promise made by his friend: 'As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a *berit* with you before the Lord' (I Sam 20:8). Jonathan replies thus, 'Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you.' Marcel identifies the essence of belonging as the commitment to *substitute* the other's freedom for one's own. Here we see the depth of Jonathan's commitment to his friend: he is prepared to substitute David's will for his own.

There was in the action of making the covenant, a symbolic act of substitution. Jonathan hands over to his friend his robe and his armour. Here he is effectively giving over his right to claim the throne.<sup>32</sup> In this way, he indicates the depth of his love and respect for his friend.<sup>33</sup>

### *Substitution: A Case Study*

In his book entitled *Prophetic Pastoral Care*, Charles Gerkin presents the report of Edith L., a student training in hospital chaplaincy.<sup>34</sup> Edith received a call to be with the lover of a homosexual white male in his late 20's who had died of AIDS. No other friends or relatives were at the hospital. Even though the man had a terminal illness, his death had not seemed imminent. The lover was

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. R. Gordon, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), p. 159; and W. Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel, Interpretation Series* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), p. 136.

<sup>33</sup> Some have argued, however, that Jonathan's love reflects a political commitment rather than an emotional attraction. That what we have here is in fact an example of loving substitution is evident when one bears in mind that 'in this chapter everyone -- apart from Saul, that is -- loves David (vv. 16, 20, 22)!' (R. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 159). The love these others have is not that of the relatively cold and calculating commitment associated with a political alliance, and neither is Jonathan's.

<sup>34</sup> See C. Gerkin, *Prophetic Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), pp. 126-132.

deeply upset with grief and with a sense of guilt. He was himself an AIDS victim.

Edith looked in both the patient's room and 'the quiet room' for the man. Finally, he was noticed walking out of the men's toilet and the administrative nurse introduced them:

**N.** J., this is the chaplain.

**E.** Hi, J. I'm Edith L., one of the ministers in the hospital. I understand that you have had a great loss.

**J.** Hi. Will you talk to me?

'Will you talk to me?' reveals a certain apprehension and tentativeness. Gerkin refers to it as 'the cry of the outcast who both desires someone, even a stranger, to share his time of grief and expects to be rebuffed'.<sup>35</sup> A fully available presence is needed if there is to be any genuine sharing in his grief. In endeavouring to be that presence, Edith has to struggle against two powerful pulls. She could be pulled away, first, by her fear of being infected with the virus. Secondly, she has to overcome the repelling force of being close to a person with 'the smell of a sick body'.

In her report, Edith acknowledges her tentativeness about establishing communion:

I noticed that his face was swollen due to the crying. I placed a chair almost directly in front of him, very close. I remembered that the nurse had told me over the phone that he had AIDS and she thought I should know. So as I placed the chair in front of him I remembered that he was an AIDS victim and that I should take every precaution necessary. I did not, however, change the position of the chair, because I felt that he needed someone to be close. The thought occurred to me that if he had been a woman, I would probably have simply sat beside him on the sofa in the room.<sup>36</sup>

She also shows through her verbatim the intensity of J's distress:

**J.** Is he dead; is he really dead? (with great sobs and tears)

**E.** Yes, he is really dead (embracing him).

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 127-128.

**J.** I should have been with him more time. But I was afraid. I could not hold him as he wanted. I should of known. He told me he felt like on a roller-coaster and that he wanted to get off.

**E.** He did get off.

**J.** Yes he did. And he died alone. I missed him by two minutes. (Now he began to cry and speak very loudly in his cry.) I don't want to die alone!<sup>37</sup>

Edith comments on her instinctive reaction at this point of holding him. She also notes her urge to let him go when his nasal discharge falls on her arm:

Now he was crying so hard I couldn't resist embracing him, trying to hold him in order to give some comfort. He was not only crying for his loss, but for his own death he was foreseeing would be as lonely as his lover's death. As he cried, tears fell on my arms and some mucus too when he moved. I felt like letting him go to dry myself up, but feared for his well-being. I could smell the smell of a sick body. As I write this I can still smell it.<sup>38</sup>

J. straightens up now and dries both his tears and the mucus on her arm. Edith continues to talk with J. She moves to his fear of dying alone and his sense of having failed his lover. She also allows J. to talk about the relationship that was shared. And then a male friend arrives. Edith decides to leave them alone and she says goodbye. In noting her reflections on her farewell, it is evident both how much J. appreciated her ministry and how scared Edith was of the risk of infection.

I said my farewells; they said their thank yous and I left. I searched for the bathroom and washed my arms and hands. I looked for the administrative nurse to let her know that I was leaving. She told me they had expressed their thanks to her for my being there with them. I thanked her and was on my way. I didn't want to touch anyone. I walked into the office and as soon as possible went to the apartment to wash my hands and face again. I feared for my health and the health of others and I prayed for continued health and the hope of not having tempted God with the risk of being with this young man. Perhaps I will never forget his eyes of gratitude and his smile for me when I left him, but I probably will also never forget the fear over my health being in jeopardy, either.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 131.



Edith offered J. a real presence. She stood with him in a fully committed way; she made herself emotionally and physically disposable. It is not absolutely clear from medical evidence whether or not Edith was taking any real risk by embracing an AIDS sufferer. It is generally accepted that infection does not occur in this manner. However, the infection of health workers who do not seem to have been exposed to contaminated blood casts some doubt on this consensus view. In any case, the salient point is that Edith perceived a very real risk. One could understand her opting for a less committed contact with J. By placing a hand on a shoulder, and offering trained empathic responses she would establish a 'professional' presence. All the while she would hold herself at a safe distance from this body oozing the smell of a potentially lethal sickness. She would be able in this way to save herself from deep fear and anxiety. Edith wanted to withdraw; she felt a strong urge to clean herself up. But she didn't.

Edith substituted J's need for care for her desire for emotional equilibrium. This was a costly substitution for her. As soon as she opened herself to J's need for solidarity and community, she gave up her freedom to pursue her own security, safety and comfort. Edith and J. shared in a real presence. For a brief time, they belonged together. J's 'eyes of gratitude and his smile' on leaving testified to that fleeting, but nonetheless rich, experience of communion. It is this willingness to substitute the needs of the other for one's own desires that is foundational in pastoral care.

### ***Covenant Versus Contract***

One of the key elements in substitution is the radical openness characterising its commitments. When Edith first made her decision to be a chaplain, she had only a generalised conception of what may lie ahead. Implicit in her original commitment was a readiness to embrace a man who smelt of death, who may have been dripping death. From a theological perspective, a covenant is a promise binding two people or two parties in a relationship of unconditional love. It is the open, trusting, unconditional nature of a covenant which differentiates it from a contract. The latter term refers to a *legal* relationship in which conditions are clearly stated and agreed to so as to

promote and protect the interests of both parties. James Torrance points out that the sin of late Judaism was to attempt to turn God's covenant of promise, grace and unconditional love into a contract.<sup>40</sup> As he indicates, the offer of grace is always prior to the duty of fulfilling the law. Judaism, however, wanted to turn things around. It sought to secure God's gracious action on the basis of fulfilment of the obligations of the law. God's promise of posterity and land began with Abraham. Four centuries later, the obligations of the law were spelled out at Sinai. This act did not, however, constitute the introduction of conditions on divine grace. 'It did not', writes Torrance, 'turn the covenant into a contract. To introduce conditions would be to break a promise. Love always brings its obligations. But the obligations of love are not the conditions of love....*The God of the Bible is a Covenant-God not a contract-god....*' [emphasis in the original].<sup>41</sup>

A good contract is one in which all possible loop-holes are closed. The parties to a contract will act quickly to alter any conditions which are not tightly specified. What is striking about the covenant God made with Abraham is its radical openness. Abraham is called upon to place a very high degree of trust in God. God simply says to Abraham, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you' (Gen 12:1). Nothing is clearly specified; the issue for Abraham is one of faith and trust. With this aspect of the distinction between covenant and contract in mind, Jewish authors Kalman Kaplan and Moriah Markus-Kaplan distinguish two basic forms of relationship.<sup>42</sup> In the 'Hebrew Humanist-Ecclesiastic' mode of relationship, one sees the other as an end and feels able to trust her.

To the extent that one sees the other as an end, for Buber (I-thou), one becomes able to make commitments on intuitive faith before all the evidence is in. In other words, one is *able* to form a covenant relationship based on trust....Being freed from the contractual demands of outlining evidence in advance, one is able to attempt to

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<sup>40</sup> See J. Torrance, 'Covenant or Contract', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970), pp. 51-71, p. 56.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> See K. Kaplan & M. Markus-Kaplan, 'Covenant Versus Contract as Two Modes of Relationship Orientation', *Journal of Psychology and Judaism* 4, no. 2 (Winter 1979), pp. 100-116, p. 110.

know the other directly rather than through a cognitive screen and as a whole person rather than as a set of behaviors.<sup>43</sup>

A person who tends to relate in the 'European Humanist/Stoic' mode, on the other hand, will see the other person as a means, and consequently will define the relationship in terms of furthering his own interests.

To the extent that one sees the other as means [sic] for Buber (I-it), one is preoccupied with aspects of control and manipulation. This tendency toward suspicion makes it impossible for a person to engage with another unless all aspects of the situation are laid out in advance.<sup>44</sup>

Here, then, are two fundamental orientations to relationship. One is based on openness and trust, the other on control and suspicion. In terms of pastoral care, it is obvious which relational mode is to be preferred.

### *Substitution, Contract and the Covenant of Care*

Let us take as the starting point for our reflections the situation for a particular minister -- a fictitious one -- at the beginning of a parish settlement. We will suppose that this minister values precision, clarity and order. We will further suppose that she is quite generous with her time and energy. In a previous parish, however, she felt that her parishioners had taken advantage of her willingness to make herself available for their care. She considers that she needs to do something this time to protect herself. The idea comes to her of a 'charter of care'. In this charter, her duties and responsibilities will be clearly specified on the one hand, and on the other, the responsibility of her parishioners to ask appropriately for care. With regard to the latter, this will mean, in particular, refraining from making calls over trivial matters and from contacting her on days off when it is not absolutely necessary. Initially she is quite excited about the idea; but later she finds herself having second thoughts. She feels uneasy about the notion of a charter of care. In reflecting on why she feels this way, it occurs to her that the mainspring of pastoral care is openness

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

and trust. A formal statement of duties and responsibilities would introduce undesirable elements of suspicion and over-control.

Substitution is grounded in the radical openness associated with the Abrahamic covenant. To say to someone 'I belong to you' means, says Marcel, 'I am opening an unlimited credit account in your name, you can do what you want with me, I give myself to you'. There is an almost outrageous level of trust associated with this declaration. Given that there will be those who will abuse the privilege extended to them, is it really possible to establish substitution as foundational in pastoral care? I contend that it is. It is precisely this deep generosity of spirit and this radical openness in the relationship which constitute the essential nature of pastoral care.

There will be, as has just been indicated, those who will betray the trust in the relationship of care. Consider the case of the parishioner who makes unreasonable demands on the availability of the minister. He is constantly requesting the presence of his pastor for help in dealing with relatively unimportant matters. From the minister's point of view, a relationship which began in a spirit of joy and with a sense of the privilege of offering care is now being coloured by disappointment, anger, frustration and a feeling of alienation. She will feel the need to negotiate with the unreasonable parishioner over what constitutes an acceptable demand on her time. The whole complexion of the relationship of care has changed. Openness, spontaneity and trust has been superseded by negotiation and the spelling out of expectations. There has been *a movement from a covenantal to a contractual basis*.

It may be, of course, that the pastor is the one who weakens the bond of trust in the relationship. Here, I think, Marcel's concept of *constancy* is especially relevant. A constant presence is one which is driven by a sense of obligation rather than by a genuine desire to be with the other in her need. Most people can quite easily sense through observation of verbal and non-verbal signals whether or not a pastor is really present. When a person becomes aware of a duty-driven act of care, her faith in her minister's commitment to her is eroded. There is a rupture in the covenant of care. It is likely, unless the person is particularly bold, that she will not raise with the pastor her feelings of

disappointment. In this case, future contacts will be characterised by formality and inauthenticity. Here is the tragic situation of two people simply ‘going through the motions’ of a care event.

### *Mutuality in the Covenant of Care*

We have identified above two common failures in the project of maintaining the joy and trust in the covenant of care. It is a project which can only be optimally maintained, I suggest, when there is *mutuality* in the relationship. In identifying substitution as foundational in pastoral care, it is important to note that Marcel’s concept implies reciprocity. He is able to make his extravagant declaration of an unlimited credit account because there is within the concept of substitution a central place for reciprocity. Substitution assigns primacy to giving, but it also acknowledges the importance of receiving. ‘[S]ince I cease to belong to myself’, Marcel writes, ‘it is not literally true to say that you belong to me; we transcend one another in the very heart of *our love*’ [emphasis in the original].<sup>45</sup>

Marcel, as we saw in chapter 3, sets the concept of availability within the context of a healthy self-love. The decision to declare to the other ‘I belong to you’ does not indicate, he insists, the presence of some kind of self-hatred.<sup>46</sup> One loves the other while at the same time displaying a certain ‘charity towards oneself’.<sup>47</sup> Appropriate self-love he defines in terms of ‘distance from and nearness to the self’.<sup>48</sup> The distance pole indicates a certain objectivity, a capacity to overcome the urge to rationalise one’s behaviour. In this way, one can see it for what it really is. Nearness refers to the ‘contact with ourselves that we should always have to our fellow-men’ (*viz.*, a loving contact).<sup>49</sup>

The radical openness in the covenant of care which I am arguing is foundational, does not carry with it an elevation of self-sacrifice, as if this is closer to the spirit of Christ than is reciprocal love. There are times, of course, when a pastor is called upon to give without receiving. Indeed, giving is primary

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<sup>45</sup> Marcel, ‘Phenomenological Notes on Being in a Situation’, in *Creative Fidelity*, p. 99.

<sup>46</sup> See Marcel, ‘Belonging and Disposability’, in *Creative Fidelity*, p. 46.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

in pastoral care. The ideal for the act of care, nonetheless, is mutuality. Moral theologian, Stephen Post, arguing in a vein very similar to Marcel, writes that it is *communion* rather than a one-sided giving which constitutes the ideal for Christian love.<sup>50</sup> He observes that a love which is heedless of self is commonly thought to be ethically superior to a love which is grounded in both giving and receiving. It is possible, though, to give communion a central place in the act of love without falling into egoism:

The equilibrium of communion that allows each participant to find fulfillment through the process of mutuality is set aside to make room for the rare genius of selflessness. However, in our view, a 'true' or proper self-love defined as the pursuit of one's own good...can be distinguished from both selfishness (the pursuit of one's own separate interests) and self-infatuation.<sup>51</sup>

In the covenant of care, giving is a primary concern. There are certain contexts, however, in which the act of care is greatly enriched through communion. A person who is highly neurotic, it is true, will probably be unable to contribute much to the pastor's sense of fulfilment. He will greatly stretch the minister's capacity to give of herself. There are many other cases, though, when the person offering care actually feels as though more is received than is given. Consider the case of the care of the sick. There are those people who in sickness are gracious and long-suffering. Marcel refers to a lively, creative presence. Some people are able to make their presence felt even under the duress of serious illness. In such a situation, the minister will find himself giving at his best. His acts of care will have a spontaneous, even joyful, quality about them. Though he feels sorrow, he finds his spirit also lifted. All acts of care require emotional and spiritual exertion. Care is the extending of oneself for the sake of the other. Where there is communion, however, the minister finds the exertion relatively effortless.

Irene was dying of cancer. She was a person who lacked both a formal education and the social graces. She possessed neither sophistication nor wit. Irene was, however, a beautiful human being. Her battle with

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<sup>50</sup> See S. Post, 'Communion and True Self-Love', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 (Fall 1988), pp. 345-362.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.



cancer was not the dominating factor in her life. She did not constantly complain; neither did she lapse into a deep depression. It is perfectly understandable when a cancer patient does manifest these traits. However there was something in Irene, her deep faith and her indomitable spirit, which allowed her to cope well with her illness. What struck me most was her genuine concern for, and interest in, the lives of others. Our conversations would usually start with me asking her how she was getting on. I would ask her, for instance, about the great discomfort she was experiencing as a result of nuclear therapy. After a time, she would ask me how things were going at the church. She would ask me about my family. I remember telling her once that my daughter, Louise, had just started piano lessons and was loving it. She seemed genuinely interested and pleased. I looked into her eyes and I noticed that they were sparkling. Her pleasure was real. I always left Irene's place feeling uplifted. Moreover, as a result of the communion established between us, I believe I was able to care for her at my best. I was alive to her and to every word she said, every concern she expressed. It was not an effort but rather a joy and a privilege to be with her.

There are other care situations, of course, when it really is a struggle to be with the person. One simply must substitute the other's needs for one's own at that point. One extends oneself for the sake of the other, even though he is giving very little. The ideal, though, is when there is a mutuality in the relationship. Then one is able to care at one's best. To be fully available to the other when he is contributing almost nothing to one's own fulfilment requires, in Post's words, a 'rare genius'. In general, it is the case that the giving of the other draws out the best the pastor has to give.

### ***Jesus and Belonging to His Family***

Jesus was, of course, one of those rare geniuses. There is perhaps no better indication of his deep capacity for care and concern than his last act from the Cross (Jn. 19:26-27). Jesus says to his mother, 'Dear woman here is your son', and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' Here the narrator adds, 'At that hour, this disciple took her into his home.' Given the fact that on the one hand the references to 'woman' and 'that hour' suggest an intended link with the events at Cana, and on the other that the scene is climactic, a number of commentators argue that some symbolic meaning is intended.<sup>52</sup> However, other

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<sup>52</sup> See, for example, R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 922 ff; D. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John*

scholars argue that the naturalness of this scene gives a depth to the last action of Jesus, and that the drawing out of symbolic meanings tends to obscure this important fact.<sup>53</sup> It is indeed important not to lose sight of the reality of Jesus' profound act of compassion and care. Nonetheless, with this aspect of the scene firmly in mind, one may still search for some deeper level of meaning. There is no consensus amongst biblical scholars as to what that meaning might be. Even so, there is one interpretation which is favoured by a number of scholars and which has the merit of staying close to the setting of the scene. This is a *family* scene.<sup>54</sup> Jesus gives his mother to the beloved disciple, and the beloved disciple takes her into his home. The evangelist, it seems, is seeking to confirm the testimony of the beloved disciple by portraying him as a member of the family of Jesus on the basis of Jesus' own words. In the Synoptic tradition, Jesus declares that his disciples are indeed members of his household. When his mother and his brothers (and sisters) came looking for him, he said, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother' (Mk. 3:31-35). At the Cross, in this climactic moment in Jesus' life and ministry, the beneficiary of this 'adoption' is the beloved disciple.

New Testament scholar, Gerhard Lohfink, observes that great demands were made of the disciples called into the new family established by Jesus.<sup>55</sup> They were to leave behind brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, children and fields. Jesus called them to a costly act of substitution, namely, the old life and all that it meant for a new life under the coming reign of God. However, in leaving behind everything they had, everything that was precious to them, they received back a hundredfold (Mk. 10:29-30). Lohfink expresses the situation well:

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(Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), p 108 ff.; and G. O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol IX (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), pp. 831-832.

<sup>53</sup> See G. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary* 36 (Waco, Texas: Word, 1987), p. 350.

<sup>54</sup> For symbolic interpretations which pick up the idea of family, see D. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus*, p. 110; and G. O'Day, *NIB* IX, p. 832.

<sup>55</sup> See G. Lohfink, *Jesus and Community* (London: SPCK, 1985), p. 41.

They left their families, but then found new brothers and sisters among the disciples. They left their parental home, but found new mothers throughout the country where they received hospitality. They left their children, but new people whom they had not previously known, all filled with something new, constantly stream to them. They left their fields, but found a firm and supportive community as a 'new land'.<sup>56</sup>

It is significant, argues Lohfink, that although in Mk 10:29-30 Jesus promises that those who follow him will be blessed with homes, brothers, sisters and mothers, there is no reference to fathers. The exclusion is deliberate; in the new family there are to be no 'fathers'. The 'father' is too symbolic of patriarchal domination.<sup>57</sup> I find this a very interesting observation. Of course, it may be that Lohfink is making too much of the omission in the text. Be that as it may, he is surely right in highlighting the fact that Christ ushered in a new age in which control and oppression have no place.

Resistance to domination is important in relation to the notion of substitution. Marcel begins his reflections on belonging and substitution with the case of a master-servant relationship. He points out that in this context to say, 'You belong to me' is abhorrent. Everything changes, however, when one says, 'Jack, I belong to you'. Implied in this declaration is its counterpart, 'You belong to me'. This mutuality is expressed through a transcendence of each person in the bond of reciprocal love. A patriarchal father, far from substituting the other's freedom for his own, takes that freedom from her.

The fact that there are to be no 'fathers' in the new family, Lohfink points out, is reiterated by Jesus in Mt 23:8-12:

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Jesus declares that there is no place for honorific titles. He also addresses the issue of proper official conduct. He advocates a servant heart. Though Jesus did, in general, tolerate being addressed as 'rabbi', here he

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>57</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 45.

challenges the rabbinic custom of being served by one's students.<sup>58</sup> At the Last Supper, Jesus blocked what would have been a normal, expected act from students (Jn 13:1-20). Here was one who did not come to be served, but to serve (Mk 10:45).

Though Marcel does not specifically refer to service in his description of belonging (except in the negative sense of being treated as a slave), it is obvious that the former is implied. The declaration 'I belong to you; I substitute your freedom for mine' is grounded in deep humility. 'You can do whatever you want with me' is another way of saying 'I am at your service'. The possession of a servant-heart underpins disposability and is at the core of Jesus' ethical teaching. It is foundational in pastoral care.

Mark, a teacher, had recently come to faith in Christ. His attendance at worship was regular. He was attempting to bring up two small children on his own, and the strain was showing. Mark came to see me because his drinking and gambling were getting out of control. The way in which we attempted to address these problems is not relevant in this context. What is salient is the fact that Mark appeared to be tense and somewhat suspicious of me. Understandably, he felt some shame over his lapses in self-control and the negative impact this was having on his children and on his work. I attempted to reassure him by acknowledging his courage in coming to see me and by declaring my respect for him. Despite these attempts at confirmation, he continued to be uneasy and on edge during our conversations.

Mark went away on holiday for a number of weeks. After his return, he came neither to worship nor to my study. I received a 'phone call from his boss at the school, also a member of my congregation. He indicated that Mark's performance at school had seriously deteriorated and that his job was in jeopardy. I decided to call on Mark at his home. We had not been speaking for long when we heard a disturbance from his children in the upstairs bedroom. He excused himself and went to settle them for sleep. It was obvious that he was going to be away for quite a while. I looked around and noticed that he was not keeping up with his domestic duties. It occurred to me that perhaps I could assist in some way. I thought I would begin with some ironing. For a few moments I hesitated, wondering if Mark might construe such an act as patronizing. In the end, I decided to take the risk and began work. By the time he returned I had finished the whole basket. I was pleased to observe that Mark did in fact receive the work I had done positively. It was a small thing, and yet it had a marked effect on our relationship. I was no longer 'the minister'; now I was a friend. Mark visibly relaxed in my presence. Our conversations were more open and honest.

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<sup>58</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 46.

A servant-heart, along with trust, mutuality and a generosity of spirit, are the qualities which are intimately associated with substitution. It is the willingness to substitute the other's freedom for one's own which is foundational in pastoral care.

### **BEFORE SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES THERE IS AVAILABILITY**

In counselling and psychotherapy, there is often a significant commitment to, and emphasis on, particular theories and interventions. What I believe the discussion above points to is the notion that there is a personal quality, availability, which is more important in caregiving and in counselling than any skill or technique. This is not, of course, an original idea. As we observed above and also in chapter 2, a number of counsellors and psychotherapists shape their healing work around this conviction. Brian Thorne, for example, has discovered the healing power in a personal quality, 'tenderness', which is beyond the conventional skills and arts of the counsellor. When he finds himself neglecting his best wisdom, Irvin Yalom uses his 'therapist's prayer' to put himself back on track. 'It's the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals--my professional rosary.'<sup>59</sup> James Bugental finds it hard to believe that he could have neglected the fundamental importance of presence for so long. Moreover, he is aware that others continue to do so. 'All too often', he writes, 'therapists seem to be so attentive to the content of what is being said and to their prior conceptions about client dynamics and needs that they don't notice the distance that exists between themselves and their partners.'<sup>60</sup>

The conviction that availability is the cornerstone of effective care and counselling is beautifully illustrated in a story told by the pastoral psychotherapist, James Jones.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> I. Yalom, *Love's Executioner and Other Tales of Psychotherapy* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), pp. 91-92.

<sup>60</sup> J. Bugental, *The Art of the Psychotherapist* (New York: Norton, 1987), p. 46.

<sup>61</sup> See J. Jones, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Religion: Transference and Transcendence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 71-73.

Sylvia's parents immigrated to the U.S. when she was five and settled in an Eastern European Pentecostal ghetto. She had a long history of childhood sexual abuse and incest. Jones tells us that the major struggle for Sylvia was over acceptance. During the termination phase she tells her therapist that:

'For hours and hours you struggled with me, fighting with me, battling my defenses against your acceptance. Finally I had to say to myself, you must care or you wouldn't fight so hard. Fighting you made me realize how I repel others' acceptance.....

The most helpful thing in therapy was the experience of having someone hanging in there with me, of caring enough to stick with me.....I could understand and accept what had happened to me because you understood and accepted what happened.'<sup>62</sup>

Jones then asked Sylvia, 'Did God's love help you to accept yourself with your mistakes and guilt?'<sup>63</sup> To which she replied, 'No it was the other way around. Only after I accepted myself could I accept that God and others cared.'

Jones struggled with Sylvia; he battled against her defenses; he fought hard. It is this willingness to engage in emotional and mental toil for the other that expresses genuine availability. Though she does not use the word, it is evident that Sylvia had a profound experience of belonging in this therapeutic relationship. No doubt Jones from time to time -- probably often -- verbally encouraged and affirmed his client; the really potent source of prizing, however, was Jones' willingness to dispose of himself for her. It was this experience of belonging which helped Sylvia to accept herself, and ultimately recapture a feeling of belonging to God.

Even experienced pastors and counsellors can allow themselves to become so focused on content, skills, techniques and interpretations that they fail to notice that they are no longer making their presence felt in the therapeutic relationship. The really gifted and graced helper knows, however, that when she allows herself to enter heart-and-soul into the relationship, it is not so much words or techniques which are healing and renewing but her very presence.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, we have been attempting to spell out what it means to refer to availability as foundational in pastoral care and counselling. With the

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 73.



thought in mind that compassion is absolutely fundamental in any form of care, we began our task by showing that there is a close correlation between availability and the biblical notion of compassion. Marcel works with the metaphor of *chez soi*, while the biblical writers use the images of the womb and the heart. However, both are referring, it was argued, to the same reality, namely, the capacity to feel the pain and distress of the other in the depths of one's being.

The second stage in the task was an exploration of the role of substitution in pastoral care. Noting the close link between belonging and the idea of the covenant, we used the framework of covenantal theology for our reflections. In discussing a number of concepts which are intimately related to the notion of substitution -- generosity of spirit, trust, mutuality and servanthood -- we identified the foundational qualities in effective care. In this way, we were able to demonstrate what it means to say that the capacity to substitute the other's freedom for one's own is a cornerstone of the pastoral care project.

It is common amongst those who practice and/or theorise about pastoral care and counselling to identify empathy, acceptance and compassion as foundational. Clearly, these qualities *are* basic in pastoral care. The burden of our argument has been, however, that availability is a rich and comprehensive concept which on the one hand embraces these qualities, and on the other adds its own distinctive and unique meanings.

Finally, it was suggested that what these pastoral reflections on compassionate self-giving lead to is the notion that presence is more important in caregiving and counselling than any skill or technique. It is not so much technical expertise as availability-in-relationship which is healing and renewing.

## 6. Pastoral Confirmation I: Integration in the Community of the Self

In the last chapter, we attempted to establish availability as foundational in pastoral care and counselling. The first and basic moment in pastoral care is the capacity for deep being-with the other in her pain and distress. Buber's dialogical thought takes us into the second moment. As we have seen, he understands confirmation to mean helping another person, sometimes against herself, to become the person she was created to be. From this perspective, we are describing the second moment in pastoral care and counselling as helping in the realisation of God-endowed potential. Here we focus on the first dimension of this process, namely, the facilitation of growth towards psychological wholeness. In the next chapter we shall discuss the other dimension, confirmation in relation to ethical confrontation. In seeking to describe the way in which confirmation functions in pastoral care, we will shift our attention from the general practice of providing care to the more specialised function of counselling.

A basic feature of the counselling process is the attempt to help the counsellee enter into a dialogue on a feeling level. In using the word 'feeling', I have in mind the model of counselling developed by the British psychotherapist, Robert Hobson. As we saw in chapter two, for Hobson the healing dialogue revolves around 'feeling-images'. The expression of feeling is more, however, than the release of pent-up emotion. As we shall see below, a feeling-language also incorporates cognition, choice, will and action. I will suggest, moreover, that when a person relates on the level of feeling, she encounters the polarities in her personhood. As Buber notes, there is in a person a 'yes' and a 'no', acceptance and refusal. Feeling-images, one might say, are bipolar.

Now recall that Buber distinguishes confirmation from acceptance. Confirmation begins with acceptance, but it also includes wrestling with the other against himself as he grows into his potential. Buber's insight into the need for this struggle with the other is founded on his understanding of the polar

nature of the self. The philosopher, Herbert Fingarette,<sup>1</sup> has developed an understanding of the almost universal tendency to self-deception in terms of avowal and disavowal within the community of the Self.<sup>2</sup> A sub-self (the 'angry self', for example) which is considered unacceptable is disclaimed and isolated from the other selves. I will attempt to develop the links between Buber's idea of the polarities in the Self and Fingarette's model of avowal/disavowal of sub-selves. If there is in fact a close association of ideas here, it is possible to understand *confirmation in the context of counselling as helping the counsellee reclaim disavowed selves*. Struggling with the counsellee against herself means, in part, helping her discover the person she actually is, her real self. In other words, it is a process of moving her to the point where she can accept isolated sub-selves. This is an essential first step in the journey towards psychological wholeness.

However, there is obviously a need to go further. The person who, for example, reclaims an angry self she has split-off, now must learn how to appropriately deal with anger when she feels it. I will be aiming to show the value in *thinking of the healing process as facilitating a dialogue within the community of selves*. Buber refers to helping the other strengthen positive polarities in the Self. He also indicates the value in changing the relationship between the polarities. An 'internal dialogue' can achieve these goals. I will also attempt to show that in this inner dialogue Buber's concepts of inclusion, confirmation and responsibility can be usefully applied.

In sum, I will endeavour to develop a two-stage model for helping the counsellee deal with his inner polarities. The first stage involves helping the counsellee reclaim disavowed selves. In the second stage, the counsellor facilitates a process of dialogue within the community of selves.

Some may consider that this focus on psychological wholeness is really an encouragement of self-centred introspection. Instead of wasting time and energy on attempting to integrate disavowed selves, persons should be devoting

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<sup>1</sup> See H. Fingarette, *Self-Deception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); and idem, 'Alcoholism and Self-Deception', in M. Martin ed., *Self-Deception and Self-Understanding* (Lawrence, Ka.: The University Press of Kansas, 1985), pp. 52-67.

<sup>2</sup> In order to avoid confusion, I will use a capital 'S' to distinguish between the personal entity which is a unity, the Self, and the various sub-personalities, selves.

themselves to doing good to others. Of course we must make time for service and social action. However, I will argue that reclaiming the dark side of the personality is also a moral imperative. To live as if these polarities do not exist is a dangerous self-deception. Dangerous because not only will one suffer from a fragmented, disordered psyche, but others will also suffer from the destructive outworking of that psyche.

It is interesting to observe, finally, that the key dynamics described above -- a feeling-dialogue and the avowal/disavowal of polarities -- seem to be operating in certain sections of the Bible. In the psalms of lament, first, image is piled upon image as the psalmists pour out their anguish and distress before God. I will offer the view, following Walter Brueggemann, that they regress into a language of the 'pit' in an attempt to call God into the action which will bring transformation and reorientation.

I will also suggest that the dialogue between God and Jonah in the final scene of the novella can be construed as a 'confirmation game'. God is 'playfully' (it is serious play) endeavouring to help Jonah to be honest by reclaiming the egoistic self he has disavowed.

### ***COUNSELLING AND THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART***

It is a contradiction in terms to talk about a surface dialogue. Any real meeting between two people is a meeting at depth. In Marcelian language, the mainspring of dialogue is the 'shared secret'. When the other shares something from his heart, something which is precious and makes him vulnerable to me, and I receive it sensitively and graciously I have confirmed him as a person who is unique, valuable. In a counselling context, the shared secret forms the basis for challenging personal work. Not everyone, I have discovered, is prepared for the demands this kind of work makes.

Tom came to see me because he was distressed over disturbances in his home environment. He is not the sort of man who would naturally think of counselling as an option. He came with a reticent, apprehensive attitude. 'The wife seems to think talking to you will help', he said. Tom is an intensely practical man, currently working as a carpenter. He began our conversation with the comment, 'Well what do we do? I tell you what the problem is and you tell me how to solve it. Is that what it's about?' I of course told him that that was not what

it was about. 'I'm not the fount of all wisdom', I said. 'What I can do is work through with you some of the things that are concerning you at the moment. Let's start by you telling me what has brought you here.' (I was aware of the key details in relation to Tom's home situation. His partner, Anne, attended my church. She had a son, Michael, with a man whom she subsequently divorced. Michael, aged 12, suffers from Attention Deficit Disorder. Tom and Anne have two small children of their own.) 'Well', said Tom, 'Michael's driving me crazy with his strange behaviour. The kid is often up 'till after midnight. He's just as likely to be prowling around in the middle of the night. At meal-times he's throwing food at the little ones. Or he's eating some strange concoction that makes me want to throw up. I love Anne and the kids, but I don't think I can stand it for too much longer.'

As we explored the frustration and anger Tom was feeling, he spoke of his years in the Navy and how good it was. He loved the order, the precision, the neatness. There was routine, everyone knew what was expected of them, and there was discipline. He also mentioned his love of his current work. I had seen some of Tom's carpentry work. I was greatly impressed by the neatness and precision in his work.

I realised that in a subsequent session we would need to look at some practical strategies for coping with his family situation. It was also evident, however, that Michael's bizarre, chaotic behaviour was going to continue; concrete coping strategies would never be the whole answer. Tom would have to reshape his attitude to the behaviours he found so distressing. I decided to begin by pointing up the stark differences between what brought him a sense of peace and fulfilment and the situation in his home environment. Life in the navy was characterised by order, routine, discipline. He loved that milieu. In his current work situation he enjoyed the neatness and precision he achieved in putting together structures. Contrast this with the home situation. The family was continually thrown into confusion by Michael's unpredictable and strange behaviour. I wanted to help Tom work with two sets of contrasting and conflicting sets of images. On the one hand, there was the *order, neatness, precision* and *discipline* characterising the life he cherished; on the other hand, the *disorder, unpredictability* and *messiness* of the home environment he found so deeply disturbing. Working with this conflict would take Tom to the heart of his personhood. It would require him to rework his characteristic emotional and cognitive patterns. Sadly, he was not ready for that kind of demanding personal work. Tom simply wanted a few quick pointers that would help him transform his family life into the neat, ordered existence he wanted and, he thought, deserved. He did not return for a second conversation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In reflecting back on this case, I am aware that I would now choose to handle it somewhat differently. Certainly, I needed to confront his basic premise: 'If only the others in my family would change, life would be just fine.' However, in beginning to explore his psychological patterns, perhaps I scared him. Or perhaps I was signalling a task which seemed to him to be much too difficult, namely becoming more tolerant of messiness and disorder. It may have been better to raise the issue of his *interpretation* of his family situation. Michael's behaviour was unlikely to improve significantly. The home scene would always be more chaotic than he, Tom, would want it to be. If he wants to stay with the family and, also, to find an acceptable level of inner peace, he needs to reframe his situation, to change the meaning the chaos in his domestic

### *Hobson's Notion of a 'Feeling-Language'*

At the heart of the counselling process is two people sharing in a conversation on a feeling level. This was something Tom was not prepared for. I am using the word *feeling* here in the sense developed by Robert Hobson. He construes the healing relationship as a dialogue between two persons aimed at developing a 'feeling-language'. A central feature of this dialogue is *aloneness-togetherness*.

To understand Hobson's notion of aloneness-togetherness, one must recognise the distinction between on the one hand, aloneness and isolation, and on the other, between togetherness and fusion.<sup>4</sup> With this concept, he refers to 'an individual-in-relationship'.<sup>5</sup> The aloneness pole indicates distinction, autonomy and personal identity; whereas the togetherness pole refers to mutuality, reciprocity and sharing.<sup>6</sup> Aloneness-in-relationship means that there is an inner dialogue taking place within the therapeutic conversation (something we will explore in developing our two-stage model of confirmation in counselling): 'To be alone means being together in an open dialogue, but it also means an inner dialogue: a conversation with many "selves" in a society of "myself".'<sup>7</sup>

Though Hobson does not make this connection, the idea of aloneness-togetherness is clearly an expression of Buber's understanding of distance and relation. Before one can enter into a relation, the other must be set at a distance. That is, the establishment of independence and otherness (aloneness) is the precondition of coming together in relation.

Hobson's choice of the word 'feeling' to describe the therapeutic conversation is perhaps a little unfortunate. When one thinks of 'feeling', the natural association is with affect or emotion. However, Hobson understands the

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environment has for him. Whatever approach I took, I needed to make it plainer for Tom that the counselling process would require something *from him*. It could not simply be about me giving some good advice that would get the problem fixed. He may have still decided to discontinue counselling, but at least he would have been more in touch with both the reality of his situation and what counselling could realistically offer him.

<sup>4</sup> See Hobson, *Forms of Feeling* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985), p. 194.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.



term to incorporate a much wider range of human experience than the emotional. The term 'heart-language' may be more helpful, although it also has its limitations (e.g. the word 'heart' has for some the connotation of sentimentality).

Hobson observes that in everyday speech we use the word 'feeling' in a variety of ways.<sup>8</sup> It can mean the following: (a) examining by touching (the 'feel' of a piece of cloth), (b) bodily sensation ('I feel light-headed'), (c) tenderness for others ('I feel for you'), and (d) ethical assessment ('It feels the right thing to do'). He incorporates all of these connotations, along with others, into his understanding of a feeling-language.

'Feeling'....is a growing 'family' or 'society' of meanings which range from elementary physical sensations, perceptions, and emotions, metaphors of touch, and groping exploration, to organized, vivid, and heart-felt artistic shapes. It expresses personal knowledge with a growing self-awareness in sympathetic ('feeling-with') conversations between persons. The meanings, as it were, 'ascend' from the literal body and yet remain firmly tied to it (especially the sense of touch).....

A personal feeling-language means a progressive increase in mutual understanding and its form must be such as to promote that creative process within a relationship. It is not a mere matter of discharging affect.....<sup>9</sup>

This last statement by Hobson is particularly important. It would be to gravely misunderstand his intention to think of the feeling dimension in counselling as simply a 'blowing off' of pent-up emotion. Obviously emotion is involved in a feeling-conversation, but other elements are also important.

While it is usual to distinguish cognition and emotion, Hobson joins the two together in his understanding of feeling. 'When I speak of feeling', he writes, 'I do not mean a faculty of emotion *plus* cognition. It is a kind of "emotional knowing" or, as Mill [John Stuart Mill] puts it, an "imaginative emotion" related to an "idea" ...'<sup>10</sup>

Feeling also involves choice, will and directedness.<sup>11</sup> Through feeling, experiences are assigned a value. As a result of the likes and dislikes, desires

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<sup>8</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>11</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 90.

and fears, attaching to them, we make certain choices about what we will do with our experiences. Feeling plays an important role in shaping our attitudes and behaviours. To a large degree, the actions we choose are determined by feeling.

Hobson recounts an early experience in therapy in which he struggles to develop a feeling-language with an adolescent.<sup>12</sup> At the time, Sam was 14 and had been referred because of disturbed behaviour at home and at school. He was previously a mannerly and obedient son to his widowed mother. In the year before entering therapy, however, he had become aggressive and had manifested various inappropriate behaviours. At school he was rude and uncooperative. He was caught passing around papers containing erotic stories.

At first, Sam was surly and disinterested in therapy, 'a picture of dumb insolence', as Hobson puts it. Hobson attempted to show an interest in his life. He tried to explore his attitudes to his teachers, schoolmates, and his mother. An attempt was made to engage him in talk about what might have been interests -- films, games, and girls. 'All he gave me', recalls Hobson, 'was a surly frown and the very occasional favour of a short, grudging answer.'

This attitude of non-cooperation persisted for weeks. Finally, Hobson felt he could no longer stand it. In desperation, he began talking about cricket. He discovered that he and Sam shared a love for the game. Here was the turning point in the therapy. Now Sam smiled and responded with some enthusiasm. For the first time, they were talking together.

Hobson goes on to report that one day Sam entered the room with a strange expression on his face. They sat together in silence for a while. This, though, was different to the tense, disengaged silences that had dominated the therapy previously. When Sam finally spoke, it was to tell his therapist about a dream.

I was by a dark pool. It was filthy and there were all sorts of horrible monsters in it. I was scared but I dived in and at the bottom was a great big oyster and in it a terrific pearl. I got it and swam up again.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 3-8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Hobson responded with: 'That's good. Brave, too. You've got it though, and pearls are pretty valuable.'

Nothing more was said about the dream, but the interview was followed by another important step. Sam began to share his feelings and thoughts, his hopes and fears. He told Hobson how he hated himself for becoming violently angry when his mother treated him like a child. At the same time, he feared she did not really love him, and he was terrified at the thought of being separated from her. When he shared how he felt about the loss of his father, he wept with grief and rage. In sharing his ideas, wishes and impulses and finding that his therapist still liked and accepted him, he lost much of his hate for himself. A new self emerged. He had a much more positive attitude to both home and school.

Only once did Sam refer to the dream; it was many months later. He shared with Hobson a beautiful insight: 'Its queer about that pearl. I suppose it's me in a *sort of way*.' The pearl is an example of what Hobson calls a *feeling-image*. For Freda,<sup>14</sup> it was emptiness. She revealed to Hobson that '[t]here's this terrible empty feeling I've got inside'. Joe Smith<sup>15</sup> spoke of feeling 'hollow' and like 'a wobbly child learning to walk'. The images are used in therapy to 'carry experience forward' and 'disclose a meaning which is beyond, or prior to conceptual thoughts and formulated words'.<sup>16</sup>

While a good deal of time and energy is devoted in the therapeutic process to helping a person overcome the blocking associated with various defences in order to get to this level of immediate experiencing, it seems that many of the people of the Old Testament quite naturally and spontaneously poured out the pain felt deep within. Job and his cries of anguish comes immediately to mind. On her return from a disastrous stay in Moab, Naomi, overcome with distress, responds to the greeting of her friends by telling them that the name 'Mara' (meaning bitter) suits her better: 'I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty' (Ruth 1: 20-21). In the psalms of lament we

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<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

find image piled upon image as those who suffer pour out their agonies before God.

*The Language of Feeling in the Psalms of Lament*

In reading the psalms of protest, one is immediately struck by both the rawness of emotion displayed and the vivid imagery used to communicate it. Those in distress have reached a point of extremity; the old certainties, along with the feelings of serenity and joy associated with them, have been swept away. In this limit experience, it is impossible to hold on to a restrained, domesticated way of communicating with God. There is now no slippage between the agonies of the heart and the primitive, aggressive articulations before God. The images of distress and anguish coming tumbling out in prayer.

Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors;  
I am a dread to my friends--those who see me on the street flee from me.

I am forgotten by them as though I were dead;  
I have become like *broken pottery*. (Ps. 31: 11-12)

[My enemies] spread a net for my feet--I was *bowed down* in distress.  
They dug a *pit* in my path--but they have fallen into it themselves.  
(Ps. 57:6)

How long will you assault a man?  
Would all of you throw him down--this *leaning wall*, this *tottering fence*?  
(Ps. 62:3)

Your wrath has *swept over* me: your terrors have destroyed me.  
All day long they surround me *like a flood*; they have completely *engulfed* me. (Ps. 88:16)

These ejaculations of anguish do not, however, simply represent a release of emotion. They are, in Hobson's terms, manifestations of an 'emotional knowing'. Behind the metaphors is an understanding of the dynamics of the distress. 'Enemies' of various kinds are being allowed by God to press in and wreak havoc. The modern person feeling something of the same agonies of the soul will easily be able to put her own names on the enemies.

We note, too, that those who cry out to God in these psalms are not lost in a whirl of emotion. They are not paralysed by their distressing circumstances. Associated with their cries from the heart are will and directedness. The note sounded is not so much lament as *protest*. There is a very clear expectation that God should intervene in the current turmoil to bring order, freedom and peace.

Walter Brueggemann characterises the experience of casting off the niceties and the serene language of better times and of unleashing a torrent of anguish and anger as regression: 'The *lament as plea and petition regresses* to the oldest fears, the censored questions, the deepest hates, the unknown and unadmitted venom...' [emphasis in the original].<sup>17</sup> Following Ricoeur, he sees in the life-experience three movements, namely, orientation, disorientation and reorientation.<sup>18</sup> When one is experiencing the shattering effects of a period of dislocation, joy and newness of life are not to be found in simply getting back to the old order. There is no way back. One's life-experience has been radically transformed; the old perspectives have lost their power. The way forward is to find fresh hopes, a different vision, a new order -- reorientation. In order to get there, however, there must first be a regression, a fall down into the depths. One must learn to speak the language of the 'pit'.

[U]ntil the reality of the 'pit' is spoken about with all its hatred of enemies, its mistrust of God, its fear of 'beasts', its painful yearning for old, better times, its daring questions of dangerous edges -- until all that is brought to speech -- it is likely that one will continue to assume the old now-discredited, dysfunctional equilibrium which is in fact powerless.<sup>19</sup>

### *A Feeling-Language and The Polar Self*

In the healing dialogue, there is also a regression in the service of reorientation. Counsellee and counsellor, alone and together, need to discover a language in which the images of the 'pit' emerge. These images penetrate the experience of the person as it really is. A new self is constructed through a re-shaping, a re-ordering, of this experience. Sam went down into the depths and

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<sup>17</sup> W. Brueggemann, 'Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function', in D. Clines ed., *The Poetical Books* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1995), pp. 35-66, p. 58.

<sup>18</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

confronted his 'monsters' in search of his pearl. He had to learn how to talk about his hatred for himself in becoming violently angry towards his mother, about his terror that she would leave him, about his grief and rage over the loss of his father, before he could find a new self, the pearl 'that's me in a sort of way'.

When a person moves to this level of experiencing, he encounters the polarities in his personality. As Buber puts it, there is in a person a 'yes' and a 'no', acceptance and refusal. In the counselling context, the 'yes' stands for all those tendencies, traits, fantasies, emotions, and actions which are considered acceptable and owned; the 'no' refers to those that are unacceptable and disclaimed. In Sam's case, he had to work through the negative pole -- his self-hatred over his ambivalent feelings toward his mother and his father -- before reaching the vision of himself as something precious and rare.

The art of the counsellor is in paring back the protective layers of the counsellee in order to make present to her the heart of her personhood. There are almost endless possibilities for a counsellor in learning with the person a language of the heart. Some will use P-A-C theory (Transactional Analysis). The counsellee is invited to play with images of authority and control, rationality, and emotion respectively. Others find the Empty Chair technique of Gestalt therapy useful. In the chair opposite, the counsellee fixes an image of the person (he or she may even be deceased) primarily associated with the current distress. He is invited to carry on a 'dialogue' with that person, raising and working through key issues. The particular technique a counsellor might use is not of primary interest here. Behind all of the available interventions is the art of the counsellor. It is an art requiring intuition, playfulness, and a willingness to take risks.

In trying to get beyond the superficiality and pretence of jolliness of a client he calls Betty, Irvin Yalom used two 'playful' interventions.<sup>20</sup> Bored with her endless meaningless chatter, Yalom asked her to rate her level of self-disclosure on a scale of one to ten. To his amazement, she gave herself a 'ten'. When he told her that he would have given her a 'two' or a 'three', they began a

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<sup>20</sup> See I. Yalom, *Love's Executioner and Other Tales of Psychotherapy* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), pp. 87-99.



dialogue about her pride in her ability to entertain others. An obese person, Betty saw herself as the jolly fat woman.

"I'm really interested in what you said about being, or rather pretending to be, jolly. I think you are determined, absolutely committed, to be jolly with me."

"Hmmm, interesting theory, Dr. Watson."

"You've done this since our first meeting. You tell me about a life that is full of despair, but you do it in a bouncy, 'aren't-we-having-a-good-time?' way."

"That's the way I am."

"When you stay jolly like that, I lose sight of how much pain you're having."

"That's better than wallowing in it."

"But you come here for help. Why is it so necessary to entertain me?"

Betty flushed. She seemed staggered by my confrontation and retreated by sinking into her body. Wiping her brow with a tiny handkerchief, she stalled for time.

"Zee suspect takes zee fifth."

"Betty, I'm going to be persistent today. What would happen if you stopped trying to entertain me?"

"I don't see anything wrong with having some fun. Why take everything so.....so.....I don't know-----You're always so serious. Besides, this is me, this is the way I am. I'm not sure what you're talking about. What do you mean by my entertaining you?"

"Betty, this is important, the most important stuff we've gotten into so far. But you're right. First, you've got to know exactly what I mean. Would it be O.K. with you if, from now on in our future sessions, I interrupt and point out when you're entertaining me--the moment it occurs?"<sup>21</sup>

This option of immediately interrupting Betty's superficial jolliness is the second playful device used by Yalom. He comments, "Within three or four sessions, her "entertaining" behavior disappeared as she, for the first time, began to speak of her life with the seriousness it deserved."<sup>22</sup> Yalom's confirmation of Betty allowed her to get in touch with her serious side. As he did so, she was able to own a feeling-image, 'emptiness'.

She reflected that she had to be entertaining to keep others interested in her. I commented that, in the office, the opposite was true: the more she tried to entertain me, the more distant and less interested I felt.

But Betty said she didn't know how else to be: I was asking her to dump her entire social repertoire. Reveal herself? If she were to reveal herself, what would she show? There was nothing inside. She

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 97-98.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

was empty. (The word *empty* was to arise more and more frequently as therapy proceeded.....)<sup>23</sup>

Later, Betty would own other heart-images, namely isolation and hunger for closeness. She could now speak authentically out of her serious self.

When Betty began to relate on the level of feeling-language, she discovered the polarities in her personhood. She had disclaimed her serious self and was living in bad faith through the false self of the 'jolly fat lady'. Speaking out of the serious self, she was able to own the emptiness, isolation, and hunger for closeness she felt. A movement towards psychological wholeness begins when a person gets in touch with her feeling-images. These images will be bipolar. Confirmation in counselling, I suggest, is a process in which one helps the counsellee move to the point where she can own and integrate disclaimed polarities.

### **CONFIRMATION AND RECLAIMING SPLIT-OFF SELVES**

Recall that in his dialogue with Carl Rogers over the difference between confirmation and acceptance, Buber argued that in order to help the other grow into his potential one must 'help him against himself'. This need to move beyond acceptance he related to a polar understanding of the self. We have seen these polarities at work in Sam and in Betty. It is interesting to note that the person-centred therapist, Ralph Quinn, also attests to the reality of the polar nature of the self, although he does not refer to the Buber-Rogers debate. In an article entitled 'Confronting Carl Rogers', he points up the limitations in an 'acceptance-only' policy and cites his own clinical experience:

In the last year I have worked with a man who claimed he *desperately needed* to be more assertive in his life, with a lonely woman who *wanted* to quit spending all her evenings alone at home, with a student who *would do practically anything* to stop using marijuana, and with a husband and wife whose constant fighting was "ruining their marriage."

With all of these clients at some point in the course of therapy I spent a good deal of time confronting their (largely unconscious) desires to *not be* assertive, to *not be* with other people, to *keep*

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-99.

*smoking marijuana, and to maintain the same dysfunctional patterns of fighting [emphasis added].*<sup>24</sup>

The theorist who has done the most to relate Buber's ideas to counselling is Maurice Friedman. In an article co-authored with Tamar Kron on the role of confirmation in counselling, the need affirmed by Quinn to go beyond acceptance to confrontation is related to the polar self: '[I]t is not enough to reflect back to you what you are and affirm it. I have to confront you with your unacknowledged polarity so that you will be ready to take responsibility for it.'<sup>25</sup> The authors illustrate their convictions through a case study involving a young doctoral student who came to Kron for counselling in order to work through the difficulties created by his low self-esteem and lack of confidence in his intellectual capabilities.

The client is one of seven children of a North-African, low socioeconomic multiproblem family who grew up in a nonencouraging environment. Overcoming all his hardships, the talented youngster succeeded in his studies and became a doctoral student in a highly valued natural sciences program.

Listening carefully to the client's way of describing himself, the therapist sensed, concealed within his self-deprecation, a tone of arrogance. She verified her impression during the next few sessions. When the client once again expressed his feelings of inferiority and despair at his inability to go on with his somewhat pretentious project, she stopped him and said, "But you know, actually you are arrogant and presumptuous."

The client was taken aback and responded with surprise, "Arrogant? I never thought of myself as arrogant, for I usually feel so inferior."

The therapist told the client that side by side with his feelings of inadequacy, he does feel proud of his high achievements in the face of his low background and his hardships. "You can be justly proud of yourself for all your achievements," she added, "but you are also arrogant for being the only child in your family who made it and climbed high up into the academic world."

The client became quiet and reflective. In the next session, he came in and said, "Last time I felt hit as though you had sent a missile at me. I was confused and bewildered the whole week. I feel as if my whole self-image is being turned upside down." He then continued by telling a dream he had. In the dream, he sees himself standing precariously on a hill of stones. He looks down the hill and feels afraid that the stones will start rolling down and he will fall and get himself

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<sup>24</sup> R. Quinn, 'Confronting Carl Rogers: A Developmental-Interactional Approach to Person-Centered Therapy', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 33, no. 1 (Winter 1993), pp. 6-23, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup> T. Kron & M. Friedman, 'Problems of Confirmation in Psychotherapy', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 34, no. 1 (Winter 1994), pp. 66-83, p. 81.

hit hard. He then starts to descend the hill very slowly and cautiously, holding on to the more solid-looking stones with his hands and feet until he succeeds in going down all the way and standing on firm ground.

Both the client and the therapist understood the dream to be about the patient's ego inflation, his fear of failure, and the acknowledged need to go slower and adapt his work to his present abilities.<sup>26</sup>

Within this student there are both acknowledged and unacknowledged polarities. He claims his sense of inferiority and low self-esteem, but disclaims arrogance and pride. Above we saw similar dynamics in Betty. Betty lives out of a false self -- the jolly fat lady -- in a misguided attempt to entertain and keep others interested. It is the disclaimed serious self, however, which is authentic and most likely to engage others. 'Yes' and 'no', acceptance and refusal -- these are the dynamics the counsellor must reckon with; she must wrestle with her client against himself.

In this section, I offer the view that *confirmation in counselling means helping the counsellee reclaim disowned selves within the society of the Self*.<sup>27</sup> Confirming the other as the unique person she is obviously means more than simply reflecting back to her what she appears to be. It involves struggling with the person to help her discover the selves which she has lost contact with. Confirmation in counselling, I will argue, means, as a first step, affirming the particularity and uniqueness of the person by re-acquainting her with some of the disowned members in the family of the Self.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 81-82.

<sup>27</sup> The idea that a central aim of psychotherapy is the re-integration of isolated sub-selves is not novel. Jung highlighted the destructive consequences associated with disavowal of the shadow. The gentle, peace-loving person, for example, represses his tendency to hatred and aggression. Jung also pointed to the fact that males tend to disavow their female side, and vice versa. Psychological integration involves the reconciliation of opposites. 'The conscious mind is on top, the shadow underneath', writes Jung, 'and just as high always longs for low and hot for cold, so all consciousness, perhaps without being aware of it, seeks its unconscious opposite, lacking which it is doomed to stagnation, congestion, and ossification' ('The Problem of the Attitude-Type', in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, Vol. 7 of *The Collected Works*, Bollingen Series XX, 2nd edit. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977], p. 54). The idea is also found in the Gestalt therapy school. There is a recognition that persons have a tendency to reject parts of themselves which they consider unworthy. Acknowledgement of the disowned parts as a first step is advocated. This is followed by a facilitation of a process of integration into the Self (see M. Korb et al, *Gestalt Therapy: Practice and Theory*, 2nd edit [New York: Pergamon Press, 1989], p. 15). What is different in our analysis is, first, the linking of this process of repression to the concept of self-deception (Herbert Fingarette's contribution) and, second, the association of the lifting of the repression with Buber's notion of confirmation.

This is obviously only a first step. Confirmation is also about helping a person grow into her potential. To refer to the case study presented above involving the North African student, Tamar Kron has not done her work in simply confronting him with his disclaimed arrogance. Certainly, it is a crucial step in the direction of growth to acknowledge a proud self. The next step for the student, though, is to integrate the inferior and arrogant selves so that he can reach a point of healthy self-esteem and appropriate confidence in relation to his research. I will offer a view of the second stage of the confirming process as the facilitation of a dialogue within the community of selves. Further, I intend to show the value in using some of Buber's key concepts -- namely inclusion, confirmation and responsibility -- in understanding this inner dialogical process.

It seems likely that in his reference to the polarities in the self Buber had in mind the almost universal tendency to self-deception. Even if he did not, there appears to be a very close connection between the two concepts. We have already seen how Friedman and Kron interpret confirmation in counselling as helping the other recognise unacknowledged polarities. The 'no' in a person is manifested in the production of clever cover-stories aimed at the avoidance of the real Self. To acknowledge the Self as it really is would result in deep anxiety and distress; hence the deception. The philosopher, Herbert Fingarette, has developed an understanding of self-deception in terms of avowal and disavowal within the community of the Self. When selves are split-off, there is confusion and alienation of the Self from itself. It is the over-coming of this disorder and self-alienation -- the conflict between the 'yes' and the 'no' polarities -- which confirmation is aimed at.

### *Self-Deception and Disavowal of Selves*

Fingarette develops a new understanding of consciousness in order to construct his model of self-deception. In place of a passive registration and reflection to the mind of what the eyes see in the world, a 'mental mirror' model, he posits consciousness as the exercise of the skill of 'spelling-out' (making explicit) an aspect of one's way of being engaged with the world.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, p. 39.

Engagement is Fingarette's short-hand for the complex ways a person lives in the world. It covers 'the activities he engages in, the projects he takes on, the way the world presents itself to him to be seen, heard, felt, enjoyed, feared, or otherwise "experienced" by him'.<sup>29</sup> A person is involved in self-deception when there is a compelling reason *not* to spell-out a particular engagement. He avoids becoming explicitly conscious of his engagement, and he avoids becoming explicitly conscious that he is avoiding it.<sup>30</sup> Thus in self-deception there is a 'purposeful discrepancy between the way the individual really is engaged in the world and the story he tells himself'.<sup>31</sup>

All this raises the question: Why bother to hide from oneself what is really there? For Fingarette, the answer lies in the need to disavow certain engagements to avoid anxiety and to maintain self-esteem. There are three chief dimensions of disavowal, namely, isolation, non-responsibility and the incapacity to spell-out.<sup>32</sup> A disavowed engagement is cut-off from the influence of the Self. In this way, the Self no longer takes responsibility for it. Since this feature of a person's way of being in the world has been split-off, she would not, if asked, be able to make explicit what she is doing in a situation in which that feature comes into play.

In developing this idea of avowal/disavowal of engagements, Fingarette uses the idea of the Self as an achievement, a synthesis. Avowal of engagements in the developing Self produces a synthesis; self-deception contributes to a failure of this synthesis. The model of the Self Fingarette uses is a *community*. In the growing child, the members of this community are the 'various originally independent forms of engagement, the rudimentary but unified complexes of reasons-motive-feeling-aim-means-and-moralistic reaction'.<sup>33</sup> Thus, within the developing community which is the Self, there are angry selves, shameful selves, creative selves, aggressive selves, righteous selves, dishonest selves, logical selves and so on. When a self is avowed it is claimed as part of one's personal identity. If a self is unacceptable, on the other hand, it is isolated, split-

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>32</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 82.



off. It is this process of disavowal which leads to confusion, disorder and a sense of alienation of the Self from itself. 'Disavowed desires that in fact continue to exist are experienced as "alien," as "forces" that press us, drive us, or overcome us.'<sup>34</sup> Disavowal contributes to a failure in the synthetic processes within the community of the Self. If the coherence is weak, there will be great inner distress, anxiety, shame, guilt and self-hatred.<sup>35</sup>

The literature on self-deception is immense, and there are, of course, authors who are critical of Fingarette's approach. David Jones, for example, believes that the introduction of the notion of a community of selves, along with disavowal of sub-selves, needlessly complicates the matter.<sup>36</sup> He contends that in self-deception there is only one self and that this self uses a 'biased cognitive style' and 'motivated excusing strategies' to maintain the cover story. In order to hide the truth from herself, a person develops a cognitive style which is selective in regard to attention, memory and judgement. Put differently, a person sees what she wants to see, remembers what suits her purposes, and makes biased judgements. Along with these selective thought processes, there is a tendency to make excuses for behaviour which is unacceptable. A person is able to rationalise her actions in such a way that the blame is always laid elsewhere.

There is no doubt that self-deceivers use these strategies to maintain their cover stories. A description of these ploys does not in itself, however, prove that it is illegitimate to talk in terms of disavowal of unacceptable selves; the two approaches are not incompatible. In any case, my purpose in introducing Fingarette's model is not to enter the complex and controversial debate over the processes involved with self-deception. Rather, I am using it because it has a close affinity with what is a central concern in psychotherapy, namely defence mechanisms, and, moreover, because it sheds light on some of the cases we have been discussing. Sam had repressed his ambivalent feelings toward his mother and father because they were too painful and frightening to face. Betty had disavowed her serious self because she believed that she needed a jolly self to keep others interested in her. The young doctoral student, finally, had

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<sup>34</sup> Fingarette, 'Alcoholism and Self-Deception', p. 53.

<sup>35</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>36</sup> See D. Jones, 'Pervasive Self-Deception', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 27, no. 2 (1989), pp. 217-237.

disclaimed his arrogant self. He was happy to own an inferior self; he found it acceptable to spell-out to others his problems with his studies in terms of low self-esteem and lack of confidence. What he could not make explicit was his tendency to look upon the under-achievers in his family with disdain.

As we have seen, a key element in Fingarette's model is the notion of the Self as a community. This idea has also become important in contemporary psychological theories of the Self. In order to continue laying the foundation for a view of confirmation in counselling as helping the counsellee re-claim isolated selves, it is necessary to discuss further this theory of the Self.

### *The Self as a Community*

Marie Hoskins and Johanna Leseho argue that there has been within psychological theorising on the Self a dramatic shift from a focus on the unitary Self to an exploration of the Self in terms of sub-personalities.<sup>37</sup> While older theories worked with the metaphors of cohesive self, core self and authentic self, postmodern theories throw up images of sub-selves, possible selves and a community of selves. It is true that there has been a shift in the way the Self is theoretically constructed, but I contend that it is a mistake to over-emphasise the differences in approach between older and more recent theorists. In my view, psychological theorists have always worked with the community model of the Self.

Hoskins and Loseho present Heinz Kohut's notion of the 'cohesive self' as paradigmatic of the traditional approach.<sup>38</sup> Kohut certainly understands the Self in terms of a personal core; it is 'a center of productive initiative'.<sup>39</sup> This Self is superordinate to the psychic agencies (id, ego, and superego).<sup>40</sup> It should be recognised, though, that the Self is also understood by Kohut as a community. The smallest form of community is a couple. What Kohut calls the

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<sup>37</sup> See M. Hoskins & J. Loseho, 'Changing Metaphors of the Self: Implications for Counseling', *Journal of Counseling and Development* 74, no. 3 (Jan-Feb 1996), pp. 243-252.

<sup>38</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>39</sup> H. Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1977), p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> See Kohut, 'Remarks About the Formation of the Self: Letter to a Student Regarding Some Principles of Psychoanalytic Research', in P. Orstein ed., *The Search for the Self*, vol. 2 (New York: International Universities Press, 1978), pp. 737-770, p. 757.

'bipolar self' accounts for two basic psychological functions: healthy self-assertiveness in relation to the 'mirroring' (approving and admiring) selfobject<sup>41</sup> and healthy admiration for the idealized selfobject.<sup>42</sup> Thus it is possible, theorises Kohut, to identify a *grandiose self* which seeks admiration and approval, and an *idealizing self* which desires merger with an admired other. When the two basic psychological needs are fulfilled in infantile development, a *cohesive self* emerges.

It is also possible to identify a communitarian element in Freud's construction of the Self. Id, ego and superego may be construed as metaphors for an instinctual self (itself composed of a loving self and an aggressive self), an executive self and a moralising/civilising self, respectively.

The P-A-C conceptualisation of the Self developed by Eric Berne likewise contains a reference to sub-selves. The Parent is the image of authority, control, strictness. Playfulness and spontaneity, along with irrational fear, are the metaphors we associate with childhood. The Adult, lastly, carries with it connotations of maturity and rationality. Persons grow up under the influence of a whole host of parental injunctions, rules, values and taboos. They carry a 'Parent-self' around inside them. They also live with a 'Child-self'. Dysfunctional emotional reactions developed in childhood break out in current stressful situations. The 'Adult-self' represents the rational faculty which is able to challenge parental injunctions and modify dysfunctional emotional patterns.

Freud, Berne and Kohut, then, all have a communitarian dimension in their constructions of the Self. The idea of a community of selves is not a new one. It is, however, true that contemporary psychological theorists make explicit reference to the existence of multiple selves within the Self.

Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius, for example, have developed a theory of 'possible selves'.<sup>43</sup> They refer to a type of self-knowledge which refers to how individuals imaginatively construct their future existence. Caught up in a vision of potential selves are the hopes and dreams, along with the fears and

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<sup>41</sup> The term 'selfobject' is used to indicate that the child views her mother (or father) as an extension of herself.

<sup>42</sup> See Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self*, p. 171.

<sup>43</sup> See H. Markus & P. Nurius, 'Possible Selves', *American Psychologist* 41, no. 9 (Sept. 1986), pp. 954-969.

anxieties, of a person. A possible self is the ideal self a person dreams of. It can, nonetheless, be a self she is afraid of becoming. 'The possible selves that are hoped for might include the successful self, the creative self, the rich self, the thin self, or the loved and admired self, whereas the dreaded possible selves could be the alone self, the depressed self, the incompetent self, the alcoholic self, the unemployed self, or the bag lady self.'<sup>44</sup>

J.M.M. Mair has exploited the therapeutic potential in the metaphor of a community of selves.<sup>45</sup> He begins his discussion with a reference to the smallest form of community, namely a community of two persons. It is common to refer to being 'in two minds'. There is part of one tending in a certain direction, but another part is pulling in the opposite direction. It is like having to do battle with oneself. The community of two can be expanded to three, four or more selves. Some of these selves will persist over time, others will play a role for only a time. Sub-selves may be 'loners', or they may be 'team-players'. Some will be powerful and dominant, others will be docile and agreeable.

Mair encourages his clients to reflect on their psychic conflicts in terms of their internal selves. He suggests that they may find it helpful to work with the 'characters' provided by communities they are familiar with. These will be political groups, business communities, sporting clubs, and the like. His experience in working with 'John' illustrates his approach.<sup>46</sup>

John came to Mair because he wanted to give up smoking but was unable to. As they talked together, it became evident that there were a variety of personal issues impacting on the presenting problem. In his attempt to establish a healthy relationship both with himself and with others, John was experiencing a good deal of conflict. Mair suggested to him that it might be helpful to think of his contradictory feelings, desires and concerns as different 'selves' constituting his personal 'community'.

As John began this therapeutic experiment, he was able to identify the most powerful person in his 'community' as his 'Foreign Secretary'. The Foreign Secretary spent very little time at home. He was continually travelling

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 954.

<sup>45</sup> See J.M.M. Mair, 'The Community of Self', in D. Bannister ed., *New Perspectives in Personal Construct Theory* (London: Academic Press, 1977), pp. 125-149.

<sup>46</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 131ff.

in order to visit other 'communities' (other people) to provide assistance. The Foreign Secretary was trying to impress others at the cost of his own 'community' (his family). He wouldn't refuse calls for assistance because he needed to be needed and he wanted to be popular. Sadly, the neglect of the home community left its members feeling neglected and stressed. As a consequence, they were resentful.

At the next interview, John presented a typewritten page detailing further insights into his personal community, which he had called 'The Home Team'. John had used in his reflections the fact that Britain was at the time deciding whether or not it should enter the Common Market of the E.E.C. He identified two major groups, namely 'The Wise Ones' and 'The Common Marketeers'. The positions and policies of both the 'Home Secretary' and 'The Chancellor of the Exchequer' were outlined. He decided to sack the Home Secretary because of his weakness of will and to replace him with a stronger one. The powers of the Foreign Secretary were curbed. Now all requests for help from other communities had to be discussed 'in Cabinet'; no longer could the Foreign Secretary engage in unilateral decision-making.

John shared with his therapist that for the first time he had been able to say 'no' to a request for assistance, recognising that he was over-committing himself. In the past he had always felt too lonely to be alone even for a few minutes. But now he felt that recognising the diversity of 'characters' in his personal community allowed him to feel comfortable in his own company. In addressing his inner conflict, John was able also to reduce his cigarette smoking to just a few a day. Mair reflects that John's use of the metaphor of a personal community 'seemed to provide him with the beginning of a personal "language" within which to conceive and begin to control aspects of his ways of dealing with himself, others and the world'.<sup>47</sup>

While the idea of a community of selves has been around in the world of psychology for some time, there is no doubt that increasingly theorists and therapists are exploring its potential. It is an important element in our attempt to identify the role of confirmation in counselling.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

### *Confirmation as The Process of Reclaiming Isolated Selves*

Confirmation means making the other present in her uniqueness and particularity. In counselling, as we have seen, a person will often present just some of the selves in her personal community. Selves which are unacceptable remain unacknowledged. They are split-off in an attempt to avoid anxiety and a lowering of self-esteem. The particularity of the person, however, is constituted through both avowed and disavowed selves. To help a person re-claim rejected selves is to confirm her. The first step in a movement towards wholeness is always an awareness of the real Self; the person must be able to discover the Self that she actually is.<sup>48</sup> In the terms we are using, there needs to be an acknowledgement of disowned sub-selves in the society of the Self. While it is not possible, or even necessary, to get in touch with all disavowed selves, it is critical that the repressed self (it may be selves) which is most closely associated with the person's psychological dysfunction is acknowledged.

Confirming the counsellee through a re-claiming of disavowed selves requires artistry from the counsellor. It is not possible to precisely identify a series of steps which will lead a person to the point of being able to acknowledge disclaimed polarities. What can be identified, as we have already noted, is the need for the counsellor and the counsellee to engage in serious play. The British psychotherapist, Donald Winnicott, suggests that we view playing as a form of communication in psychotherapy.<sup>49</sup> Play is universal and belongs to health. It is the natural reality; the sophisticated modern version of it takes place in the therapist's office.

Psychotherapy takes place in the overlap of two areas of playing, that of the patient and that of the therapist. Psychotherapy has to do with two people playing together. The corollary of this is that where

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<sup>48</sup> Social psychologists, Roy Baumeister and Dianne Tice, refer to four selves: the public self, the self-concept, the actual or behavioural self, and the ideal self (see their 'Four Selves, Two Motives, and a Substitution Process Self-Regulation Model', in R. Baumeister ed., *Public Self and Private Self* [New York: Springer-Verlag, 1986], pp. 63-74). The public self refers to how one is known and experienced by others. The self-concept differs from the public self because of secrecy and a tendency to present oneself in a distorted or falsified way. The actual self is defined by what one really thinks and what one really does. Finally, the ideal self is the person one aspires to be. The gap between the self-concept and both the actual and public selves, they point out, is partly due to self-deception (see op. cit., p. 66).

<sup>49</sup> See D. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971), p. 41.



playing is not possible then the work done by the therapist is directed towards bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play.<sup>50</sup>

In Winnicott's description of the dynamics of play, an important concept is that of the *potential space*.<sup>51</sup> Play is not located in inner psychic reality; nor is it to be found in external reality; it is something which takes place in the space between, in the first instance, the mother and the baby. In the context of counselling, it is located in the 'overlap of two areas of playing'. As Buber stresses time and again, dialogue is an event in the sphere of the 'between'. If the counsellor cannot establish with the counsellee a potential space where they can creatively explore the latter's psychic conflict, no healing is possible.

Winnicott also draws attention to the central place in play for the element of *surprise*.<sup>52</sup> If a child knows exactly what is going to happen at every stage of the game, the joy of play is lost. Similarly, in the therapeutic context it is the moments when the client surprises himself that are the significant ones.

My description amounts to a plea to every therapist to allow for the patient's capacity to play, that is, to be creative in the analytic work. The patient's creativity can be only too easily stolen by a therapist who knows too much. It does not really matter, of course, how much the therapist knows provided he can hide this knowledge, or refrain from advertising what he knows.<sup>53</sup>

For Winnicott, then, it is not the insightful interpretations of the therapist which are turning points in the healing process, but rather the creative connections, the surprising insights, which come to the client. With this in mind, it is interesting to review the way in which Tamar Kron chose to expose the student's arrogant self. In reading the report of the case, one is immediately struck by the bluntness of Kron's approach. She simply says, 'But you know, actually you are arrogant and presumptuous.' He feels like she has 'sent a missile' at him. In this case, it seemed to work; it led to a very significant dream related to the disclaimed self. The danger, of course, is that such a direct approach can create so much anxiety that the client begins a blocking strategy. He then moves further away from a

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>51</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 47, 52-53.

<sup>52</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

recognition of the self he has disowned. It seems to me that Winnicott's guiding principle that the counsellor create the space in which the person comes to his own insights is to be preferred. Sensing the possibility of a disclaimed self, the counsellor seeks for ways to lead the counsellee to the point where he can acknowledge it. It may be, for example, that in playing with the idea of a community of selves (Mair's strategy) the counsellee discovers a self that he has split-off. Mair's suggestion that a framework from politics, business, sports or the arts be used is an important factor in the process. In looking at his inner dynamics from a different perspective, the counsellee may be helped to recognise a polarity that he has been blocking out. The new frame for his self-examination may provide the key in breaking through some of his defences.

### ***A Biblical Game of Confirmation: God and Jonah***

It seems to me that the two key insights offered by Winnicott, namely that therapy is play and that the moments when the client surprises herself are the really significant ones, are valuable guiding principles for helping a person reclaim a disavowed self. Interestingly, there seems to be a parallel with the way God is presented as working in the book of Jonah. These two principles are in evidence, I suggest, in God's dialogue with the prophet in the last scene of the novella.

Why was Jonah so unwilling to carry out the Lord's commission to go to Nineveh and call the citizens to repentance? James Limburg outlines a series of proposed answers.<sup>54</sup> Josephus suggests that it was fear that was behind Jonah's flight towards Tarshish. In the first century A.D. book, *Lives of the Prophets*, the suggestion is made that if Jonah prophesied against Nineveh and it was not destroyed, then Jonah would be made to look like a false prophet. The ninth century A.D. *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* offers the view that motivating Jonah's flight was a desire to protect Israel and his own reputation. He suspected Nineveh might repent and God would relent. Then the Lord would be angry with his Chosen People for being so slow to repent and Jonah, who had announced impending doom for Nineveh, would be seen as a lying prophet.

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<sup>54</sup> See J. Limburg, *Jonah* (London: SCM Press, 1993), pp. 42-43.

The answer to the question of why the flight becomes clear in the dialogue between God and Jonah in chapter 4. H. W. Wolff describes this interplay between the two as playful: 'The Creator of all things begins a game with him, just as Wisdom, God's delight, plays a game before the Creator on the inhabited globe....Just as in 1:17 God "appointed" the great fish....so he now appoints a castor oil plant.'<sup>55</sup> The focus for this playful dialogue is Jonah's anger. On the surface, it may seem that the prophet is angry because he is distressed that God failed to honour the demands of his own system of justice. Jonah upholds the ancient tradition that sin must be punished; there should be no relenting on God's part. Certainly a number of interpreters take this line.<sup>56</sup> I contend, though, following Wolff, that the real concern is not theodicy but Jonah's self-assertion.<sup>57</sup> The reason for the prophet's self-pity may be described as follows.<sup>58</sup> Jonah subscribes to a view that when a message of God is authentically received and faithfully proclaimed it is bound to be fulfilled. The corollary is that if such a message is not fulfilled the reputation of the prophet is destroyed. It is the fact that God, through his act of mercy, has allowed him to fall into disrepute that causes Jonah to be enraged.

Chapter 4 of the book opens this way:

But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

Jonah uses what appears to be a celebration of God's grace and mercy as a reproach against God. In this way he seeks to cast the problem of his anger in terms of theodicy. He is asking God to justify his decision to have mercy on the merciless Ninevites. I suggest, however, that this is simply a cover story. What Jonah is hiding from himself is his own egoism and exaggerated self-concern.

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<sup>55</sup> H. W. Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah: A Commentary*, trans. by M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), p. 169.

<sup>56</sup> R. B. Salters provides a convenient summary of such views. See his *Jonah and Lamentations* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1994), pp. 56-57.

<sup>57</sup> See Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah*, p. 176.

<sup>58</sup> See Salters, *Jonah*, pp. 59-60.

He avows an identity as an upholder of the ancient view of divine justice; he disavows his own egoism and self-pity.

God can see through the cover story, though. Reflecting Winnicott's insight that the significant moment in a therapeutic dialogue is when the client surprises himself, God does not directly confront Jonah over his self-deception. The Lord does not say, for instance, 'You think you can convince me that you are concerned about divine justice, but I can see that the real issue is your arrogance and egoism.' Instead he begins a game with the prophet. He asks, 'Have you any right to be angry?' (v. 4). God begins to nudge Jonah towards self-examination.

Jonah, however, forcefully resists God's lead. He heads off to the east of the city and builds himself a shelter as he waits to see if there will be a reversal (v. 5). Perhaps, he muses, the Ninevites will relapse into their old ways and God will punish them as they deserve. This wordless response constitutes a defiant reply. His self-concern and arrogance are displayed in the way he directs his focus away from God's question and onto the fate of the city.<sup>59</sup>

God continues his game as he provides a plant for shelter from the burning sun (v. 6). When he sends a worm to eat it and a hot east wind to heighten the effects of the loss of shelter (vv. 7-8), Jonah's cover story is all but in tatters. His death-wish says it all. Wolff comments:

Earlier Jonah was indignant because Yahweh took pity on Nineveh. Now it is self-pity that incites his indignation. By showing Jonah as ready to die because there is no more shade, the satirist exposes the fact that his first expression of unwillingness was also *deeply rooted in self-pity, not in genuine concern about the validity of God's word and his justice* [emphasis added].<sup>60</sup>

God, meanwhile, is patient and continues to push the prophet to honest self-reflection. He asks, 'Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?' (v. 9). God still has the hope that Jonah will re-claim the egoistic self he has isolated and is refusing to take responsibility for. In the end, Jonah fails to reach that point. We are left with God contrasting Jonah's compassion for the plant (here, as Wolff<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah*, p. 169.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>61</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 173.

observes, there is a note of irony) with his own compassion for the city (vv. 10-11). Helping a person see what he desperately does not want to see is no easy task, not even for Almighty God!

### *Integration Through a Dialogue in the Community of the Self*

Buber's understanding of confirmation extends beyond affirming the other in her uniqueness. He also sees the need to help her against herself as she grows into her potential. Confirmation begins with acceptance of a person as she is, and moves to helping her become the person she is potentially. In the context of counselling, there is a need to move from the recognition of the disfavoured selves in the society of the Self to a point of relative integration in the functioning of that society. A turning point for Betty came when she was able to own her serious self, but she still needed to learn how to utilise her capacity for thoughtful, profound reflection to deal with her over-eating, her sense of emptiness, and her experience of social isolation.

Buber suggests that in order to help the other achieve a higher level of personal integration, it is necessary to work with her to strengthen a polarity, and to change the relationship between the polarities. This points, I believe, to the need for an internal dialogue. In this second stage of the model of confirmation being developed here, I offer the view that a genuine internal dialogue works according to the same principles Buber develops for an interpersonal dialogue. As the selves within the community learn how to relate more constructively, the synthesising function of the Self facilitates a dialogue oriented around *inclusion*, *confirmation* and *responsibility*.

It is essential that the selves understand the needs, fears and hopes each of them have. This involves a bold swinging into the life of the particular self being considered. In *inclusion*, or 'imagining the real', there is an attempt to think and feel from the other side. This is precisely the process which is required in this internal dialogue. Let us take the case of John's 'Foreign Secretary'. What are his needs, his fears, his hopes? The Foreign Secretary has a need to be needed. Behind the readiness to provide his services to everyone he can is a need to be praised: 'John's such a good fellow; always ready to lend a helping

hand'. His self-esteem is flagging; the affirmations that regularly come his way as a result of his helpfulness provide him with the boost he needs. What about his fears? He is clearly afraid of being alone. Is it the case that a frenzy of activity means that he never has to sit still long enough to think his own thoughts, face his own short-comings? Or is it simply the case that he is bored when he is by himself? Finally, we consider his hopes. He can see the distress his family is suffering; it hurts him to observe the resentment that is building up in them due to his neglect. He wants to cut down on his trips away in order to be fair to the members of his family and to enhance the quality of their life together.

*Confirmation* means valuing the uniqueness of the other person. It involves understanding the differences between oneself and the other through inclusion and then learning to appreciate those differences. The generic reason behind a disavowal of a sub-self is that it is considered to be unacceptable. Learning the way of confirmation is learning to appreciate the gifts such a self possesses. It will also have serious short-comings; but this must not lead to a failure to value its positive contribution to the society of the Self. With his vision of the Christian community as the Body of Christ, Paul is very aware of the important role played by the 'weaker' members. 'The eye', he writes, 'cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor' (I Cor. 12:21-22). The Foreign Secretary is busy for all the wrong reasons. He neglects his family and causes them unnecessary distress. There are clearly areas he needs to grow in. Nevertheless, he also possesses significant gifts. The Foreign Secretary has a generous spirit. Despite being motivated by a need to be needed, he nevertheless makes himself available to people when they require assistance. An abundant source of energy, a healthy vitality, are also assets. It is simply the case that the generosity and the vitality need to be channelled appropriately.

*Responsibility* means a willingness to allow the address of the other to penetrate one's defences and to act accordingly. It means the capacity to live in 'the receptive hour'. A word calling for a response has been spoken. What will



one do with it? That is the crucial question guiding Buber's reflections on responsibility. What will the Foreign Secretary do with the 'motion' that has been put that all requests for outside assistance must go before the 'Cabinet'. He is being asked to give up his practice of unilateral decision-making. The positive changes in John's life came because he was able to respond to that call. Now, for the first time he could say 'no' when he was over-committed.

The final stage in the process of confirming a person in counselling is the facilitation of an inner dialogue. It will be of value, I am suggesting, to structure this dialogue between sub-selves around the principles of inclusion, confirmation and responsibility. It is not, of course, important or even desirable that the counsellor use these rubrics in her facilitation. What is essential is that she helps the counsellee to incorporate the dynamics described by the rubrics into his internal dialogue.

### ***EGOISTIC INTROSPECTION OR GROWTH IN HOLINESS?***

There may be some who consider that this focus on psychological wholeness is really an encouragement of self-centred introspection. Instead of wasting time and energy on attempting to integrate disavowed selves, some will say, persons should be devoting themselves to serving others. Rather than joining in the rampant individualism plaguing our modern industrialised societies, we should broaden our interests to include the well-being of the local community and of the society as a whole. Of course we must devote ourselves to doing good to others. It goes without saying that we must have a communitarian commitment. However, I argue that reclaiming the less attractive side of one's personality is also a moral imperative. To live as if these polarities do not exist is a dangerous self-deception. Dangerous because not only will one suffer from a fragmented, disordered psyche, but others will also suffer from the destructive outworking of that psyche. In some of the cases we have studied, the pain inflicted is relatively minor. For example, one may have to suffer Betty's boring, annoying 'entertainment'. Other cases, though, pointed to more serious harm. Untold damage is done in the church and in the world by 'good' people who are not nearly as good as they would like to think they are. Cut off from

their tendencies to hate, power and control, they unleash their dark forces in subtle, covert ways. Others pay the price for their repression.

Growing in the way of Christ involves acknowledging and integrating the 'black sheep' in the family of the Self in order that we may relate to others more constructively. This process takes effort and it requires courage and honesty. It is not something, fortunately, that we have to do in our own strength. In Romans chapters 7 and 8, Paul emphasises the need to rely on the resources of the Spirit in conforming oneself to Christ. Gerald Borchert, a scholar with an interest in both the New Testament and pastoral care, helpfully links integrating one's shadow side with Paul's exhortations in these chapters:

Christians who seek to achieve holy living by depending upon their own resources--namely by living *kata sarka*--will discover again and again their helplessness. They may well perceive the way of God, as the Jews did through the law, but hope does not spring from the self-made person, even the self-made perceptive person! Indeed, the life which relies on its own resources--*kata sarka*--will suffer ruination (8:6). The alternative for the Christian is reliance on the Spirit--namely a life which is lived *kata pneuma*. Such a life is the life of faith about which Paul spoke earlier. It is, in psychological terms, the acceptance of the dark side of the human personality and the learning of how to live with it positively.<sup>62</sup>

These reflections by Borchert remind us of the importance of grounding all attempts at psychological transformation in the power of the Holy Spirit. Further, they point to the link between the integration of the shadow side and sanctification. They tie in, I suggest, with the case of God and Jonah analysed above. God was attempting to help the prophet grow in holiness through confronting his tendency to self-assertion. Integration within the community of the Self should be construed as part of the process of sanctification.

### **CONCLUSION**

We have seen how the process of confirmation in counselling involves an attempt to develop a feeling-language with the counsellee. In moving to this

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<sup>62</sup> G. Borchert, 'Romans, Pastoral Counseling, and the Introspective Conscience of the West', *Review and Expositor* 83, no. 1 (1986), pp. 81-92, p. 87.

deep level of experiencing, a person encounters the polarities in her personhood. Feeling-images are bipolar.

We have also explored the feeling-language in the psalms of lament. In order to reach the stage of reorientation, those suffering distress needed first to regress to a level of primitive, uncontrolled expressions of distress. Unless the language of the 'pit' is spoken, there is no possibility of leaving behind the old, dysfunctional order. A connection was made with the regression in the service of a new self that takes place in counselling.

Following the line of the bipolarity on the level of heart-experience, it was argued that helping a person reclaim split-off selves constitutes the first stage in the movement towards psychological wholeness. Here we saw links between Buber's notion of the polar self and Fingarette's description of self-deception in terms of avowal/disavowal. In terms of counselling process, we made use of Winnicott's two guiding principles: therapy takes place in the overlap between two areas of play, and the moments when a client surprises herself are the really significant ones. We observed how these principles are reflected in God's endeavours to help Jonah own the egoistic self he had disavowed.

We also identified a second stage in the counselling process. Once there is an acknowledgement of an isolated self or selves, there needs to be a facilitation of an inner dialogue. This internal dialogue is aimed at a higher level of integration in the community of selves. Here it was argued that it is helpful to view the inner dialogue in terms of Buber's principles of interpersonal dialogue, namely inclusion, confirmation and responsibility.

Finally, it was contended that this process of reclaiming lost selves does not constitute a fall into exaggerated self-concern. Rather, it should be viewed in terms of a moral imperative. Unless we learn to see through the cover-stories we invent, not only will we continue in suffering, but others will also be deeply hurt as our dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours wreak havoc in their lives.

## 7. Pastoral Confirmation II: The Role of Conscience

Confirmation in a helping relationship involves moving with a person towards integration within the community of the Self. It also entails, it will be argued here, ethical challenge and stimulation of conscience. While Buber speaks generally about confirming the other as helping him 'against himself' to grow and develop as a person, in one place he sets confirmation in an explicitly moral context. We find this development in a lecture he delivered in the mid-fifties to a group of psychotherapists and psychiatrists.<sup>1</sup> In this address, Buber challenges the tendency amongst therapists to focus exclusively on neurotic guilt and to ignore real or 'existential' guilt. He argues that mental health professionals should be concerned about conscience and the demands it places on those in their care.

While a number of theorists in the pastoral care field have advocated a greater emphasis on ethics, very few have paid attention to the role of conscience.<sup>2</sup> Attention tends to be directed at establishing an effective method for use by pastoral counsellors in dealing with the various ethical issues which crop up in the counselling context. To be sure, the methodological aspect of moral guidance is an important issue; it needs further development. The burden of this chapter, however, is to demonstrate that attention to conscience and its demands should have a central place in pastoral counselling.

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<sup>1</sup> See Buber, 'Guilt and Guilt Feelings', *Psychiatry* 20 (1957), pp. 114-129.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the main reason for this is that the conscience has been associated so strongly with repression, neurotic guilt and anxiety. Gerald May believes that the repression of conscience in psychotherapy and pastoral counselling is a mirror image of the repression of sexuality in Victorian society. He argues that 'the time is ripe' to move 'out of an age of Spiritual Victorianism, a Victorianism of conscience' (see his 'The Fate of Conscience in Psychotherapy: A Synthesis and A Challenge', *Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 13 [Spring-Summer 1978], pp. 12-17, p. 12). Another theorist/practitioner who argues for a rediscovery of the role of conscience in pastoral counselling is John Hoffman (see his *Ethical Confrontation in Counseling* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979]). Like May, he is aware of the problem of repression and neurotic guilt (the 'negative conscience'). There is also, however, as we shall see below, the 'positive conscience'. This, says Hoffman, is characterised by aspiration to ideals rather than submission to the internalised commands of oppressive authorities.

Buber argues that human beings have a responsibility to promote the health of the social 'order-of-being'. When a person injures the order-of-being, the result is an experience of ontic guilt. In the depths of conscience she experiences the pangs of that guilt. An appropriate response is what Buber calls *reconciliation*: action aimed at healing the wound that one has inflicted. In what follows, an attempt will be made to develop the link between responsibility and conscience. It will be argued that calling others to responsibility and moving with them towards reconciliation are key functions in pastoral care. An understanding of the difference between two different orders of responsibility, it will be argued, is important and helpful in this task. What we will call *first-order* responsibility refers to those responses which are commonly embraced, conventional, in the family, in the church, and in the society. Creativity and conscientiousness define *second-order* responsibility. Pastoral counsellors, I will suggest, need to promote both as they each have a role to play.

The chapter will begin with a discussion of Buber's understanding of the relationship between guilt, conscience and confirmation. Since we are following Buber's lead into the area of the moral context of pastoral care, it will be necessary to contrast our approach with existing ones. The next task is the development of the important link between responsibility and conscience. Finally, we will focus on the practical issues of the stimulation of conscience and of encouraging reconciliation in the pastoral context.

### ***THE ETHICAL DIMENSION IN CONFIRMATION***

In a recent article, Kenneth Potts uses Buber's dialogical philosophy to interpret his marital therapy with a couple made known to us as Tom and Mary.<sup>3</sup> We will be particularly interested in the way Potts uses the concept of confirmation in his discussion.

He worked for some time with Mary in individual therapy before commencing conjoint work. At Mary's request, he continued with the individual sessions after the marital therapy had begun.

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<sup>3</sup> See K. Potts, 'Martin Buber's "Healing Dialogue" in Marital Therapy: A Case Study', *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1994), pp. 325-338.

Tom suffers from chronic diabetes and requires regular dialysis treatment. As a result of his illness, he is sexually impotent. Mary sees in her husband a fear of intimacy and a concomitant tendency to be emotionally distant. She also indicates that he is dependent on her, expecting her to assume responsibility for tasks he could quite easily do himself. For example, she makes the arrangements for his dialysis.

In relation to herself, Mary describes the sense of fulfilment and the boost to self-esteem she receives through the caretaker role. This need to take on the care role has been with her all her life. As a child, she felt that her father had not really wanted her; he communicated to her that she was an 'after-thought'. In what seemed like a form of punishment to Mary, he was cold and distant. Her mother was busy with her paid employment and in taking care of her rather large family. 'In response to these dynamics', recounts Potts, 'Mary attempted to become not only assertively self-sufficient, but a caretaker of others as well. In such caretaking, she recalls she at least found acceptance and approval within her family and other social systems.'<sup>4</sup>

Mary felt that she was giving much and receiving only a little in return. Potts' work with her in individual therapy focused on her struggle over whether or not to continue in the marriage. He raised with her in this context the need to express the anger which had long been building up inside her. They agreed that if a sense of guilt over abandoning Tom in his time of need was her main reason for staying, continuing in the marriage would prove to be destructive for both of them in the long-term. Potts has this to say about Mary's unacknowledged anger:

Though initially resistant [sic] to the depth of her pain and rage, especially its roots in her family of origin experience, Mary was eventually able to recognize these feelings and her related behaviors. This led to an awareness of the pervasiveness of her role as caregiver and the underlying attempt to gain acceptance and security in this role. Issues of self-worth, competency, and eventually meaning were all raised when this basic dynamic of Mary's personality was brought into question.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 331.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 335.



It is in this context that Potts introduces the idea of confirmation:

Though every dialogical relationship begins with acceptance, therapy also requires confirmation. Sometimes in helping a client to move toward her potential, the therapist is required to help a client “against herself.” With Mary, this meant confronting her on the unacknowledged depth of her anger which shaded her perceptions of her relational life. I worked to convince her that she must first see clearly if she were to assess the potential for dialogue in her relationship with Tom.<sup>6</sup>

Potts construes confirmation in his therapeutic relationship with Mary entirely in psychodynamic terms. I agree that it was important to challenge her concerning her unacknowledged anger. However, it is possible, and indeed necessary, I contend, to establish in this case the moral context of confirmation. In a marriage relationship (or in any close relationship) a fundamental ethical question is: What does my partner require of me for the promotion of his well-being? Put in terms of Buber’s language of responsibility: What are the claims associated with his good that he makes on me and to which I must respond? The claim Tom makes on Mary is not one which he would recognise or articulate. What he needs for his own personal development, and what is required for the health of the marriage, is for him to take a greater responsibility for his care and for his life in general. Mary uses her caretaker role to establish her sense of worth. From a *psychological* point of view, as Potts observes, this is not healthy for her. Self-worth needs to be grounded in being rather than in doing. In terms of the *ethical* requirements of the relationship, she needs to decide to do less for Tom and to encourage him to become more responsible. Confirmation here means challenging Mary in relation to what her husband, and their marriage, needs from her.

On the other hand, Mary’s desire for and need of emotional intimacy constitutes a moral claim on Tom. He needs to be challenged over his tendency to withdraw into himself. (When Tom was referred to another counsellor for individual work, he was in fact confronted concerning the destructive effects of his propensity for isolation<sup>7</sup>.) Not only is this tendency psychologically

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 336.

unhealthy for him, it causes his wife a good deal of emotional pain. He has a moral responsibility to overcome the blocks to intimacy.

Though, to my knowledge, it has not been recognised in the literature on confirmation, Buber himself identifies -- at least implicitly -- a moral dimension in confirming the other.<sup>8</sup> In his article on guilt and guilt feelings, he comments on the case of an acquaintance made known to us as Melanie.<sup>9</sup> She was a woman

of more intellectual than truly spiritual gifts, with a scientific education, but without the capacity for independent mastery of her knowledge. Melanie possessed a remarkable talent for good comradeship which expressed itself, at least from her side, in more or less erotically tinged friendships that left unsatisfied her more impetuous than passionate need for love. She made the acquaintance of a man who was on the point of marriage with another, strikingly ugly, but remarkable woman. Melanie succeeded without difficulty in breaking up the engagement and marrying the man. Her rival tried to kill herself. Melanie soon afterwards accused her, certainly unjustly, of feigning her attempt at suicide. After a few years Melanie herself was supplanted by another woman. Soon afterwards she fell ill with a neurosis linked with disturbances of the vision. To friends who took her in at the time, she confessed her guilt without glossing over the fact that it had arisen not out of passion, but out of a fixed will.<sup>10</sup>

Melanie subsequently went to see a psychoanalyst. He set out to free her from her feelings of guilt. He affirmed in her a 'genius of friendship', and suggested that here she would find her due compensation. Melanie, Buber tells us, involved herself in a rich and active social life. Here she established bonds of friendship. In contrast, her attitude towards her clients in her professional welfare work was instrumental rather than personal. She viewed her clients, Buber comments, 'not as persons needing her understanding and even her consolation, but as objects to be seen through and directed by her'.<sup>11</sup> The therapy was a 'success'. 'The guilt feelings were no longer in evidence; the

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<sup>8</sup> While he does not suggest that Buber himself thought of confirmation as a moral act, Maurice Friedman does identify the moral dimension in confirming the other. After referring to the obligation to encourage the other to respond to the demands associated with her existential guilt, he says that 'the paradox of guilt must be understood in the broader context of the problematic of confirmation' (*The Healing Dialogue in Psychotherapy* [New York: Jason Aronson, 1985], p. 168).

<sup>9</sup> See Buber, 'Guilt and Guilt Feelings', p. 118.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

apparatus that had been installed in place of the paining and admonishing heart functioned in model fashion.<sup>12</sup> Buber, however, identifies a high cost for Melanie in failing to work through her existential guilt:

With the silencing of the guilt feeling there disappeared for Melanie the possibility of reconciliation through a newly won genuine relationship to her environment in which her best qualities could at the same time unfold. The price paid for the annihilation of the sting was the final annihilation of *the chance to become the being that this created person was destined to become through her highest disposition* [emphasis added].<sup>13</sup>

Though he does not use the word ‘confirmation’ in this statement, it is clear that Buber is referring to the concept. We saw in chapter 4 that in his discussion with Rogers over the difference between confirmation and acceptance he refers to helping a person grow into the person he was created to become.

Confirmation means first of all, accepting the whole potentiality of the other and making even a decisive difference in his potentiality, and of course we can be mistaken again and again in this, but it’s just a chance between human beings. I can recognize in him, know in him, more or less, the person he has been (I can say it only in this word) *created to become*. In the simple factual language, we do not find the term for it because we don’t find in it the term, the concept *being meant to become* [emphasis in the original].<sup>14</sup>

The contention that Buber is talking about confirmation in this discussion on working through real guilt receives added support when his comment immediately following his presentation of Melanie’s case is taken into account. He argues that the psychotherapist needs to be concerned to help ‘the essence’ of his client thrive. He defines ‘essence’ as ‘that for which a person is peculiarly intended, what he is called to become’.<sup>15</sup> In these statements, we see very clearly Buber’s characteristic language for confirmation. Confirmation, we may say, needs to be referred to helping a person deal appropriately with her guilt and the associated pangs of conscience. We now turn our attention to the way in which

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>14</sup> Buber, *The Knowledge of Man*, p. 182.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Guilt and Guilt Feelings’, pp. 118-119.

Buber develops the links between real guilt, conscience and reconciliation with the order-of-being.

### **EXISTENTIAL GUILT, CONSCIENCE AND RECONCILIATION**

In the article we have been referring to, Buber is concerned to point out to psychotherapists and psychoanalysts that they need to pay attention not only to neurotic guilt but also to real guilt. This latter form of guilt does exist and is 'fundamentally different from all the anxiety-induced bugbears that are generated in the cavern of the unconscious'.<sup>16</sup> There are normative principles which define the nature of right relations in the world. When a person acts against these principles harm is caused to others. In this case, the guilt one experiences has an ontic character; it cannot be reduced to the level of 'anxiety-induced bugbears' associated with trespass against parental and societal taboos. This genuine experience of guilt Buber refers to as *existential*, and the structure of being created through human relationships he calls *the human order-of-being*. When there is injury to the order-of-being, one is obligated to attempt healing.

Each man stands in an objective relationship to others; the totality of this relationship constitutes his life as one that factually participates in the being of the world. It is this relationship, in fact, that first makes it at all possible for him to expand his environment (*Umwelt*) into a world (*Welt*). It is his share in the human order of being, the share for which he bears responsibility. An objective relationship in which two men stand to one another can rise, by means of the existential participation of the two, to a personal relation; it can be merely tolerated; it can be neglected; it can be injured. Injuring a relationship means that at this place the human order of being is injured. No one other than he who inflicted the wound can heal it.<sup>17</sup>

We note here the link between responsibility and existential guilt. Each person is called to answer the claim on him or her to promote the good of the order-of-being. The morally good person, far from neglecting or simply doing the minimum in personal relations, will act to bring richness, depth and vitality to them. The person of good character will avoid doing harm in the interpersonal and social spheres and will seek to make a positive contribution. When there is

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

injury to the order-of-being, however, the appropriate response is to bring healing and renewal.

The therapist, observes Buber, cannot teach her client the way of responsibility, healing and reconciliation.<sup>18</sup> This is the task of the religious leader. She can, nonetheless, lead her client to the point where he catches a glimpse of the vision.

Buber notes that there are three spheres in which existential guilt is an important consideration.<sup>19</sup> The first is the justice system sponsored by the State. The third sphere, the 'highest', is that of faith. It is the middle sphere, however, which is relevant to psychotherapy. In between the judicial system and the realm of faith is the individual and her *conscience*. There is, of course, an overlap between the second and third spheres. Conscience is also a very important theological concept. 'For the sincere man of faith, the two spheres are so referred to each other in the practice of his life, and most especially when he has gone through existential guilt, that he cannot entrust himself exclusively to either of them.'<sup>20</sup> Buber, though, confines himself to the natural dimension of conscience (below we will explore the theological context).

Conscience is defined by Buber as 'the capacity and tendency of man radically to distinguish between those of his past and future actions which should be approved and those which should be disapproved'.<sup>21</sup> It refers not only to deeds but also to omissions, not only to decisions but to failures to decide. Buber is well aware of the destructive potential in an overweening conscience. A person may tyrannise herself through attempting to live with unrealistic or distorted ideals. There is a 'vulgar' conscience which torments and harasses but which cannot lead a person to 'the ground and abyss of guilt'.<sup>22</sup> What is required is a 'greater' conscience which moves a person to the point where she can take responsibility for her relationship to the order-of-being and to her own being. This higher form of conscience is not, however, only for the spiritual elite. Any

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<sup>18</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>19</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

person, contends Buber, with the vision and courage to transcend the lower conscience can achieve this level of personal authenticity and moral sensitivity.

The dynamics associated with conscience can be described with reference to three events: *self-illumination*, *perseverance*, and *reconciliation*. We have already mentioned the last of these three events; it refers to the call on a person to heal the wound he has caused in the order-of-being. Reconciliation is the attempt 'to restore the order-of-being injured by him through the relation of an active devotion to the world--for the wounds of the order-of-being can be healed in infinitely many other places than those at which they were inflicted'.<sup>23</sup>

It may be that a person recognises his moral failure, but it is only through illumination that he grasps the essence of his existential guilt and its meaning for his life. This movement of conscience can only take place in 'the abyss of I-with-me'.<sup>24</sup> Self-illumination refers to a profound moment of silence in the inner spaces in which the only sound is that of honesty and truth. It is

not even a monologue, much less a real conversation between an 'ego' and a 'superego': all speech is exhausted, what takes place here is the mute shudder of self-being. But without this powerful wave of light which illuminates the abyss of mortality, the legal confession of guilt remains without substance in the inner life of the guilty man, no matter how weighty its consequences may be, and the religious confession is only a pathetic prattle that no one hears.<sup>25</sup>

The key concepts are self-illumination and reconciliation. Perseverance simply indicates the need for an on-going commitment to illumination. Even though one may have become stronger in moral character, there is a need to maintain an awareness of the identity of the new person with the old. Where such awareness is lacking, a person may become closed-off to the guilt of the present moment.

Buber concludes his reflection with the observation that there is an 'inner resistance' to illumination in modern humanity. He uses two characters from classic literature to illustrate his conviction, namely Nikolai Starogin in Dostoevski's novel *The Possessed*, and Joseph K in Kafka's *The Trial*.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>26</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 123 ff.



In a chapter which was later omitted from the book, Dostoevski describes a scene in which Stavrogin goes to a priest with the intention of confessing a shameful act, the rape of a young girl. This, however, was only a 'confession in words'. Stavrogin, comments Buber, 'lacks the small light of humility that alone can illuminate the abyss of the guilty self in broad waves'.<sup>27</sup> The feelings this feeble, pathetic character has are too weak and too shallow for genuine confession. He attempts to snatch in a moment the authentic existence which could only come through long, hard and painful work.

Joseph K, suggests Buber, fits even more closely with the modern ethos. He stands before the court convinced that he is completely without guilt. This character functions as a symbol of a generation for which 'no real guilt exists; only guilt-feeling and guilt convention'.<sup>28</sup>

The inner resistance to illumination may not be in general as strong as it is with these two characters. Nevertheless, it is true that for a whole range of reasons -- the establishment of a therapeutic culture being prime amongst them -- the modern person has a tendency to ignore, rationalise and minimise his guilt. The church has, of course, been significantly influenced by the contemporary cultural ethos. In my view, illumination and reconciliation are of crucial importance in the moral context of pastoral care. Too little attention has been given to stimulation of conscience in discussions of the relationship between counselling and ethics. The reasons for this neglect are not hard to find. One can point, for example, to a fear of moralising and judgmentalism. Then there is the fact that many have had negative experiences of an overweening conscience. These concerns are legitimate, but, as we will see, they can be adequately addressed. Most theorists in pastoral care concerned with the moral dimension, however, seem not to agree with this judgement. They are wary to the point that conscience is not even mentioned. They prefer to concentrate on questions of method in ethical decision-making.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

## **TWO APPROACHES TO ESTABLISHING THE MORAL CONTEXT OF PASTORAL CARE: METHOD AND CONSCIENCE**

We will discuss briefly the work of three theorists who have endeavoured to provide us with an effective methodology for working through ethical issues in pastoral counselling, namely Don Browning, James Poling and Donald Capps. John Hoffman and Alastair Campbell are representative of an alternative approach. A look at their reflections will help us as we begin to think about the role of conscience in pastoral work.

The most eloquent and persistent advocate for a renewal of a concern with ethical issues in pastoral care is Don Browning. In his early work, *The Moral Context of Care*,<sup>29</sup> Browning argues that care should not be confined to the embodiment of love, forgiveness and grace, but should also involve a practical moral inquiry into the normative shape of the various expressions of everyday life. Pastoral counselling is more than simply assisting persons in coping with various interpersonal, existential and developmental crises. It also involves providing a person with 'a structure, a character, an identity, a religiocultural value system out of which to live'.<sup>30</sup>

In order to develop this model of care, Browning retrieves the Hebrew images of the sage, the scribe, and the Pharisee. He relies on Max Weber's interpretation of ancient Judaism.<sup>31</sup> Ancient Judaism was a distinctively ethical type of religion. Human action was understood to have a vital role in transforming the world. The priest, the wise man, and the scribe, each in their different ways, were directors of the soul. Their 'cure of souls' was oriented to the *torah*.

The Levitical priests, for example, led in a cultic activity aimed at addressing breeches of the covenant law. The cultus worked to both inculcate and expiate a sense of guilt. In a sense, the Levites exercised a rational, educational role. In post-exilic times, the expositors of the covenant law operated in a context further and further removed from the cultus. The group of *torah* experts formed in this time passed on a tradition shared in by the scribes

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<sup>29</sup> D. Browning, *The Moral Context of Care* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

and the Pharisees. In contrast with the magical and mystical techniques characterising the priestly activity in other religions, these mediators of the covenant law relied on practical rationality. They used a casuistic approach to the law in order to help others deal with the guilt, anxiety and need for forgiveness associated with everyday life. Browning identifies these scribes and Pharisees as 'practitioners of pastoral care par excellence'.<sup>32</sup>

Jesus, observes Browning, continues in this tradition but also transcends it. He was neither a legalist nor an antilegalist, but rather a 'supralegalist'.<sup>33</sup> He showed a creative genius in being able to idealise certain aspects of the tradition, while simplifying or casting off other aspects. While a legalist is confined by the letter of the law, a supralegalist such as Jesus is able to identify its inner meaning, its deeper objective.

A church which is in touch with these roots -- the practical moral rationality of the *torah* experts and the supralegalism of Jesus -- will have a vision of itself as a 'center for moral discourse'.<sup>34</sup> Whereas the task of religion is to construct a world of meaning, the specific task of the church is to construct an ethical world. The theological and ethical perspectives generated on issues such as work, sex, marriage and family life, child rearing, and ageing form the context for the ministry of care.

Given that one accepts that there is an important place for 'practical moral rationality' in the life of the church in general and in the practice of care in particular, the question that quickly comes to mind is: How do we go about the task of practical moral inquiry? That is, if one is persuaded by the argument in *The Moral Context* one will soon be asking the methodological question. Browning does not, as it turns out, leave us stranded. In his later work, he sets about working up just such a methodology. Five levels of practical moral rationality are identified: the metaphorical or visional, the obligational, the tendency-need, the environmental-social, and the rule-role.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>35</sup> See D. Browning, *Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), pp. 57-71; and idem, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 99-107.

The symbolic or metaphorical level of human experience is of prime importance in the religious life. We do not know the ultimate dimension of experience directly; metaphors are the means of constructing our thought about this ultimate horizon. The particular metaphors we appropriate determine our fundamental vision of the universe. Browning, following Reinhold Niebuhr, identifies the vision of God as Creator, Governor, and Redeemer as fundamental in Christianity. It is these metaphors which shape our vision of the way we should think and act in the world.

Theological metaphors, however, cannot fully determine our moral thinking. The idea of the governance of God, for example, cannot in itself fund a position on abortion, on homosexuality, or on industrial relations. The obligational level is the most overtly moral dimension of the five. It is here that those carrying out practical theological inquiry will make use of deontological, utilitarian or narrativist moral systems. For example, as Browning suggests, one may look to John Rawls' principle of impartiality or justice as fairness (representing a deontological approach). This principle may be integrated with fundamental Christian notions of love and justice.

The difficulty in using 'impartiality' to interpret the Christian vision of love and justice is that it, impartiality, is an abstract concept. Thus, argues Browning, it needs to be supplemented by a generic theory of human nature. Once we are able to establish the various tendencies and needs humans actually have, it is possible in situations of conflict or scarcity to use the principle of impartiality to effect an arbitration.

The social-environmental level introduces into our thinking the vital role played by social systems and the ecology in moral decision-making. There are social-systemic and environmental constraints on the way moral goods should be ordered.

Finally, the rule-role level indicates the enactment of the principles established through the thinking defined by the previous four levels. The purpose of moral reasoning is to establish certain concrete rules which shape our living in the world.

While Browning's methodological construct has the advantage of being comprehensive, its disadvantage is its complexity. It seems to demand a level of intellectual rigour which most pastoral counsellors would not aspire to. A simpler method, also with five levels, has been proposed by James Poling.<sup>36</sup> The levels are as follows: context, decision, rules, norms and story.<sup>37</sup> Ethical interpretation in a pastoral context needs to begin with the counsellor gathering data on the background and history of the relevant personal and institutional relationships. Establishing the context for the ethical dilemma is of prime importance. 'We cannot afford a return to a kind of ethics that treats decisions without regard for the complex intrapsychic dynamics of individuals or for the sociological web within which people live.'<sup>38</sup>

While recognising the personal and social complexity associated with ethical reflection, the counsellor cannot allow herself to become paralysed. She needs to reach a point of decision. In making her best assessment of what constitutes the good in this particular situation, she has moved to a new level, namely that of rules (cf. Browning's fifth level).

Rules are both specific to a particular situation and universal in nature. They are 'guidelines which transcend any particular situation but which give concrete help in deciding normal decisions'.<sup>39</sup> Examples would be these: pre-marital sex is wrong; marriage is good; cheating is bad. Rules need to be very concrete and specific. There can, of course, be contradictions. Poling uses the case of a couple contemplating divorce.<sup>40</sup> The rule 'divorce is bad' may be in tension with the rule which indicates personal happiness and growth as goods. In this situation, one is forced to choose one rule over another. Here we are introduced to the level of norms. Norms are 'community property'.<sup>41</sup> To speak of private norms is to introduce a contradiction in terms. Values *are* internalised

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<sup>36</sup> See J. Poling, 'Ethical Reflection and Pastoral Care, Part II', *Pastoral Psychology* 32, no. 3 (Spring 1984), pp. 160-170.

<sup>37</sup> In a more recent article entitled, 'An Ethical Framework for Pastoral Care', Poling includes a liberationist perspective. He observes that the abuse of power is often the primary cause of human suffering. Thus, he suggests, it is necessary to add in another level, namely 'Social Analysis of Oppression and Power'. See *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 42, no. 4 (Winter 1988), pp. 299, 306, p. 304.

<sup>38</sup> Poling, 'Ethical Reflection', p. 162.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>40</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

by individuals, but the salient fact is that these values represent the consensus view, the moral wisdom, of a particular community or culture.

In the pastoral context, the moral wisdom of the community has as its source the Christian story.<sup>42</sup> The counsellor needs to identify the metaphors and symbols in the biblical narratives which inform the issue under consideration (cf. Browning's first level, the 'visional'). She needs to exegete the relevant texts in order to establish a biblical and theological framework in which to situate her ethical reflection.

As one would expect and as is indicated above, we see some of Browning's themes repeated in Poling's model. Christian ethical thinking is necessarily concerned with a biblical and theological context and with norms and rules. However, most pastoral counsellors, I suggest, would be attracted by the simplicity of method and clarity of presentation in Poling's system.

Donald Capps takes a very different approach to these two theorists in an attempt to equip pastors methodologically for the task of ethical reflection.<sup>43</sup> He observes that parishioners frequently come for counsel with themes of personal fulfilment and self-actualisation running through their minds. As a consequence, they may have overlooked the moral dilemma underlying the psychological distress. With this in mind, Capps sets out to provide pastors with a *diagnostic tool* for use in working through moral disorientation.<sup>44</sup> His focus is not, as it is for Browning and Poling, on norms and rules but on particular *virtues* and on the *vices* which are correlated with them.

Capps works within an Eriksonian framework. In the early sixties, Erikson developed a schedule of virtues to correspond to his eight stages in the life cycle. The eight virtues are as follows: hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care and wisdom. Capps attempts to correlate these psychosocial strengths with the traditional list of deadly sins. The common list, of course, has only seven sins. He takes up a very early list in which sloth was viewed in terms of two separate sins, namely indifference and melancholy.<sup>45</sup> The complete list,

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<sup>42</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 167ff.

<sup>43</sup> See D. Capps, *Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), chp. 2.

<sup>44</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>45</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 37.



then, is this: gluttony, anger, greed, envy, pride, lust, indifference and melancholy. Capps works with Erikson's idea that while a given virtue (or in the original theory, crisis) can feature at any point in the life cycle, it nevertheless has a particular time of ascendancy. That is, at each stage in human development there is one virtue or crisis which is focal. With this idea before him, Capps assigns the vices as follows.<sup>46</sup> Gluttony, anger, greed and envy develop in childhood; pride emerges in adolescence; and lust, indifference and melancholy arise in adulthood.

In this way, Capps provides the pastoral counsellor with a set of matching vices and virtues to be used as a diagnostic aid. Having identified the particular vice gripping a person, the counsellor has at her disposal a knowledge of the virtue which has the power to break its deadly hold. The crucial issue of course, something which unfortunately Capps does not address, is how to help a person strengthen a virtue in herself. This is the question which has exercised the minds of virtue ethicists from Aristotle and Aquinas through to contemporary figures such as Stanley Hauerwas.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>47</sup> In his theory of the inculcation of the virtues, Aristotle emphasises *phronesis* and *training* (see his *Nicomachean Ethics* in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, the Revised Oxford Translation, vol. 2, J. Barnes ed. [Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984]). The person of virtue uses reason to order and tame the passions and appetites. Reason can never be the slave of passion. The moral life is fundamentally about excellent deliberation ordering the passions and so moving the moral agent towards attainment of the good. Moral excellence and practical wisdom are indissolubly linked together. The former establishes the right end for the human, and the latter indicates the means for achieving that end (see *NE* 1145a4-6).

Through the use of practical wisdom the moral agent is able to establish those passions and actions which over time are formative of character. It is in acting virtuously that a person eventually comes to possess this or that virtue (the idea of training). Just as a person becomes a lyre player by playing the lyre, one becomes just by doing just acts, brave by doing courageous acts, and so on (*NE* 12103a31-1103b1).

In a similar vein to his teacher, Aquinas refers to a virtuous disposition as a *habit*. 'The rational powers, proper to a man...are not determined to one act, but rather in themselves are poised before many. It is through habits that they are set towards acts...Human virtues, therefore, are habits' (*Summa Theologiae* I-II.55.1). His understanding of a habit, however, is different from our modern one. When he speaks of a virtue as a habit, he refers to a well-established disposition to act for the good. Every time a person acts virtuously, the disposition is more firmly established in her.

Key categories for the important contemporary theological ethicist, Stanley Hauerwas, in relation to the inculcation of virtue are *vision* and *community*. We form our characters through growing into a right vision of self, of life, of the Christian way. The challenge is 'to become as we see' (*Vision and Virtue* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981], p. 46). The formation of character, further, needs a virtuous community to support it. 'Our capacity to be virtuous', writes Hauerwas, 'depends on the existence of communities which have been formed by narratives faithful to the character of reality' (*A Community of Character* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981], p. 116).

Leaving aside some of the problems with the way some of the theorists go about their work, they are surely right to draw attention to the prime importance of method and diagnosis in moral guidance. The concern that I have, however, is that a category which is of prime importance in the moral life, namely conscience, has been almost entirely overlooked by the advocates of the 'ethics in pastoral care' school.

John Hoffman<sup>48</sup> is one, however, who is not guilty of this oversight. His primary concern is to describe how a 'nonmoralistic morality' functions in the counselling relationship. He begins the task by differentiating between a positive and a negative conscience.<sup>49</sup> The former corresponds to the Freudian notion of the ego ideal.<sup>50</sup> Through this structure of the personality, values and ideals to which one aspires are identified and pursued. The contents of the ego ideal develop through a process of autonomous choice and desire. Superego contents, on the other hand, are introjects of parental and societal injunctions and taboos. A negative conscience, being an expression of the superego, is characterised by imposition and heteronomy; a positive conscience is associated with aspiration and autonomy.<sup>51</sup>

A nonmoralistic morality, it goes without saying, is oriented to the positive conscience. Appropriate ethical challenge in counselling is focused on aspiration rather than condemnation. It is grounded in the conviction that 'the individual's right to be [is] prior to any moral achievement'.<sup>52</sup> What Hoffman seems to be pointing to in this phrase 'the right to be' (which he uses repeatedly and without definition) is that the dignity of a person is derived fundamentally from her status as a child of God and therefore someone created, sustained and redeemed by God in love, grace and mercy. He is right to assert that it is of prime importance to communicate to the counsellee that she is accepted not on

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<sup>48</sup> See J. Hoffman, *Ethical Confrontation in Counseling*.

<sup>49</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 56ff.

<sup>50</sup> Of course, Freud's view of the ego ideal changed throughout his career. Hoffman acknowledges this. Given the context of our discussion, it is not necessary for us to follow with Hoffman the development in Freud's thought. It is enough for us to simply identify the key fact that aspiration is associated with the ego ideal.

<sup>51</sup> See Hoffman, *Ethical Confrontation*, p. 90.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

the basis of any goodness she has achieved but rather simply because she is God's child.

Like Hoffman, Alastair Campbell identifies a positive conscience. He also begins by acknowledging both the destructive potential in a tyrannical conscience and the importance of Freud's discovery of the dynamics associated with it.<sup>53</sup> In light of this, he points to the value in Carl Rogers' advocacy of the quest for the true self. Rogers believed that we tend to be so dominated and controlled by the 'conditions of worth' imposed by parents and other authority figures that we live out of a 'self-concept' rather than out of the more authentic 'organismic self'. Through self-trust, self-acceptance and the exercise of autonomy, however, it is possible to find and establish the true self.

In spite of the fact that these two important psychotherapeutic thinkers had some very significant things to say about guilt and conscience, we must, Campbell rightly points out, go beyond their formulations.<sup>54</sup> On the one hand, Freud's gloomy picture of humanity as a seething cauldron of sexual and aggressive desires restrained only by societal prohibitions and injunctions leaves us without hope. While on the other hand, Rogers' overestimation of the place of autonomy and self-interpretation leads the individual to cut herself off from the potentially positive influence of others. Put differently, the interpretations of both Freud and Rogers lack the transcendent dimension which orients us to the lostness and alienation in the human condition (sin in the Christian tradition).

In moving the discussion forward, Campbell offers his vision of the positive conscience. We can use guilt to lead us into our possibilities. In this way guilt can prepare us for grace 'because it tells us what we might be, if only we will seek to break open the shell of our subjectivity'.<sup>55</sup>

The role of the person offering pastoral care becomes one of an *embodiment* of grace. The helper seeks to incarnate love and grace as he contributes to the other's growth into her potential. This interpretation of the healing dialogue is, I think, quite similar to Buber's. For Buber, as we have

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<sup>53</sup> See A. Campbell, *Rediscovering Pastoral Care*, 2nd ed. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986), pp. 66-68.

<sup>54</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

seen, confirmation involves helping the other reach for her God-given psychological, moral and spiritual potential.

In the discussion below, I will attempt to build on the insights offered by both Hoffman and Campbell. However, I will be adding a Buberian perspective. Like the other two thinkers, Buber is concerned with transcending a negative (or 'vulgar') conscience in order to critically examine one's relationship to one's own being. What is distinctive in his analysis is the way in which he links responsibility and conscience. Each person bears a responsibility for the health of the human order-of-being. In the life of dialogue, others address us with claims for love, care, trust, respect and justice. A failure to answer those claims results in a wounding of the human order. Before the inner tribunal of conscience, we are convicted of our guilt in this wounding. Following Buber's lead, I contend that calling the other to responsibility is a key to stimulating conscience. In developing this notion, it will be instructive to explore the ways in which certain moral theologians have endeavoured to connect responsibility and conscience.

### ***RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSCIENCE***

In his classic study entitled *The Responsible Self*, H. Richard Niebuhr, inspired by Buber, identified answerability as the key modality associated with responsibility: 'What is implicit in the idea of responsibility is the image of man-the-answerer, man engaged in dialogue, man acting in response to action upon him.'<sup>56</sup> Conscience viewed from a dialogical perspective refers to a person confronting in the inner spaces not a law or an ideal but other persons and their claims on her.<sup>57</sup> The reflective life of conscience is 'life in relation to companions; it is I-Thou, I-You existence. It is existence in response to action upon us'.<sup>58</sup> Here, notes Niebuhr, one is placing oneself in the company of those who adhere to a social theory of conscience. In this theory, the idea is projected of the self in its critical examination adopting the view of an 'impartial spectator' (Adam Smith) or a 'generalized other' (George Herbert Mead). This

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<sup>56</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 56.

<sup>57</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

'partner' in the inner dialogue represents the social group and its moral consensus. The point at which Niebuhr parts company with the advocates of a social theory of conscience, however, is precisely in relation to this abstraction from the social milieu in the form of a generalized other. For him, it is real, concrete individuals who speak the words which echo around the inner chamber of conscience.<sup>59</sup> This approach is reflected by the eminent Roman Catholic moral theologian, Bernard Häring, in his notion of a *reciprocity of consciences*.<sup>60</sup> The self-examination and self-awareness associated with conscience are only possible existentially through encounter with the other. 'The person comes to his or her identity and integrity only in the reciprocity of awareness and conscience. One knows about one's own unique self only through the experience of relationship between Thou and I, which leads to the experience of the We.'<sup>61</sup>

Neither Häring nor Niebuhr, however, would be prepared to accept this as the final statement on the dialogical nature of conscience. The latter rightly points out that the relation that a person in the act of self-examination has with significant others always involves a 'third reality'.<sup>62</sup> This third factor is on the one hand something personal, and on the other something transcendent. That is to say, the third always points beyond itself. Without this transcendent dimension, a social theory of conscience would be seriously flawed. It would necessarily suffer through relativism, tied as it would be to the limited vision of the contemporary social group. In the context of the Christian community, an encounter with other disciples is grounded in a third reality represented by the prophets and apostles.<sup>63</sup> They in turn point beyond themselves to Christ. In discovering that one can be responsible in the Church only as one responds to Jesus Christ, there is the discovery that he points beyond himself to the cause to which he is faithful, namely, the Father's creative, renewing and redemptive purposes in the world.

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<sup>59</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>60</sup> See B. Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, vol. 1 (Middlegreen, Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1978), p. 265ff.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>62</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 79ff.

<sup>63</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 88.

In a more recent attempt to establish the connection between responsibility and conscience, William Schweiker broadens the base of the analysis.<sup>64</sup> A responsible person, in Schweiker's view, is *accountable* for her decisions and actions (and for her failures to decide and to act), *answerable* to the claims of others with whom she shares life, and called to care for others through the *representative actions* required by her vocation.<sup>65</sup> These three dimensions -- accountability, answerability and representative action -- need to be integrated, he rightly points out, in an adequate ethical theory of responsibility.<sup>66</sup>

With this comprehensive understanding in mind, it can be said that to be responsible refers to a capacity to evaluate and to transform one's life in the light of the values one chooses to define one's moral identity. A responsible person asks: 'What are the values that I really care about in this life, in my life?' *Care* is one key term for Schweiker.<sup>67</sup> The other is *respect*.<sup>68</sup> We are called to view others as intrinsically worthy of respect. 'Respect is the recognition of and regard for what is other than the self and its projects.'<sup>69</sup> In critical self-examination, the goal is to align our fundamental moral option, what we really care about, with the demands of respect. This is central in the agapic life.

[T]he aim of moral self-criticism in Christian ethics is to make the source of human action, that is, what we care about, to be identical with the claim to respect the integrity of life perceived in others and ourselves. The responsible person or community is the one who cares about what ought to be respected. This is actually what Christian faith means by love; *agape* is the bestowal, the gift, of care based on the recognition of the goodness of what is.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See W. Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chp. 7.

<sup>65</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 74-76.

<sup>66</sup> I would want to argue, in line with Buber's teaching, that answerability is the primary category in an understanding of responsibility. In the life of dialogue, the other makes claims on my life with respect to love, care, trust, fidelity and justice. This is the fundamental ethical reality for *homo dialogicus*. The other categories Schweiker identifies -- accountability and representative actions -- are derivative from the notion of answerability. When I fail to respond rightly to the moral claims of others, I am accountable. My representative responsibility for others as parent, teacher, minister etc. is also to be interpreted in terms established by answerability. Those in my care make certain claims on me which I must faithfully and creatively fulfil. Answerability is primary; accountability and representative action are interpreted in terms of it.

<sup>67</sup> See Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics*, pp. 170-173.

<sup>68</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 173-175.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.



Schweiker defines self-criticism more precisely through what he calls *radical interpretation*. This penetrating form of self-interpretation is a 'hermeneutic of conscience' and is basic to an ethics of responsibility.<sup>71</sup>

Radical interpretation is reflective, critical inquiry aimed at the question of what has constituted our lives in terms of what we care about and what ought to guide our lives under the demand of respect for others. It is the form conscience takes in the lives of social, linguistic, self-interpreting agents. Such inquiry becomes 'radical' when it strikes at the root of who we are, our identity-conferring commitments, and the conceptual frameworks that we have used to understand ourselves and our world.<sup>72</sup>

This radical form of self-criticism has as its goal a closer imitation of the divine goodness. In a very real sense, God *is* responsibility. God is infinite love and care at work in the world God has called into being. Through the ongoing divine work of creation, sustenance and redemption, God defines responsibility. With this in mind, we may refer to radical interpretation as 'theocentric' conscience.<sup>73</sup>

### ***STIMULATING CONSCIENCE IN PASTORAL CARE***

Above we discussed the dialogical nature of conscience. In examining one's conscience, there is a sense in which, as Buber points out, one stands alone in 'the mute shudder of self-being'. Ultimately, though, the moment of illumination is only possible because there is a dialogue with the consciences of others. There is a 'reciprocity of consciences' which begins with significant others and leads through the apostles and the prophets all the way back to God.

#### ***Challenging Others with the Demands of Respect***

An important function in pastoral care, I contend, is a dialogical stimulation of conscience. Buber and Hoffman (and others) are right, let me say at the outset, to remind us of the destructive possibilities in an overweening conscience. A person can indeed fall under the tyranny of her own ideals. It is essential, as Hoffman points out, to promote a healthy attitude in which persons

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<sup>71</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>73</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 179.

establish their right to be. That is, pastoral counsellors need to relate in such a way that their clients are encouraged to embrace the fact of their acceptance in and through grace prior to their moral achievements. Buber, however, reminds us that there is another end to the spectrum. There are those who are resistant to self-illumination, whose consciences are underdeveloped. A central aim in the moral life, as we saw above in discussing Schweiker's analysis, is to align what we care about in the ethical domain with the demands of respect for others. It is sometimes the case that there is too little respect shown and a failure to really care about it. When there is a resistance to illumination, pastoral care involves lighting up the dark spots. A basic way to stimulate conscience is to point up the effects the actions of a person has had on others. It is sometimes the case, sadly, that a person fails to recognise, or cannot allow himself to recognise, the deleterious consequences of his irresponsible, disrespectful actions. Calling a person to responsibility entails helping him become aware of the destructive effects of his words and deeds.

Ted, a man of about 70, was an elder and the treasurer in my former parish. He was a man of considerable influence in the parish, although he was not particularly well-liked on the whole. Ted could be aggressive and demeaning when a person disagreed with him or acted in a way which he considered inappropriate. Others were expected to fit in with his plans and expectations. If they did not, he usually reacted by bullying them through activating his fierce temper and unleashing a verbal barrage calculated to belittle and wound. In a special session of the Elders' Council aimed at working out some of our differences (his behaviour featuring high on the list), Ted failed to acknowledge his problem. He considered his angry outbursts to be entirely appropriate, an expression of 'righteous indignation'. Others needed to be called to account, and he was 'man' enough to do it. He explained that the besetting sin of the church was the tendency of everyone to be so 'nice' that the truth was never spoken.

On another occasion, there was an incident involving Ted and myself which sparked a very intense and, in the end, reasonably fruitful discussion. In the parish we had a pastoral care group. The members of the group provided practical expressions of care (delivering hot dinners after discharge from hospital and so on) and they engaged in pastoral conversation with those in need. I was asked by the leader of the group to give input at one of the regular meetings. I chose to conduct a workshop on basic communication skills. Ted was present at the meeting and obviously resented my choice of topic. I assumed he did not like what he perceived to be 'new fangled' psychological approaches. During one of the exercises in which the participants were encouraged to make a response, Ted blurted out,

totally out of context, 'What I really hate is half-smart upstarts half our age who think they know everything telling us what to do. We've got a lot of experience and we've forgotten more than they'll ever know.' Naturally I was shocked and thrown completely off balance. I did, however, manage to ignore the comment and continue with the rest of the session. As soon as it was finished, I lent over to Ted and said, 'We need to talk. I'll see you in my study in a few minutes.' Our conversation proceeded as follows.

**NP:** Ted, can you tell me exactly what was going on just now?

**Ted:** I don't understand. What do you mean?

**NP:** I mean your outrageous reference to me as a 'half-smart know-it-all'.

**Ted:** You've got it wrong. That was just a general reference.

**NP:** Oh, come on Ted. I'm not stupid. You obviously resented my approach and you wanted to let me know about it. Isn't that so?

**Ted:** Well, I hate all this modern psychology stuff.

**NP:** Okay, you hate it. So that gives you the right to make a personal attack on me?

**Ted:** You're too sensitive. You need to learn to take criticism on board.

**NP:** Constructive criticism is one thing. But do you really think your comments fit into that category?

**Ted:** Maybe I was a bit harsh.

**NP:** Yes, you were harsh. Let me tell you how your comments affected me. When you used terms such as 'half-smart' and 'know-it-all' I felt attacked and belittled. Your words were demeaning and they hurt. Now I feel alienated from you. I want to have a good relationship with you, but your aggressive behaviour is making that very difficult for me. And you know Ted, I'm not the only one who feels this way.

**Ted:** Yeah, I want to get on with you and with other people. I do have a problem with my temper. I have to do something about it. I'll have to count to ten when I get worked up.

We then proceeded to talk about how he might modify his aggressive behaviour. I was pleased to observe that in subsequent parish meetings Ted was restrained and co-operative. Predictably, though, the 'model' behaviour did not last. There were more personal attacks, and these were followed by more discussions. However, the fact that he was prepared to acknowledge his moral failure opened the way for some positive change in behaviour. Some months later, Ted acted characteristically and abused one of the other elders for what he saw as a major 'sin'. Mary had written a short article in the local newspaper advertising our upcoming dramatic presentation during the Easter Day service. Mention had been made of a member of the congregation who was a professional playwright. Obviously she thought a few details of his professional career would provoke some interest. Ted's next-door neighbour, however, was also providing some assistance. The fact that she was not mentioned constituted in his mind a major slap-in-the-face for his friend and neighbour. Mary was, of course, puzzled and very upset by Ted's attack. The next day, though, she was pleased to report that he had spoken to her again and

apologised for his bad behaviour. The abuse was characteristic of Ted; the remorse and apology were not. He was at least making some progress, however limited, towards aligning what he cared about with the demands of respect for others.

### *Challenging Others with Second-Order Responsibility*

Respect for others and their feelings, allowing others the freedom to hold a different opinion, refraining from angry, demeaning outbursts -- these qualities are part of what defines basic responsibility. In the family, in the church, in the society there are a collection of core values on which there is a general consensus. On the whole, we value honesty and diligence in the workplace, love, care and respectful discipline in the home, and love of God and neighbour in the church. There is general agreement on what it is to be a responsible parent, employee, or Christian. As the Roman Catholic moral theologian, Anne Patrick, points out, many people consider that they are being responsible in passively assuming the role of the 'good homemaker', or the 'good Catholic' (or the 'good Christian').<sup>74</sup> This constitutes what might be called a *first-order responsibility*.<sup>75</sup> This is a form of responsibility which is characterised by *habit*, *convention*, and *security*. Faced with an ethical issue, a first-order response is shaped instinctively by the influence of attitudes and patterns of thought inherited from the family and church. The person acts responsibly but in a *conventional* manner. To observe that the response is habitual and conventional does not imply denigration. The fact that the person is concerned with the promotion of what is right and good is morally praiseworthy. What is lacking, however, is *initiative* and *creativity* in the process of ethical reflection. That is to say, there is no real attempt to stretch one's understanding of what constitutes responsibility in this particular situation. One simply acts, or rather *reacts*, in terms of the attitudes and ideas that one has inherited. It is safe, comfortable, to work within the limits defined by the consensus view in the family and in the church.

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<sup>74</sup> See A. Patrick, *Liberating Conscience: Feminist Explorations in Catholic Moral Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1996), p. 184.

<sup>75</sup> Patrick refers to *passive responsibility*. I use here the more general term *first-order responsibility* because I am describing a form of responsibility which is characterised not just by passivity but by a range of factors.

A *second-order* responsibility, on the other hand, is characterised by *conscientiousness, creativity, and risk*. In attempting to differentiate the two orders, it may be helpful to introduce a parallel with approaches commonly adopted by school students. There are those scholars who are responsible enough to do the work assigned to them and to exert a reasonable amount of effort in completing it. Some students, though, are more conscientious, more inclined to be creative in their studies. A student of the French language, for instance, explores the possibility of spending some time in a French-speaking country. In preparing a class presentation, to give another example, a lad goes beyond the standard ‘talk-and-pictures’ approach to a creative use of sight and sound technology.

A person guided by a second-order understanding of responsibility is not content to simply follow a conventional approach. She searches for a creative edge in her responses to the claims of others. Anne Patrick helpfully suggests that this involves being

conscientious in preventing harm and promoting good through realistic appraisal of the likely consequences of our decisions, and it entails a willingness to act without absolute assurance of being right. Instead of relying entirely on others’ formulas for behavior, one does one’s own interpreting of what is going on and one’s own analysis of how to prevent or minimize harm and contribute to the betterment of life for oneself and one’s neighbors.<sup>76</sup>

It would be wrong, however, to think that second-order responsibility is only available to the ethically elite. This is not an ethic which applies only to those rare individuals with a genius for personal relationships and/or social challenge. The call to be creative in responsible living is for every person of good will. To be sure, some people have a greater talent for seeing new possibilities *vis-à-vis* responsibility than others. Nonetheless, given the limits of their gifts and abilities, everyone should be prepared to stretch their understanding of what it means to be responsible.

Consider the following very ordinary situation. Within a particular family, the Brown family, there is a girl, Jane, who lacks social skills. Jane finds

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<sup>76</sup> Patrick, *Liberating Conscience*, p. 184.

it very difficult to express herself and is deficient in the basic conversational skills appropriate to her age (she is 12). As a consequence, Jane is something of a loner, even in her own family. This particular day, the Brown family is out on a walk in the hills. Mr. Brown observes that Jane, as is her tendency, is walking by herself and ignoring her three siblings. He is eager to help his daughter and so he takes her to one side. Quietly he says, 'Jane, you must mix in more with the others. I know you find it hard, but do make the effort.' Jane, however, fails to respond to her father's exhortation. Mr. Brown thinks, 'Well, I did my best. You can lead a horse to water....' The father's concern and his attempt to help are commendable. He could have simply ignored the fact of his daughter's isolation. In describing his actions as an example of first-order responsibility, there is no desire to devalue or condemn his response. With a little thought and creativity, however, his desire to respond to his daughter's needs could have been converted into a more effective course of action. Mrs. Brown, also concerned about the fact that Jane is not socialising, thinks beyond encouragement and comes up with a creative strategy. To the children she announces, 'On our walk today, we are going to do something a little different. I've got a fun activity in mind for us. I want you to pair up and tell your partner what you would like to be doing in ten years time and why. Then I want you to tell us what he or she said. Okay?' After an initial reluctance, the children, including Jane, join in and quite enjoy it. Without this structure, Jane would not have extended herself to socialise.

There are deep theological reasons for a concern with second-order responsibility. Quite apart from the obvious fact that Christians should be motivated to find that course of action which is most likely to be effective in promoting the good of others, there should also be a concern to reflect in our lives the nature of God. God is the ultimate in creative love and care. John McIntyre expresses it well: 'Imagination is the medium of God's loving penetration into the world of the sinner.'<sup>77</sup> While they may be theologically correct, the classical dictums concerning creation -- *creation ex nihilo*, *creatio per verbum*, and *creatio continua* -- fail to convey any sense of God's

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<sup>77</sup> J. McIntyre, *Faith, Theology and Imagination* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1987), p. 48.



imaginative artistry.<sup>78</sup> It is only as one is able to tune into God's artistic use of colour, fragrance, shape and proportion that one feels inspired by the full range of God's creative action. In the arresting smells and sounds, in the sunsets and snow landscapes, in the juxtaposition of reef and rainforest, of mountain and lake, one sees 'the expression of God in his own creation'.<sup>79</sup>

God's loving and imaginative penetration into our world is also seen in the doctrine of the Incarnation.<sup>80</sup> When the world failed to receive the prophets sent at the divine command, God found a bold and immensely innovative way to communicate God's love, mercy and justice. In the Word-among-us, the essence of God could be seen, heard, handled, and questioned. The being of God was in this way communicated at the uppermost limit of concreteness, clarity and reality.

God's imaginative love and care for us represents the limit case in creative responsibility (we are confronted once again with the infinite gap between the human and the divine). In keeping with a desire to imitate the divine goodness, each and every Christian, given the parameters established by gifts and abilities, should be concerned to extend the boundaries of her understanding of what constitutes the right and good response. In commenting on a hospital chaplaincy case study presented by John Hoffman,<sup>81</sup> I hope to further demonstrate this.

Mrs. B. was a thirty-nine-year-old divorcee, the mother of two young children and an advertising executive for a manufacturing company. To the patient, her occupation represented many positive values. She strongly identified with her father and with the masculine role in general; she disliked women's groups. She enjoyed the aggressive nature of the position and the power it gave her. In addition, the financial rewards were appealing.

However, despite her valuing certain aspects of her work, her concern for honesty and integrity left her feeling uneasy about what she saw as the corruption in her industry.

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. McIntyre, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. McIntyre, op. cit., pp. 53-55.

<sup>81</sup> See *Ethical Confrontation in Counseling*, p. 91ff.

**Chaplain:** Do you like your work?

**Patient:** A great deal of it.

**Chaplain:** You sound like you have some reservations.

**Patient:** Oh, I do. There is a lot of dirty work goes on in the fashion industry. It is not the glamorous field you might think from the outside. I don't like that aspect of it.

**Chaplain:** What do you mean exactly?

**Patient:** Well, we sell to the mills which make our gray goods, the plain gray cloth woven from our fibers; these people sell to the printers who in turn sell to the clothing manufacturers. Our company helps each of these with advertising, but each is cutthroat and out to get all they can, not caring who gets hurt. I tell you, when I get home from work at night, I just want to take a shower to wash it off me. I just loathe that aspect of it all.

'The patient later revealed', recalls Hoffman, 'that her father had been an advertising executive but had had to quit because he could not stand the immoral business practices which he encountered.'

Hoffman tells us that it is important to discern whether Mrs. B's ethical concern is associated with a negative or a positive conscience.<sup>82</sup> That is, is it the case that she is disturbed by the corrupt business practices because she has simply taken over her father's value system and is acting out of a need to gain his respect? Or is it, more positively, that she has owned the values of honesty and fairness and that her struggle over what, if anything, she should do is characterised by autonomy and freedom? Hoffman reflects on these questions this way:

Had I encouraged Mrs. B. not to feel guilty on the grounds that her role was simply part of the tough business world, then providing that she had been afflicted by pressures from the negative conscience, she might have felt truly liberated. If, however, her strong moral convictions were another aspect of her father that she wholeheartedly admired, such counsel could have been experienced as an assault upon her father and her own self-esteem.<sup>83</sup>

While one fully appreciates the import of the difference between a negative and positive conscience, the relevance of the distinction is not obvious in this case. The simple fact of the matter is that Mrs. B. is a party to business practices which are unethical and she has a guilty conscience about that. She identifies

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<sup>82</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

positively with her father and is challenged by the fact that he acted on his convictions and got out.

Assuming Mrs. B. is a parishioner, how might one go about providing appropriate moral counsel? Obviously one could explore with her the possibility of looking for alternative employment. In the terms we are using, such a decision would represent first-order responsibility. She has the precedent set by her father to follow. To leave would be a conventional response. In asserting this, one is not overlooking the fact that it would also be costly. She values the challenges, status, and financial rewards attaching to her current position. A decision to leave would involve nobility and moral conviction on the one hand, and sacrifice and uncertainty on the other. One significant indication against leaving, however, is the fact that Christians need to be *in* the world (though not, according to the oft-quoted verse, *of* it). It is important that disciples of Christ find themselves in the world of business. Indeed, in every sphere of human activity Christians are to be salt, light, leaven in the midst. While it may be that there are other areas of the business world where the practices are less morally questionable, it is probably the case that the quest for a niche where one is free from any contaminating influence will be a vain one. Be that as it may, it could be argued that it is right there in the middle of the fashion industry that a Christian witness is most needed. Second-order responsibility would indicate, I believe, *engagement* rather than *withdrawal*. Mrs. B could be encouraged, for example, to ask herself how she might begin to work for change in her industry. She might consider inviting other like-minded individuals to join her in a small group to discuss ways of challenging the unethical practices in the industry. There may, in fact, already be avenues for directing grievances and concerns. That is, there may be an industry 'watch-dog' in place.

It may be that Mrs. B. feels unable to take on the demands and stresses associated with the role of advocate for reform in business practices. The point is, however, that constructive engagement needs to be explored as an alternative to both passive collusion and total withdrawal.

## **RECONCILING THE DEMANDS OF CONSCIENCE**

One's conscience, as Buber reminds us, can be stirred as a result of both sins of commission and of omission. A failure to decide or act (as would be the case if Mrs. B. continues in involuntary collusion) is just as guilt-producing as positive wrong-doing. When one is convicted of one's guilt, the demands of both mental health and the moral order require an act of, in Buber's terms, reconciliation. The moral philosopher, Bernard Williams, refers to this act as 'response'. He groups it with the three other terms which constitute a theory of responsibility, namely cause, intention, and state.<sup>84</sup>

In an attempt to establish whether or not a person is responsible for an injurious situation, the most basic question is: Did his action either directly or indirectly cause the injury? If the answer is 'no', clearly there can be no question of responsibility.

Intention is also important; it indicates the seriousness and extent of the moral failure involved. Consider these two incidents in which a mother and a child are run down and killed by a car. In the first case, a man is lighting a cigarette while driving. The cigarette falls onto his lap causing him to swerve off the road where he collides with the woman and her infant. In the second incident, the man driving the car is the husband of the woman. She has just told him that she is leaving him to be with her lover. In a fit of rage, he directs his car towards her and the child. Both men are clearly responsible for the deaths; they caused them. However, the degree of moral failure was relatively slight in the first case (the tragic outcome coming as a result of 'moral bad luck'); in the second case, it was extremely high.

Finally, a theory of responsibility needs to incorporate the element of mental state. A person who at the time of an incident was out of touch with reality, either through a temporary form of insanity or as a result of a psychotic condition, cannot be held responsible.

In assessing the degree of criminality in a case, the courts take these factors into account. The response demanded by the State is, of course, the sentence handed down. What is important in the context of our discussion is the

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<sup>84</sup> See B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 55.

fact that the degree to which an individual feels the need to respond *personally* to meet the demands of her conscience is not correlated in the same way to these three elements. It means little to the person who acts unintentionally in a seriously injurious situation that the degree of moral failure can be adjudged to be only slight. Similarly, a person who has recovered a rational mental state takes little comfort in the knowledge that others do not hold her responsible for the damage done while she was not in control of her mental faculties. The very fact that others have suffered grievously as a consequence of one's actions, regardless of mitigating circumstances, produces in the person of conscience a strongly felt need and desire to in some way make amends. It may be, of course, that the result of the action precludes any meaningful *direct* restitution. The man who accidentally ran over the woman and her child can do next to nothing to lessen the pain the family is suffering. Even here, though, a degree of reconciliation with the structure of being is possible. '[T]he wounds of the order-of-being can be healed in infinitely many other places than those at which they were inflicted.' The driver could, for instance, write 'letters to the editor' recounting his experience and warning motorists of the dangers of engaging in potentially distracting activities while driving. Or he may choose to train in defensive driving and volunteer his services to help others learn the skills of safe motoring. Buber's concern was to point up for psychotherapists the contribution reconciliation makes to mental health. It seems that pastoral counsellors, who one would expect to have a stronger background in ethics than their secular counterparts, sometimes need the same instruction. The following case study is illustrative of this fact.<sup>85</sup> A returned soldier, John, killed five Korean soldiers in hand-to-hand combat and is suffering deeply under a weight of guilt. He goes to his pastor for help. The pastor, instead of helping him think in terms of reconciliation, is passive and evasive of the real issues plaguing John. We pick up on the conversation after the opening dialogue.

**John:** ...Reverend, can God forgive people?

**Pastor:** I think he can. What do you think about it?

**John:** I don't know. I thought so too, but that was before. Now I don't know--I don't know.

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<sup>85</sup> See 'A Soldier's War Guilt', in N. Cryer and J. Vayhinger, *Casebook in Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 267-272.

**Pastor:** You have some doubts about the forgiving nature of God?  
[John acknowledges that he does and proceeds to tell the story of the killing of the soldiers. The pastor responds with....]

**Pastor:** This has caused you some amount of worry since you have come back?

**John:** Yeah. You know how I've been with the church. I started out worrying more and more all the time. God is supposed to be able to forgive people, but this is sort of different. This isn't the same thing as when you preach up there on Sunday morning. You sort of get up and tell about these people. The little things--cheating at business, a heavy finger on the scale, or something like that--but this is different. This is big business; this is murder.

**Pastor:** The experience in the army is a very big thing to you in relation to some of the things we preach about?

**John:** Not so much the experience, but the killing. I just killed these men. I know, it might have been them or me. Maybe it would have been better if it had been me. I don't know. I've just been waiting, waiting for something to happen. I don't think God can just come out and forgive this kind of thing. I don't know. Just seems--I don't know.

**Pastor:** Things have been building up inside of you, and you have begun to question God's activity in this?

**John:** Yeah, I guess, sort of. Well, God--he's running the universe you might say. You just can't go around killing people right and left without being punished for it. God just doesn't sit there and let you stab people and let you get away with it. In our society, just like a man kills somebody, we kill him sometimes. This is almost the same thing. I mean, you take a life. You just don't go out and do this. You say, "Well, it's over with, it's part of the war"; but it's more than that. It's a man you killed. Just like if I killed somebody now, it's the same thing.

**Pastor:** Then you are wondering now how God can forgive one who has killed?

**John:** Yeah, that's about it. I don't know. I've been waiting; I've been hoping; I've even been praying. But I don't think he's forgiven me. He--I just keep worrying. Now I think I'm going to get punished; I don't know. But I think this is it; this is what's bothering me. I just keep waiting, looking every day. I wake up and I look out and I think, well, maybe today he'll punish me so I can go on living like I should. But he hasn't punished me. He just keeps me waiting.

**Pastor:** Waiting for punishment is a terrible threat.

**John:** Yes. You just don't kill somebody and get away with it. I mean, it's different; it's not like these little things. It is vital, vital to people. They got to live.

**Pastor:** In other words, killing is a rather large issue in the world today. More so than some of the other things, some of the smaller things you feel we talk about. This would make a very large problem; this would make one worry.

**John:** Well, killing is taking away life.

**Pastor:** Life seems important to you?

**John:** Yeah. I guess so. You can't live without life. Without life, what is there? I mean, I live; I got life. Why shouldn't the next guy have life? Why shouldn't he live the same way? You know--but I, I don't know. When you do something wrong, you have to pay. You just can't



forget about it, cast it off, and don't worry about it. You have to pay, God makes everyone pay.

**Pastor:** You feel that somehow God must have punishment for the wrong deeds of man?

John feels the full burden of the awful responsibility for the killings. He is not helped at all by the idea, 'Well, it was part of war'. In terms of Williams' third category, *state*, John gives no indication that at the time of the actions he was not in full command of his mental faculties. It is clear, though, that while he acted rationally, he did not act in full freedom. It was not his choice to kill; as a soldier he felt compelled to do his duty. This is what is conveyed in the statement, 'It was part of war'. The knowledge that he was compelled to kill, however, does not help to lift the burden. And, unfortunately, neither does the pastor's attempt at counsel. He is so intent on being reflective and non-directive that he fails to engage in any meaningful way with the profound issues his parishioner raises. John tells his minister that he is convinced that God will punish him for the horrible thing he has done, and that he is just waiting for it to happen. The pastor could have responded by acknowledging that while divine judgement is a reality, it is not to be understood in terms of direct action in the here-and-now. God is not waiting 'to get us' for our sins. He could also have reminded John that what Jesus' death and resurrection achieves for the faithful one is freedom from the power of sin and an end to condemnation. What John needed to hear, I believe, was an acknowledgement of his deeply felt need to 'pay' for what he has done, along with a firm and clear statement of the word of grace which says that because of what Christ has done there will be no act of divine retribution 'around the corner'. Responding to John's need to pay -- in our terms, to seek reconciliation with the human order-of-being -- the pastor could have explored ways of going about this with him. Paul Johnson's comments on the case are aimed in this direction; they are wise and insightful.

Remorse is a trap of self-pity that needs to yield to full repentance to renounce the sin and have a change of heart that will reverse the direction of his life. No longer a victim of an unknown penalty that will destroy him, [John] may now decide to volunteer active deeds of penance and dedicate himself to reparation for acknowledged sins.

Then, with the counselor, he could explore how to overcome evil with good, to save life more effectively because he has destroyed

it. He might decide with his family to adopt a Korean war orphan, or to undertake more substantial support for the Christian mission in Korea, or in various specific ways to give his own life daily to God in unfaltering service.<sup>86</sup>

‘[T]o overcome evil with good, to save life more effectively because he has destroyed it.’ This statement captures beautifully the idea of reconciliation, of placing one’s hand in the wound in the order-of-being to heal it. If John had followed this path, there is no doubt that he would have experienced over time at least a partial release from the awful torment he was suffering.

One final comment may be required. In applying Buber’s notion of reconciliation in the context of pastoral care, there may be a question in some people’s minds concerning the theological significance of the concept. From a Reformed perspective, acts aimed at repairing damage to the order-of-being cannot contribute in any way to a person’s salvation. A person is justified by grace through faith. The significance of reconciliation is not found in the realm of soteriology; but rather in the moral and the psychological spheres. On the one hand, an attempt to heal the wound inflicted in the order-of-being is a moral imperative. On the other, it contributes to psychological well-being.

### **CONCLUSION**

Over the last twenty or so years there has been a renewal of interest in the relationship between pastoral care and ethics. As we have seen, most of that interest has been channelled into developing an adequate method for ethical decision-making. While acknowledging that method is crucial, we have argued that attention to the role of conscience is no less important.

We have tackled the issue from two directions. First, our argument has been that the stimulation of conscience can be achieved through calling a person to responsibility. Here, we found the notions of first- and second-order responsibility helpful. Responsibility can either be defined by habit and convention, or by conscientiousness and creativity. Every Christian, to the extent of her gifts and abilities, should be prepared to stretch her understanding of what, in any given situation, constitutes a good and right response.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., pp. 271-272.

Secondly, we sought to demonstrate the truth in Buber's contention that the demands of both morality and mental health are met through reconciliation with the order-of-being. Not only is it good and right that one should attempt to heal the wound one has inflicted, it is also essential for the cure of the soul.

**Part 3: Shame and Distorted Presence  
in Pastoral Care and Counselling**

## Introduction

In our reflections up to this point, we have been attempting to show how in pastoral care and counselling genuine presence contributes to healing and wholeness. We have approached wholeness in terms of both its psychological and its moral dimensions. What happens, though, when the person offering care manifests a defective form of presence. Theologian and ethicist, James McClendon, makes the very important observation that the 'primal defection from presence is found in the experience of shame'.<sup>1</sup> Shame is 'a failed wholeness'.<sup>2</sup> Presence and wholeness is only one side of the story. We need also to develop an understanding of the fall from presence and the experience of shame.

It is important to follow through on McClendon's insight (which he offers in passing) and identify the dynamics associated with a 'failed wholeness'. How exactly, we need to ask, are defective presence and shame related? When a person is on the receiving end of derogatory or dismissive treatment her dominant feelings may be inferiority and weakness, or they may be anger and indignation. How she reacts will depend on her level of self-esteem and self-confidence. A person who is assured of her self-worth tends to refer the problem to the other person rather than to herself. That is, she believes herself to be worthy of respectful, attentive treatment; the fact that she is not receiving it she takes as an indication of a failing in the other person and may angrily tell him so. To be sure, the dismissive treatment will probably cause her a moment of self-doubt. It is likely that she will wonder whether she really is boring, uninteresting, not worthy of attention. There will be slight shame feelings. The moment will quickly pass, however, because she is confident of her worth as a person. Her dominant feelings will be anger, indignation, and disappointment with the other person.

On the other hand, a person who is prone to shame tends to expect poor handling and sees it as in some way justified. Not only does she construe it as

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<sup>1</sup> J. McClendon, *Systematic Theology: Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

justified, she sees it as confirming her worst fears about herself. Inattention is received as an affirmation that she is boring and uninteresting. Derogatory comments are registered as confirmation of her inferiority and inadequacy. And so on. Her shame feelings are heightened through the defective presence of the other person.

Now what happens to the offending party in the first case where there is an expression of anger and/or disgruntlement? How does he react when he registers the displeasure of the other person? To the extent that he cares about the feelings of others and values wholesome relationships he will feel ashamed of his fall into distorted presence. Of course, if he is insensitive, boorish, he will simply react aggressively to the challenge.

Our interest in this research, however, is not on relationships in general, but on the helping relationship. With reference to the link between defective presence and shame, we want to develop an understanding of what happens when the person offering care falls from genuine presence. This 'fall' we will interpret in terms of the key categories we have been using thus far, namely availability and confirmation. Thus, distorted presence will be construed as *nonavailability* and as *disconfirmation*. Our focus will be on the shame reactions in *both the person offering help and in the person receiving it*. We will be aiming to show precisely how the distorted presence of a pastor or counsellor heightens shame feelings in persons already prone to those feelings. And we will study the shame reactions of the helping person when he becomes aware of his tendency to nonavailability and/or disconfirmation. Our argument will be that his shame has a potentially positive function, namely, the stimulation of his conscience and 'conversion' to genuine presence. That is to say, in attending to the call of his conscience, he has the opportunity to make the changes which will produce a higher capacity for presence.

The first step in our treatment of the issues outlined above will be to describe as comprehensively as possible the nature of the shame experience (chapter 8).

Next, we will attempt to develop the links between nonavailability in the person offering help and the shame reaction he may experience on the one



hand, and the heightened sense of shame in the person in his care on the other (chapter 9). We will begin by reflecting on the way in which ‘constancy’, Marcel’s term for a pretence of presence, reinforces shame feelings in the counsellee. The fact that the counsellor will also feel shame when he catches himself acting a role rather than being genuinely present will also be highlighted. Also in chapter 9, the issue of what we will call ‘technocracy’ in counselling will be addressed. I will offer the idea that when the counsellor is more in love with the technical side of her craft than with her client, there will be a ‘failed wholeness’ in the relationship and a sense of shame. Finally in this chapter, the focus will shift to the parish context. We will attempt to describe the shame dynamic associated with the inevitable lapses in availability on the part of ministers offering pastoral care.

In chapter 10, we will analyse three disconfirming stances the counsellor may unwittingly fall into. We will call these intrusion, derogation (borrowing from the psychotherapists, R. Meares and R. Hobson) and reductionism (my own category). Each has the effect of heightening the shame feelings in the counsellee. As in the preceding chapter, there will be a shift to the parish situation. We will explore the way in which a minister’s failure to enter into the struggle that is confirmation may result in her experiencing a sense of shame.

The goal of the final chapter is to identify the positive function shame has in converting a pastor or counsellor to a more authentic way of being-with those he seeks to help. Our argument will be that when a person in a caring vocation becomes aware of his tendency to a distorted way of being present the shame feelings he experiences may serve to stimulate a period of critical introspection. Spurred on by a new vision of himself in relationship, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, he is able to enhance his capacity for genuine presence.

## 8. Shame

Shame arises when the self evaluates itself as flawed, defective, inferior. One judges that one has fallen short of a cherished ideal. One perceives a gap between the self as it really is and a desired identity. As Silvan Tomkins so neatly expresses it, 'desire has outrun fulfillment'.<sup>1</sup> It is possible to feel shame about almost anything. One condemns oneself as socially awkward, clumsy, gauche. One feels dull, incompetent, ignorant. Cowardice and betrayal are especially potent sources of shame. One may be ashamed of one's appearance, height (or lack of it), weight, disability, or disfigurement. In the following chapters, we will consider yet another source of shame. An attempt will be made to identify counsellor attitudes and behaviours which have the potential to embarrass, belittle or, worse, humiliate. Our aim in this chapter is to lay the groundwork for that investigation by describing the experience of shame.

Shame is commonly viewed as an exclusively negative emotion. This is understandable, given its potential for high emotional toxicity. Current research links shame to aggression, addictions, obsessions, pathological narcissism, depression and a number of other psychiatric disorders.<sup>2</sup> Even when it is disassociated from mental pathology, it is seen as an emotion one must overcome. In a society in which self-confidence, assertiveness and free expression are cherished by many, shame will be commonly viewed as an unhealthy source of inhibition. It is important to recognise, though, that shame has a positive value. There is a healthy form of shame. Shame, for example, forms the psychological base for humility.<sup>3</sup> Occasional experiences of failure militate against arrogance and haughtiness. There is also the fact that shame offers an innate protection against depersonalisation and violation in a society in which privacy is increasingly not being respected.<sup>4</sup> Finally, shame is a source of

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<sup>1</sup> S. Tomkins, 'Shame', in D. Nathanson ed., *The Many Faces of Shame* (New York: Guilford Press, 1987), pp. 133-161, p.155.

<sup>2</sup> See R. Karen, 'Shame', *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 1992), pp. 40-70, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. S.M. Hines, 'Shame-Based Families', *Review and Expositor* 91 (1994), pp. 19-30, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> This is the thesis C. Schneider argues in *Shame, Exposure, and Privacy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).

moral motivation and protects our relationships with valued others. This last observation will be amplified in the discussion on moral shame below, and will feature in chapter 11. The negative features of shame will come into play in chapters 9 and 10 where we focus on the ways in which a distorted pastoral presence is potentially shaming.

In order to prepare ourselves for these explorations of the links between shame and distorted presence, it is necessary to describe the shame dynamic as fully as possible. This involves three tasks. The first is to generate an adequate phenomenology of shame. Defining characteristics such as exposure, incongruence, threat to trust, the global nature of shame, and hiddenness will be investigated.

Shame, moving now to the second task, has a near relative, guilt. Given the fact that a good deal of confusion arises on both an existential and a theoretical level as a result of the overlap between these two dysphoric affects, it is important to attempt to disentangle them.

The third task may be introduced with the observation that any excursion into the area of intersubjectivity necessarily involves a moral dimension. The shame a pastor or counsellor feels when she becomes aware that her way of being-with in the counselling relationship has been defective, and therefore harmful, is of a particular kind. It is not situational embarrassment (e.g. slurping one's soup in a fine restaurant); nor is it the kind of shame that is associated with incompetence or lack of ability (e.g. one makes a mess of a business presentation). Rather, it is moral shame. The shame a person feels, on the other hand, when she suffers under the distorted presence of pastor or counsellor is not of a moral type. She has done no wrong. Rather, it is the case that her sense of self-worth is brought into question. She may feel more inadequate, more flawed. This is an experience of 'inferiority shame'. All of this points to the fact that there are various types of shame. Below we will acquaint ourselves with the members of *the shame family*.

These, then, are our tasks in mapping the territory of shame. We begin with a phenomenological description.

## ***A PHENOMENOLOGY OF SHAME***

Shame researchers emphasise a variety of concomitants and characteristics of the shame experience. However, there are five aspects that take us to the essence of the shame experience, namely, exposure, incongruence, threat to trust, involvement of the whole self, and hiddenness.

### ***Exposure***

Shame occurs when particularly sensitive and vulnerable aspects of the self are exposed.<sup>5</sup> Exposure may be to others, or to oneself, or to both. Shame is registered as a painful emotional jolt when aspects of one's self that are considered unworthy and inferior are suddenly opened to the disapproving gaze of others. One wants to disappear, to 'sink through the floor'.

This public exposure is so commonly observed and so vivid that it seems that the attention of some researchers has been drawn away from the private dimension. The fact that a shame reaction is sometimes a very personal affair is overlooked. David Ausubel, in line with the anthropologists Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, argues that shame always demands an audience, real or presumed.<sup>6</sup> Helen Merrell Lynd, however, rightly points out that '[e]xposure to oneself is at the heart of shame'.<sup>7</sup> The shame one feels in deceiving others into believing something about oneself that is untrue is particularly intense and painful. Consider this scenario. A prominent businessman and community leader who enjoys the respect of his family and of all who know him harbours a shameful secret, namely his attraction to child pornographic material. His wife and children think of him as caring, reliable, industrious and a good provider. His business acumen and community-mindedness earn him the admiration of colleagues. While he will no doubt feel shame over the unsavoury way he gains sexual titillation, perhaps he is most intensely shamed by the double-life he leads. Even if he is never publicly exposed, shame will burn secretly within him.

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<sup>5</sup> Exposure is an important theme in the studies by Helen Merrell Lynd and Carl Schneider. See H.M. Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1958) and C. Schneider, *Shame, Exposure and Privacy*.

<sup>6</sup> See D. Ausubel, 'Relationships Between Shame and Guilt in the Socializing Process', *Psychological Review* 62, no.15 (1955), pp. 379-390, p. 382.

<sup>7</sup> H.M. Lynd, *On Shame*, p. 32.

The psychoanalytic scholar, Léon Wurmser, suggests that there are intimate links between shame and exposure on the one hand, and shame and perception on the other.<sup>8</sup> ‘Moments of self-exposure’ and ‘acts of perception’ play important roles in the shaping of identity. Seeing/being seen and hearing/being heard are the modalities which facilitate a comparison of one’s self-concept with the concept others have of one. ‘The modes of attentive, curious grasping and of expressing oneself in nonverbal as well as verbal *communication* are the arena where in love and hatred, in mastery and defeat our self is forged and molded’ [emphasis in the original].<sup>9</sup> When the interchange is defective, the core of the self-concept is disturbed and becomes shame-laden.

### *Incongruence*

A shame reaction occurs when a person is suddenly aware that her behaviour is incongruous with, inappropriate to, the situation she is in.<sup>10</sup> It is not that she has done something wrong; no sin has been committed. Rather, there is a painful awareness of a gap between her actions and the expectations of the environment. The person is acting on the assumption that a particular behaviour is appropriate, but in a moment of painful awareness he discovers that the assumption was false. It is the experience of suddenly finding oneself out of tune with one’s environment. To illustrate this, let me refer to an experience in my last parish. The committee of the Men’s Breakfast group invited a local Roman Catholic man to speak at their next gathering. He was a very humorous man and he ‘spiced up’ his stories with ‘colourful’ language. I really enjoyed him. But I seemed to be in the minority. The majority of the men were from strict evangelical backgrounds and were quite offended by his bad language. Looking at his audience, he was expecting to see happy, laughing faces, but instead he was greeted with frowns of disapproval. His face suddenly went quite red and he lost his poise.

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<sup>8</sup> See L. Wurmser, ‘Shame: The Veiled Companion of Narcissism’, in D. Nathanson ed., *The Many Faces of Shame*, pp. 64-92, p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>10</sup> This discussion of the link between shame and incongruence is informed by H.M. Lynd, *On Shame*, pp. 34-42.

### *Threat to Trust*

Lynd observes that this sudden awareness that one is out of key with one's environment results in a threat to trust.<sup>11</sup> One is led to question one's own adequacy and/or the reliability of the values of the world of reality. In order to supplement the illustration above, I will use a familiar domestic scenario. It also depicts the link between misplaced confidence and shame. A child has laboured long and hard in the kitchen preparing a feast for her mother. Where the child sees a labour of love and a delectable offering, her mother sees only a very messy kitchen and a waste of ingredients. Instead of the expected smile of appreciation, the would-be chef receives a glare of anger and reproach. Lynd sums up the situation in relation to misplaced confidence nicely, 'The rejected gift, the joke or the phrase that does not come off, the misunderstood gesture, the falling short of our own ideals, the expectation of response violated--such experiences mean that we have trusted ourselves to a situation that is not there.'<sup>12</sup> The jolt of shame is triggered by this sudden awareness that what one thought could be relied on has betrayed the confidence one had in it.

### *Involvement of the Whole Self*

Shame researchers consistently use the global aspect of the shame experience to differentiate it from its cousin, guilt. A person feels guilty over actions (or omissions) which have caused harm to others. Guilt can be localised in a certain aspect of the self, namely, that which is associated with a particular moral transgression. A person with a gambling problem, for example, may say, 'I am basically a good person. I just get carried away when I go down to the racetrack.' Shame, in contrast, cannot be located in a discrete act which can be separated off from the self. The difference may be expressed this way: 'I am guilty of this bad act; but I *am* my shame.'

As Wurmser accurately observes, shame has a global quality because it is evoked by a discrepancy between a tested self and an ideal image.<sup>13</sup> This

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<sup>11</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>13</sup> See L. Wurmser, 'Shame: The Veiled Companion', p. 86.



image is not simply constructed out of a delimited reality such as actions, but out of all the components which define a self.

It is through shameful events that the self is revealed. Personal identity is shaped in this way. The shame events throw up the contours of one's selfhood and of the world of reality one inhabits. Guilt may be assuaged by confession or restitution, but the experience of shame may be transcended only by a re-shaping of identity.

### *Hiddenness*

Given that shame is acutely painful and is associated with the exposure of sensitive and vulnerable aspects of the self, we would expect that there would be a tendency to block the feeling from conscious awareness. W.H. Auden, in reviewing Stendahl's *Diaries*, expressed surprise that the latter found it so difficult to admit certain facts to himself: 'How can admitting anything to oneself be daring?'<sup>14</sup> This comment indicates an ignorance of shame dynamics. Our first reaction to shameful realities about ourselves is to hide from them.

In her ground-breaking phenomenological study of shame, Helen Block Lewis observes two distinct ways in which patients repress shame. First, there is the defense of 'by-passing' shame feeling.<sup>15</sup> The shame events are recognised, but shame feelings are blocked from entering consciousness. This is achieved by what she calls a 'distancing' manoeuvre. The self views itself through the eyes of the other, but without much affect. That is, the shame affect is bypassed and replaced by an impassive viewing of the self from a variety of perspectives. For example, a patient may speculate, in a quite dispassionate way, about what the therapist is thinking about him at the moment.

The second form of hidden shame Lewis labels 'overt, undifferentiated shame'.<sup>16</sup> Some patients in Lewis' study who manifested a high level of shame affect were unable to identify their feeling state as shame. Rather, they used words such as 'depressed', 'tense', 'lousy', or 'blank' to describe their psychological state.

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<sup>14</sup> W.H. Auden, the *New Yorker*, Dec. 18, 1954, pp.142-143. Cited in Lynd, *On Shame*, p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> See H.B.Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971), p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 53.

Clinicians have observed that the tendency in patients to hide the real situation is not quite as pronounced in relation to guilt as it is to shame. Guilt seems to have more dignity about it than shame. Yet both affects produce a sharp drop in self-esteem. They are closely related, and any study of shame must include a careful attempt to differentiate it from guilt.

### **SHAME AND GUILT**

Shame and guilt both produce dysphoria and theoretically, phenomenologically, and clinically share a considerable area of overlap.<sup>17</sup> Reference to an overlap only makes sense, however, in a moral context. It is in moral failure that guilt and shame become entangled with each other. There is no guilt associated with embarrassment, for example. One does not feel guilty because one has tripped over a shoe-lace at an inopportune moment. Nor does one feel guilty over a body-shape, *per se*, that is less than ideal. There is no guilt linked to the fact that one was born without the blessing of certain talents and abilities. It is, of course, true that a person may experience both guilt and shame in relation to body-shape and talent. A woman may be ashamed of her unattractive figure, and guilty because she knows that her failure to restrain calorific intake is causing considerable distress to her husband. A person may be ashamed of a relatively unskilled occupation because of its low social status, and guilty because he has wasted both his considerable talent and his parents' tuition fees through laziness. The shame in these instances has a non-moral association; the moral dimension is introduced through guilt. In fact, this split is too simple. Tied in with the guilt related to over-eating and idleness will be shame feelings. This indicates the way in which the two feeling states are intricately woven together. It remains true, nonetheless, that it is only in relation to moral issues that this entanglement occurs. The fact that one is disfigured, or overweight, or is embarrassed does not *in itself* produce guilt feelings; though there may be other factors related to these experiences that produce a feeling of guiltiness.

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<sup>17</sup> See D. Harder and A. Zalma, 'Two Promising Shame and Guilt Scales: A Construct Validity Comparison', *Journal of Personality Assessment* 55, nos 3 &4 (1990), pp. 729-745, pp. 741-742.

As we have already seen, shame researchers typically differentiate shame from guilt in terms of the global nature of the former affect. Shame is a painful experience which involves a focus on the whole self. In the face of the negatively evaluated experience, it is the whole self which is devalued. Lynd expresses it well: 'I cannot have done this. But I have done it and I cannot undo it, because this is I.'<sup>18</sup> Guilt, on the other hand, is focused on a specific behaviour, on a particular moral transgression. It can be assuaged by confession and restitution; shame, on the other hand, requires a transformation of the self. 'I feel guilty', one may say, 'but I *am* my shame.' Shame is consequently more painful and debilitating than guilt.

The clearest approach to distinguishing the global dimension of shame from the act-and-consequences orientation of guilt comes from Helen Block Lewis.<sup>19</sup> She observes that the ideation of being ashamed of oneself runs simultaneously with that of guilty self-reproach. In moral failures, guilt and shame get tangled up together. In observing the pain and hurt one's actions have caused the other, one feels guilt. One feels remorse and begins to think of ways to make amends. However, in thinking of the damage to the other caused by one's actions, one immediately begins to question one's worth as a person. Shame ideation operates in conjunction with the recognition of one's guilt. 'What sort of person am I to have done this bad thing?' one thinks. Lewis brings out these distinctions very clearly when she compares the self-reproaches in guilty ideation with those of ashamed ideation:

[Guilt-laden cognitions run thus:] 'how could I have *done that*; what an injurious *thing* to have done; how I *hurt so-and-so*, what a moral lapse that *act* was; what will become of *that* or of *him*, now that I have neglected to *do it*, or injured *him*. How should I be *punished* or *make amends*? *Mea culpa!*' Simultaneously, ashamed ideation says: 'how could *I* have done that; what an *idiot I am*--how humiliating; what a *fool*, what an *uncontrolled person*--how mortifying; how unlike *so-and-so*, who does not do such things; how *awful and worthless I am*. Shame!' [emphasis in the original]<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> H.M. Lynd, *On Shame*, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> See H.B. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

In early anthropological and psychoanalytic formulations, shame and guilt were differentiated on the basis of the former's relationship to *external* sanctions (the shaming of the group) and the latter's connection with *internal* sanctions (conscience).<sup>21</sup> The philosopher, Agnes Heller, rightly questions this distinction.<sup>22</sup> If by sanctions punishment is implied, then it does not hold. Experiences which evoke shame are often not punished at all. Even if the sanction is understood in terms of torment of the self rather than punishment, the conceptualisation is still flawed. It is possible to have a clear conscience and still feel the pain of mortification (cf. the guiltless shame experiences identified above). This line of reasoning leads Heller to argue that it is the *authority* rather than the sanction that is external. This authority, though, can be internalised. In which case one experiences a loss of honour. The internalisation of moral authority points to the important role exposure to the self plays in the experience of shame, as we have already seen. Hence, the internal/external dichotomy is not a totally accurate way of differentiating shame and guilt. Internalisation plays an important role in both affects. For some people, a shameful secret is more painful than public shaming.

A more promising way of differentiating the two feeling states is through a strong-weak dichotomy. Guilt presents as a more dignified emotion because there is a certain sense of power that is associated with injuring another person. There are now a significant number of empirical studies which support this conceptualisation.<sup>23</sup> During guilty states, experimental subjects reported feeling more active and having a greater sense of control than when being shamed. In the shame state, they described feelings of being inhibited, lacking in power, standing, and self-confidence. When shamed, they felt 'weak, shy, helpless, and injured in relationship with someone who was powerful, ridiculing, and hurtful'.<sup>24</sup> Under conditions of shame, subjects reported a feeling of being the focus of ridicule and humiliation. When feeling guilty, a drop in self-esteem was felt, but there was also the feeling of being the source of a similar blow to self-

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<sup>21</sup> See D. Ausubel, 'Relationships Between Shame and Guilt', p. 383.

<sup>22</sup> See A. Heller, *The Power of Shame: A Rational Perspective* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> See C. Goldberg, *Understanding Shame* (Northvale NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1991), p. 50.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

esteem in the other person. There seems to often be, then, a kind of pride, albeit a perverse one, associated with guilt. No such pride is connected with shame.

Despite the fact that shame and guilt can be clearly distinguished in this way, the two affects do share a number of features. Both produce a drop in self-esteem. Whether one has made a number of embarrassing mistakes in an important speech or told a straight-out lie which protects one's own interests but is injurious to another person, the effect is much the same: a fall in one's sense of worth. Related to this is the fact that both guide future behaviour by selecting out actions which produce dysphoria. Both are associated, finally, with the internalisation of parental and social norms, rules and prohibitions.

It is worth pursuing the question of why shame and guilt share this sizeable area of overlap. Silvan Tomkins believes that he has an economical way of explaining the link, namely that guilt is simply a shame variant.<sup>25</sup> He argues that the shame affect is identical in those experiences in which one feels embarrassed or inadequate and in those in which one feels guilty. Hence, he contends, the word 'guilt' was invented to distinguish shame from guilt. Donald Nathanson, an influential interpreter and advocate of Tomkins' views, suggests that guilt is simply shame about a violation of a moral rule.<sup>26</sup>

This insistence that shame and guilt are the same affect is inevitable given the dictates of Tomkins' affect theory. The theory holds that all known emotional states can be explained in terms of just nine innate affects.<sup>27</sup> These affects are described in terms of a mild to intense rating as follows: interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy (the positive affects); surprise-startle (the reset affect); distress-anguish, fear-terror, shame-humiliation, dissmell, disgust, and anger-rage (the negative affects). Tomkins' theory is brain- rather than mind-centred. The affects, he contends, are triggered by neural firings associated with particular programs in the sub-cortical area of the brain. It is the density of the neural firings which determines which particular affect will be triggered. A

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<sup>25</sup> See S. Tomkins, 'Shame', in *The Many Faces of Shame*, p. 135.

<sup>26</sup> See D. Nathanson, *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992), p. 144.

<sup>27</sup> See S. Tomkins, 'Shame', in *The Many Faces of Shame*; and idem, 'The Quest for Primary Motives: Biography and Autobiography of an Idea', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 41, no.2 (1981), pp. 306-329.

sudden increase in stimulation, for example, will result in a person becoming startled, or afraid, or interested. The suddenness of the increase in neural firings per unit time determines which of these affects is triggered. If there is a high, constant level of stimulation a person will experience either anger or distress (depending on the level of stimulation). Finally, a sudden decrease in the density of neural firings produces enjoyment-joy.

Shame-humiliation is considered to be a drive auxiliary. Its function is to interrupt the affects *interest* and *enjoyment* at a time when the signal for these affects is still competent. That is, the shame affect is triggered in order to pull a person away from an enjoyable experience when there is every reason for it to continue. As the innate shame affect is co-assembled over time with the concomitants in the situations in which it was triggered, the shame emotion is established. Pure shame affect is meaning-free. It is only as the maturing individual adds her particular, unique interpretation to her shame experiences that the mature emotion known as shame develops.

Tomkins and his associates have been unable to find an innate guilt affect. Consequently, affect theory demands that guilt be understood -- along with embarrassment, shyness, and inferiority feelings -- as a variant of shame. It is the same innate affect, it is argued, which is triggered in all the various situations associated with these different feeling states. Each variant emotional state feels different simply because of differences in causes and consequences. It seems that the constraints of affect theory have led its adherents to ignore compelling evidence provided in the substantial body of empirical and clinical studies that shame and guilt are distinct emotions. While the two affects share a sizeable area of overlap, the fact that shame involves the whole self whereas guilt relates to discrete actions, coupled with evidence that guilt produces a feeling of power compared to the powerlessness associated with shame, is indicative of a clear distinction.

A more satisfactory approach, I believe, is offered by the psychoanalytic theorist, Susan Miller, in her suggestion that Erikson's conceptualisation of early contact between the two developmental lines for shame and guilt helps



explain the entanglement.<sup>28</sup> One developmental line relates to self-esteem (shame), while the other is associated with the superego's generation of conscience (guilt). According to Erikson, the shame which is accrued in the autonomy crisis is absorbed by the guilt generated in the initiative phase.<sup>29</sup> Shame is linked to compulsion neurosis.<sup>30</sup> Parental overcontrol leads to the child feeling ashamed of her inadequacy. She begins to overvalue self-control and control of the environment. As a result, she develops a rigid, overweening conscience. The child's display of autonomy aimed at reducing the feeling of helplessness and shame is taken over by the need to conform to parental wishes. The recognition of a feeling of power associated with self-manipulation is lost to a feeling of needing to avoid parental disapproval and condemnation. In this way, there is a shift from an affective experience (shame) to a personality style (compulsion) which is the expression of an overweening conscience. Erikson thus shows the historical connectedness between shame and guilt. There is a dynamic interplay between the two feeling states as the child moves from the autonomy to the initiative crisis. This interplay is described in terms of the dynamics of self-manipulation and conscience.

Tomkins' dissolution of the guilt experience into shame affect fails to take account of the psychodynamic history of the two affects. There is a tendency early in the life cycle for shame to atrophy as guilt takes over. This helps to explain how the two affects become entangled. Consider the case of a young man brought up with a strict code of moral conduct. He goes off to university and is confronted with more liberal and daring approaches to life. He begins to feel ashamed of his 'straight' life-style. 'Perhaps the set of values I was raised with are in fact narrow and inhibiting as my friends suggest', he begins to think. As he begins to try on new behaviours he feels a burden of guilt over what feels like a rejection of parental values. The fact that he has not been able to completely disassociate himself from his familial values means that he also feels some shame over falling short of internalised ideals.

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<sup>28</sup> See S. Miller, 'Shame as an Impetus to the Creation of Conscience', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 70 (1989), pp. 231-243.

<sup>29</sup> See E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, p. 227.

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 226-227.

Miller gives the example of an adolescent girl who fantasised over the degree of her 'badness' as an infant in order to compensate for her feelings of helplessness and abandonment.<sup>31</sup> In exaggerating her badness she seemed to experience genuine guilt. This illustrates a 'shame-based motivation for the over-development of guilt-producing self-concepts'.<sup>32</sup> This self-image of a bad baby who persecuted her parents provided a fantasy of power and strength in her past to compensate for the feeling of helplessness she felt as an infant, and continues to feel as an adolescent. She needed, observes Miller, this attack on self ('I was a horrible baby') despite its guilt-producing effect to compensate for a sense of smallness and insignificance (shame).

In summary, guilt is much more than a word invented to describe the shame associated with moral lapses. Shame and guilt have their own distinctive developmental histories. The historical interplay between the two affects has lasting implications for the way in which they influence each other. There is an almost infinite variety of situations in which shame and guilt become entangled.

In the above discussion reference has been made to different forms of shame: embarrassment, inferiority, shame over one's appearance and moral shame. Shame is clearly not a unitary concept. This variety in shame reactions sometimes causes a great deal of confusion. Two authors may both be discussing shame and yet it may seem as if they are talking about almost entirely different things. It seems that a typology for shame is needed to bring some clarity to the discussion.

### ***INTRODUCING THE SHAME FAMILY***

The shame label is used to describe experiences as diverse as a social gaffe and an act of cowardice while in the line of fire. Clearly there are many different experiences which generate a sense of shame. In this final part of the thesis, we will involve ourselves with shame related both to moral failure and to a sense of inferiority. These refer to the person giving help and to the person receiving it, respectively. Every person engaged in a helping vocation at some point encounters limitations in his way of being present to others. We do our

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<sup>31</sup> See S. Miller, 'Shame as an Impetus', p. 239.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 239.

best, and yet we still fall short. There need be no guilt or shame in this situation. However, when a pastor or counsellor, through a lack of courage, honesty or commitment, allows himself to fall into distorted forms of presence which either hurt or militate against the improvement of the person in his care, he should feel a sense of shame. On the other hand, his failure in presence will, in most cases, heighten feelings of inadequacy in the counsellee. It is necessary, then, to discuss these two different forms of shame. We will set them beside other common varieties of shame in order to bring them into sharp focus.

An attempt to categorise the different shame variants should bring some clarity to our discussion. Typologies, however, may obscure as well as clarify. A helpful typology utilises appropriate categories and distinctions. With this in mind, the following structure for the shame family is proposed: *situational shame*, *aesthetic shame*, *inherited identity shame*, *inferiority shame*, and *moral shame*.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Situational Shame***

The term 'situational shame' comes from Robert Karen.<sup>34</sup> It describes those embarrassing moments -- slurping one's soup in polite company, tripping over one's shoe-laces at an inopportune moment, a joke falling flat -- which come to us all at some time. 'Situational shame keeps us bathing regularly, dressing appropriately, eating with utensils, and able to work in close proximity to others without acting on every aggressive or sexual impulse.'<sup>35</sup> Clearly, we are dealing here with the low toxicity end of the shame spectrum.

Babcock and Sabini define embarrassment as that emotion which is evoked by a perceived discrepancy between one's behaviour and one's

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<sup>33</sup> Two leading shame researchers who have developed typologies are Robert Karen and James Fowler. The former suggests four categories, namely *existential shame* (the individual suddenly becomes aware of his failings), *class shame* (related to my category of *inherited identity shame*), *narcissistic shame* (one's personal identity is shame-based), and *situational shame* (a category I also use). See his 'Shame', p. 58. Moving from 'normal' shame to increasingly pathological variations, James Fowler describes five types and degrees. These are: *healthy shame* (we referred to this in the introductory section above), *perfectionist shame*, *shame due to enforced minority shame* (cf. my *inherited identity shame*), *toxic shame* (cf. Karen's *narcissistic shame*), and *shamelessness*. See Fowler's *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public Challenges of Post-modern Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), chapter 7.

<sup>34</sup> See R. Karen, 'Shame', p. 58.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

conception of one's 'persona'.<sup>36</sup> A persona is 'a self-imposed standard or model for action'.<sup>37</sup> While this definition is a helpful way of conceptualising what constitutes an embarrassing situation, Babcock and Sabini take the unwarranted step of distinguishing embarrassment and shame as distinct emotions.<sup>38</sup>

Embarrassment, however we may wish to define it, is an unavoidable part of life. The fact that we have certain standards for our social presence, coupled with the fact of our human fallibility, means that inevitably we all end up at some time or other 'red-faced' and feeling rather silly.

### *Aesthetic Shame*

In a culture which places such a high value on physical beauty, there is a great potential for those who fall short of the ideal to feel shame. Whereas the ideal in other forms of shame may relate to intelligence, social skill, or moral strength, here we are dealing with an aesthetic ideal. When one perceives a gap between the real self and the desired physical ideal, shame is the painful result.

Aesthetic shame can vary from relatively slight discomfort over one's appearance to a sense of horror and self-loathing. The latter experience is associated with profound disfigurement. An attractive, unmarried twenty-five-year-old woman poignantly describes her reaction to life with a colostomy after having her colon surgically removed:

I feel so embarrassed by this--this thing. It seems so unnatural, so dirty. I can't get used to the smell of it. I'm so scared of soiling myself. Then I'd be so ashamed I couldn't look at anyone else. I've met four or

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<sup>36</sup> See M. Babcock and J. Sabini, 'On Differentiating Embarrassment from Shame', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 20 (1990), pp. 151-169, p. 153.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>38</sup> The vast majority of shame researchers are rightly content to view embarrassment as a shame variant. Babcock and Sabini argue, however, that the two feeling states should be differentiated on the basis of the different nature of the standards involved. Embarrassment is evoked when there is a discrepancy between one's actual behaviour and one's standard for behaviour (usually idiosyncratic). Shame, on the other hand, results from a failure to reach an ideal (one that has universal acceptance). The fact that embarrassment is usually correlated with idiosyncratic standards, whereas shame is associated with universal ones is sufficient warrant, argue Babcock and Sabini, for the view that we are dealing with distinct emotions. This, I contend, involves an unnecessarily fine distinction. Both feelings of embarrassment and more intense shame feelings (such as humiliation and mortification) are evoked by a sense of falling short of an ideal. The ideal may, of course, be defined in a number of different ways. It may have a reference to social poise, to personal appearance, or to moral strength. This accounts for the variety of feeling states associated with the shame family of emotions. It does not, however, indicate a need to break up the family into separate emotions.

five colostomy patients. They seem to be doing so well. But none was my age and unmarried. Who would want a wife like this? How can I go out and not feel unable to look people in the eyes and tell them the truth? Once I do, who would want to develop a friendship, I mean a close one? How can I even consider showing my body to someone else, having sex? Now they tell me the colitis is gone, together with my bowel, but what is this I'm left with? Its a disaster for me. I feel terrible, like a monster.<sup>39</sup>

In every other way a person may feel a sense of healthy pride, and yet disfigurement, as in this sad case, or other forms of dissatisfaction with body-image, have the potential to all but destroy emotional well-being.

### ***Inherited Identity Shame***

We are all born into a particular family, class and culture. Our inherited identity may be a source of pride. Sometimes, though, it carries with it a burden of shame. Members of ethnic minority groups may internalise the prejudicial stereotypes of the dominant culture. They may come to condemn themselves as 'dirty', 'ignorant', or 'lazy'. Even when a person begins to be successful according to the standards of the dominant majority, a lingering feeling of inferiority may plague her. James Fowler calls this 'ascribed shame'.<sup>40</sup>

It may seem irrational to feel shame simply because one happens to be born into a particular class or culture. After all, everyone is an individual with his own unique set of gifts, abilities and personal qualities. It is not possible, though, to define personal identity in terms of an 'atomistic' self.<sup>41</sup> I am who I am, in part, because I was born in *this* particular family, in *this* social class, in *this* country. My identity is defined, to a significant extent, by Australian culture, mainstream Protestant Christian ethos, and middle-class values. Culture, class, nationality are all given expression in and through me. The identity ascribed to a person by class and culture may generate pride, or it may result in a feeling of defect and inferiority.

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<sup>39</sup> Cited in L. A. Burton, 'Respect: Response to Shame in Health Care', *Journal of Religion and Health* 30, no.2 (Summer 1991), pp. 139-148, p. 142.

<sup>40</sup> See J. Fowler, *Faithful Change*, p. 119.

<sup>41</sup> See G. Thrane, 'Shame', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 92 (1979), pp. 139-166, p. 144.

### *Inferiority Shame*

Cultural identity is sometimes a source of shame. In the literature, however, shame is more commonly related to feelings of inadequacy arising purely out of personal experience. In broad terms, a sense of inferiority may be related either to talents and abilities or to personal qualities. A person may feel shame because she judges herself to be incompetent. She may also feel shame because she considers she is boring, timid, socially inept, lacks a sense of humour, and so on. Or she may feel ashamed on both counts.

It is common for people to feel that something is lacking in their personality. Most of us have a desire to enhance our personal qualities. We would like to be more assertive, more in control, more engaging and lively in relationships, more articulate, etc., etc. The problem is not necessarily a lack of intelligence or ability. A person may judge himself to be very successful in his chosen vocation and be quite comfortable in that setting (designing engine parts or fixing plumbing problems). In a social situation, however, he feels out of place and silly. He thinks that others find him 'stiff' and uninteresting. Another person may be able to put together perceptive, highly articulate pieces of writing, but feels small because she constantly allows others to dominate and control her.

A sense of shame may, on the other hand, be related to feelings of incompetence. Almost everything a person does, from cooking lasagne to giving an important business presentation at work, turns out less well than he would like. Another person would like to have the ability to even get into a position of having to give such a presentation.

The reflections on shame by the psychotherapist Donald Nathanson<sup>42</sup> and the moral philosopher John Rawls<sup>43</sup> take into account both lack of achievement and personality failures. They concentrate, though, on the former. Nathanson works with the relationship of shame to its counterpart, pride. Shame and pride are tracked through a series of developmental stages defined in terms of size and strength, dexterity and physical skill, dependence vs. independence, cognitive ability, communication, the sense of self, gender identity and

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<sup>42</sup> See D. Nathanson, *Shame and Pride*.

<sup>43</sup> See J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 440-444.



sexuality, and, finally, interpersonal skills. The issues raised in this discussion rotate around one pole defined by skills, abilities, competence and success, and another described by failure, a sense of inferiority, and assaults on self-esteem. When one has moved through a stage relatively successfully one accrues a sense of personal competence, self-worth, and healthy pride. Failures along the way, on the other hand, may coalesce to shape an identity defined by a sense of inferiority and shame.

Rawls' reflections have a similar orientation. Shame is related to a failure in a person's plan of life. Associated with this failure is a loss of self-respect. Rawls uses the term 'excellences' to describe naturally endowed gifts such as imagination, wit, grace and other talents and abilities. Self-respect is posited as the most important primary good. Respect for oneself has two essential conditions. First, a person must believe that his plan of life is worth pursuing. He must, secondly, have the confidence in his abilities required to fulfil his intentions. That is, he must believe that he really has been endowed with excellences, and that they are adequate for the tasks at hand. Self-respect will be injured when, either, one feels that one's life-project is of limited value, or, one is assailed by self-doubt and fear of failure such that it is impossible to successfully carry out the project. It may, of course, be the case that one values one's plan of life but the choice of that particular plan was overly ambitious. Failure is then related not so much to self-doubt as to lack of ability. Rawls characterises shame as 'the feeling that someone has when he experiences an injury to his self-respect or suffers a blow to his self-esteem'.<sup>44</sup>

Increasingly, people in modern industrialised societies, dominated as they are by a preoccupation with success, concentrate almost exclusively on incompetence and failure as the locus of shame. With this in mind, Agnes Heller refers to a 'one-dimensionality' in the western (or as we tend to say now, northern) experience of shame.<sup>45</sup> In the competitive, highly structured workaday world, we never really confront others with our global personalities. Other persons only see the particular roles we are called on to play. 'We wear our

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 442.

<sup>45</sup> See A. Heller, *The Power of Shame*, p. 17.

“roles” outside and our shabby incognito inside.’<sup>46</sup> In this context, shame is evoked by an evaluation by the self and by others that a role has been performed incompetently. Interestingly, Heller observes that it is only at war that a person is known as a total personality.<sup>47</sup> Here the real self, in all its many facets, is put to the test. In the firing line, skill, competence and success are no longer the only channels for approval or disapproval. One is judged in terms of courage, ingenuity, goodness of heart and solidarity with fellow soldiers.

### *Moral Shame*

This last observation points to the fact that shame and pride have a moral reference. Moral lapses produce a sense of shame.

Following Kant, Gary Thrane contends that a sense of honour derived from a sensitivity to shame is the only truly moral motivation.<sup>48</sup> The link between the moral personality and shame is established in terms of autonomy and identity. An important dimension in autonomy is the capacity for embracing the ideals and standards that are truly one’s own. Autonomy is a personal good because it requires ‘freedom, courage and self-command’.<sup>49</sup> When a person follows externally determined standards, he feels a sense of shame. The loss of autonomy produces a loss of dignity and sense of worth.

A sense of identity is established when a person integrates internalised attitudes and values into a stable configuration which continues over time. When a person falls short of her ideals, there is inevitably a degree of identity confusion. This is the result of the disorienting effect of perceiving a discrepancy between her tested self and her ideal identity. She comes to the shameful realisation that she is not the person she thought she was. On the other hand, to live without any standards or values is to live in a state of anomie. It is impossible to establish a sense of identity. One cannot feel ‘real’ in a social sense because it is not possible to connect with others in any meaningful way. This is so because they cannot fix on an identity that is stable and dependable.

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<sup>46</sup> A. Heller, *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>47</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> See G. Thrane, ‘Shame’, pp. 139-166, esp. pp. 139, 152-154, 157-158.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

Thrane argues that shame rather than guilt is the truly moral feeling. 'Those who merely dread the punishing voice of conscience (guilt) are not moral. Only those who love their virtue and dread its loss (shame) are moral.'<sup>50</sup> If the only motivation one has for moral behaviour is the fear of guilty feelings, one's performance of good actions will be marred by the grudging spirit behind them. A person influenced by shame feelings, on the other hand, derives satisfaction from fulfilling his duty. The sense of freedom and of self-worth associated with having nothing to be ashamed of motivates moral behaviour. Further, the capacity to live according to principles is evidence of a firm character. One needs self-command and willpower to act in accord with high ideals.

I consider that Thrane is overly negative in his assessment of the role of guilt and conscience. Buber, as we saw in chapter 7, quite rightly identifies existential guilt as a genuine source of moral motivation. He is careful to point out that a 'vulgar' conscience, one controlled by anxiety and tyrannical demands, is unworthy. His 'greater conscience', the call to act for the good of the social order-of-being, is shaped by a sense of honour and duty. It thus describes a moral life very close to what Thrane has in mind. Existential guilt is, I suggest, an authentic moral feeling.

A sense of honour and responsibility drives moral behaviour, but shame is always lurking in the shadows. As soon as one establishes high standards, moral failure and the associated shame reaction are ever-present possibilities. The idea of liability to shame as a motivation for moral behaviour is closely associated with Carl Schneider's notion of 'discretion-shame'.<sup>51</sup> Discretion-shame is contrasted with 'disgrace-shame'. When a person has done something that she considers unworthy of her best character, there is a feeling of disgrace. She judges that she has acted badly and this is followed by a shame reaction. There is also an experience, observes Schneider, of 'shame felt before'. If discretion-shame is to have ethical value it must be something more than mere emotion. After all, an emotion hardly qualifies as a virtue. Feelings are changeable and unpredictable; the virtues are settled dispositions, character

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>51</sup> See C. Schneider, *Shame, Exposure, and Privacy*, pp. 18-20.

traits. Since discretion-shame, observes Schneider, is closely linked to modesty, there is some suggestion that a sense of shame is more than an emotion.

Modesty is usually considered to be a virtue. A highly developed sensitivity to shame may be thought of as an enduring attitude or character trait. 'Shame, then, is not "just a feeling," but reflects an *order of things*. Furthermore, discretion-shame not only reflects, but sustains, our personal and social ordering of the world' [emphasis in the original].<sup>52</sup>

James Fowler uses the notion of a sense of shame as sustaining social order to link it with conscience.<sup>53</sup> Discretionary shame allows us to maintain our bond with the valued members of a group or community. It funds a capacity for sensitivity, tact and respect for others. The feeling of shame is a peremptory warning against behaviour which will lower one's sense of worth and threaten one's valued place in the group. Over time, one learns to identify the kinds of infringements which trigger shame feelings. In this way, an instinctive tendency to refrain from unworthy actions develops. Since discretionary shame incorporates these instinctive evaluative responses and the moral imagination, it plays an important role, concludes Fowler, in the formation of conscience. It is interesting to note that while Buber links the formation of conscience to existential guilt, Fowler associates it with shame. This serves to reinforce a fact we identified above, namely that in the moral sphere there is a good deal of overlap between guilt and shame. Buber's 'greater' conscience, shame and guilt are all inextricably bound together.

In general, it may be said that the conscience is formed by the internalisation of a particular configuration of moral values. There is, however, a form of moral shame which is non-internalised.<sup>54</sup> A person may feel dysphoric because others have cast the withering eye of disapproval on him. This is despite the fact that he has not internalised the moral value lying behind the judgmental reaction. For example, a child may lower her head in shame when her teacher berates her for lying. Yet she can see nothing really wrong with

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> See J. Fowler, *Faithful Change*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>54</sup> See D. Ausubel, 'Relationships Between Shame and Guilt', p. 382.

taking liberties with the truth. After all, it usually avoids the kind of unpleasant situation she currently finds herself in!

It is also the case that one may feel shame without internalising the judgement of moral failure communicated by the group. The moral philosopher, John Deigh, uses the case of Crito (from the *Dialogues* of Plato) to illustrate this situation.<sup>55</sup> Crito is anxious about what the good citizens of Athens will think of him for failing to stop Socrates from killing himself. This is in spite of the fact that he considered Socrates' course of action to be the right one. Not only that, but he did everything that could be expected of a friend in this kind of tragic situation. Nevertheless, he still feels a sense of shame when he is reproached by his fellow citizens for cowardice.

In summary, moral shame has both internalised and non-internalised forms. When one lives according to externally determined values, one forfeits autonomy and suffers a blow to one's dignity and honour. Discretion-shame (along with existential guilt) is a worthy moral feeling; neurotic guilt -- guilt induced by anxiety and associated with external expectations and controls -- is not. Discretionary shame functions to safeguard one's valued place in the group. While moral lapses tend to undermine one's sense of identity, the absence of discretion-shame means that it is impossible to establish an identity.

### **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter an attempt has been made to map the territory of shame. We have seen that shame is evoked when one judges that one has fallen short of an ideal. The fact that the ideal may relate to entities as diverse as social norms, physical appearance, class and culture, abilities and life plans, and moral values indicates a shame family of emotions. Our attention in our research is directed both to inferiority shame and to moral shame (these are the concomitants of failures in presence). A person feels shame when she judges that her personhood is somehow defective, flawed (e.g. she considers that she is boring, or unintelligent). She may also feel shame as a result of a moral lapse. These two

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<sup>55</sup> See J. Deigh, 'Shame and Self-Esteem: A Critique', *Ethics* 93 (Jan. 1983), pp. 225-245, p. 232.

forms of shame were compared and contrasted with the other members in the shame family: situational, aesthetic, and inherited identity shame.

Moral shame has both internalised and non-internalised forms. It is possible to feel shamed by the disapproval of an authority figure or a social group even though one does not feel that one has acted unworthily. This form of shame is also linked to failures in autonomy. When one lives according to externally determined values, one forfeits one's autonomy and registers a drop in self-esteem. A liability to shame is a genuine source for moral motivation; fear of a tyrannical conscience is not (although the role of the 'greater' conscience should be appreciated). An appropriate sense of shame is associated with a sense of honour and self-worth. It also functions to safeguard one's position in a group or community.

A moral transgression will be coloured by both shame and guilt. While these two affects share a considerable area of overlap, they are clearly distinguishable. Guilt relates to *actions* which constitute a violation of a moral code. Shame involves a judgement that the *self* is in some way defective. While guilt can be assuaged by confession and restitution, shame may be transcended only by a fundamental change in the self. Whereas guilt generates a perverse feeling of pride and a sense of power, shame leaves one feeling weak and helpless. Given these distinctions, it is obvious that guilt, contrary to Tomkin's view, is not simply a variant of shame. Erikson's depiction of the historical connectedness between shame and guilt -- oriented around the psychosocial dynamics of the autonomy and initiative crises -- provides a plausible explanation for the fact that the two affects are so often entangled.



## 9. Shame and Failures in Availability in Counselling and in Care

Availability in a relationship produces a sense of well-being and wholeness; it promotes healing and growth. There is, however, another side to the coin. Where there is a distorted presence, a failure to be available, there is a potential for a high level of embarrassment and shame. The level of shame varies in inverse proportion to the level of self-esteem. When a shame-prone personality experiences a lack of attention, a failure in self-giving, she is confirmed in her sense of inferiority and worthlessness. Sadly, she is quite used to having to suffer a nondisposing presence. She tends to expect it; she takes it as confirmation of her inferiority and worthlessness. 'Why should anyone bother extending themselves for my sake?' she thinks. The reaction of a person with a healthy sense of self-worth and a high degree of self-confidence on the receiving end of inattention and a lack of respect is quite different. She may experience a moment of self-doubt and the associated shame feelings, but because she is assured of her worth as a person she will eventually refer the problem to the other person. The slight feeling of shame will soon be overcome by a strong sense of indignation and anger. She does not expect this sort of treatment and she will tell the offender so. She will tend to think less of the other, not of herself. All this indicates the importance of the shame-prone personality -- sometimes referred to as a narcissistic personality<sup>1</sup> -- for our discussion. While shame is a factor in every experience of nondisposability, it looms large when the person on the receiving end is a narcissist.

In this chapter, we will begin by reflecting on a report of therapeutic work with an obese woman called 'Betty'. The therapist has a particularly strong prejudice against overweight persons and as a consequence he is anything but empathic in his relationship with her. We will see that in trying to hide his negative feelings about her and her obesity, far from maintaining rapport, he

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<sup>1</sup> We discussed the relationship between shame and narcissism in chapter 1. Recall that there we observed that there is a substantial body of literature in which shame is identified as one of the prominent features of the narcissistic personality disorder.

weakens it. His 'constancy', to use Marcel's term for a pretence of presence, reinforces Betty's belief that she is inferior, flawed. And when he becomes aware of his failing, he too feels shame (although his shame is moral in nature, whereas hers is an inferiority shame) .

We will next consider the way in which a preoccupation with counselling technique can sometimes militate against availability. When a counsellor is more in love with theory, it will be argued, than with his clients, he falls into what might be called 'technocracy'. When technology rules, self-giving fails. And where there is a failure in availability, the shame feelings in the counsellee are reinforced. 'Of course', she thinks, 'he wouldn't really care about someone like me.'

Having reflected on failures in availability in counselling, we will move to a consideration of the dynamics associated with a nonavailable presence in pastoral visitation. Here our emphasis will shift from the shame of the recipient of care to that of the care-giver. I will offer the idea that in experiencing a wane in compassion and reduced to the level of a pretence of availability (Marcel's problem of fidelity in care), a pastor may feel the pangs of shame. However, the fact that he has expressed his faithfulness, I will further suggest, through providing the best care he can in spite of not feeling particularly compassionate, is reason for a counter-balancing sense of pride.

We begin our explorations, though, in the realm of counselling process. Here we will attempt to learn, first of all, from the candid report of certain 'blind spots' from a therapist who is usually empathic and compassionate.

### ***IN BETTY'S CASE: THE SHAME POTENTIAL IN CONSTANCY***

Counsellors are, of course, expected to be supportive and affirming. Indeed, they expect this of themselves. Given this, when a counsellor feels a block with his client there is a temptation to feign empathy, to pretend that he prizes the counsellee. In Marcel's language, a pretence of presence is constancy. Constancy in a counsellor is almost always easily picked up by the client and will disrupt the rapport in the counselling relationship.

The person featured in our case study, Betty<sup>2</sup> (see chapter 6 above), has low self-esteem and suffers from depression and feelings of inferiority. Her distress and psychological dysfunction is related largely to her obesity. Persons like Betty who have a high propensity for shame do not expect to be valued and admired. Depending on the company they are in, they tend to anticipate either blunt rejection or polite attempts to feign interest. With reference to the latter case, they develop a particularly keen sense for signals indicating boredom and inattention. When a counsellor attempts to fake presence, the shame-prone counsellee will very easily and very quickly see through it. The realisation of pretence, of course, reinforces her tendency to shame. Marcel poignantly expresses the loss associated with this experience: '[S]omething has been shattered [in the person], a certain value has been lost and ...what remains is only straw....'<sup>3</sup>

Irvin Yalom, as we noted in chapter 2, is committed to a relational approach to counselling. In his writings, he emphasises the therapeutic value in compassion, presence and availability. He describes his commitment thus:

Once I accept someone for treatment, I commit myself to stand by that person: to spend all the time and all the energy that proves necessary for the patient's improvement; and most of all, to relate to the patient in an intimate, authentic manner.<sup>4</sup>

To his great credit, he has been brave enough to record a case in which for a good deal of time he was anything but intimate and authentic. In his work with Betty he tries to hide the fact that he finds obesity deeply offensive and disgusting. He realises that while he is not alone in his bias, '[his] contempt surpasses all cultural norms'. '[W]hen I see a fat lady eat', he says, 'I move down a couple of rungs on the ladder of human understanding. I want to tear the food away. To push her face into the ice cream. "Stop stuffing yourself! Haven't you had enough, for Chrissakes?" I'd like to wire her jaws shut!'<sup>5</sup>

It is not surprising that Betty received a less than warm and intimate reception from her new therapist when she arrived! She had been referred by Dr.

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<sup>2</sup> See I. Yalom, *Love's Executioner* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), chp 3.

<sup>3</sup> Marcel, 'Creative Fidelity', in *Creative Fidelity*, p. 155.

<sup>4</sup> Yalom, *Love's Executioner*, p. 91.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

Farber, who felt that 'she was not receptive to psychotherapeutic intervention'. Actually, he found her so boring that he would frequently fall asleep during sessions! Initially, Yalom had a similar experience:

Every one of my notes of these early sessions contains phrases such as: "Another boring session"; "Looked at the clock about every three minutes today"; "The most boring patient I have ever seen"; "Almost fell asleep today -- had to sit up in my chair to stay awake"; "Almost fell off my chair today."<sup>6</sup>

In a desperate attempt to gain the interest of her therapist, or anyone else for that matter, Betty seeks to entertain with (unfunny) jokes and a host of (dull) stories 'spiced up' with various accents and impersonations.<sup>7</sup> Here is a classic 'jolly fat lady' routine. Tragically, Betty is socially isolated and prone to deep depression.<sup>8</sup>

In the initial stages of the therapy, Yalom feigned compassion and interest. I would term this stage *the period of constancy*. There would come, however, *a time of availability*. The change was precipitated by Yalom's challenge to Betty concerning her insistence on keeping their conversations at the level of 'cocktail chatter'. She had the courage to respond to the confrontation, and as she began to attempt disclosure, to share her pain in a real way (she dropped the accents and the giggling), her therapist found himself engaging with her; he was even able to find a degree of empathy.

I was less bored now. I looked at the clock less frequently and once in a while checked the time during Betty's hour not, as before, to count the number of minutes I had yet to endure, but to see whether sufficient time remained to open up a new issue.

Nor was it necessary to sweep from my mind derogatory thoughts about her appearance. I no longer noticed her body and, instead, looked into her eyes. In fact, I noted with surprise the first stirrings of empathy within me. When Betty told me about going to a western bar where two rednecks sidled up behind her and mocked her by mooing like a cow, I felt outraged for her and told her so.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 90, 97.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

The dialogue between Betty and Yalom deepened over time, and together they worked through the issues which were causing her so much distress: shame, social isolation, depression and her obesity. Along with a boost to Betty's self-esteem came a very significant weight-loss. A course of therapy which had such an unpromising beginning, ended most satisfactorily.

What is particularly significant about this case from our point of view is the fact that Yalom, in the initial stages, tried to act the part of the empathic, authentic, intimate therapist. Further, he would later pride himself on the fact that he had actually carried off his charade. It is no mean feat to dress up constancy in the guise of the real thing, availability. Yalom records that he felt a sense of elation and relief; he really had got away with it. Or so he thought.

Our final three hours were devoted to work on Betty's distress at our impending separation. What she had feared at the very onset of treatment had come to pass: she had allowed herself to feel deeply about me and was now going to lose me....I attempted to address Betty's despair, and her belief that once she left me all our work would come to naught, by reminding her that her growth resided neither in me nor in any outside object, but was a part of her, a part she would take with her....To drive my point home, I attempted, in our final session, to use myself as an example.

"It's the same with me, Betty. I'll miss our meetings. But I'm changed as a result of knowing you\_\_\_\_\_"

She had been crying, her eyes downcast, but at my words she stopped sobbing and looked toward me, expectantly.

"And, even, though we won't meet again, I'll still retain that change."

"What change?"

"Well, as I mentioned to you, I hadn't had much professional experience with....er.....with the problem of obesity\_\_\_\_\_" I noted Betty's eyes drop with disappointment and silently berated myself for being so impersonal.

"Well, what I mean is that I hadn't worked before with heavy patients, and I've gotten a new appreciation for the problems of\_\_\_\_\_" I could see from her expression that she was sinking even deeper into disappointment. "What I mean is that my attitude about obesity has changed a lot. When we started I personally didn't feel comfortable with obese people\_\_\_\_\_"

In unusually feisty terms, Betty interrupted me. "Ho! ho! ho! "Didn't feel comfortable"\_\_\_\_that's putting it mildly. Do you know that for the first six months you hardly ever looked at me? And in a whole year and a half you've never--not once--touched me? Not even for a handshake!"

My heart sank. My God, she's right! I *have* never touched her. I *simply* hadn't realized it. And I guess I didn't look at her very often, either. I hadn't expected her to notice! [emphasis added]<sup>10</sup>

The expression 'my heart sank' says it all. Here is a therapist who prides himself on his genuineness, presence and empathy, and his client is laughing at his pitiful attempt to hide his true feelings and to act the part of the caring therapist. Yalom is clearly ashamed of himself and his play-acting.

Given the fact that she saw through the charade, why, one might ask, did Betty continue to hand over good money. There are other therapists around. When Yalom asked Betty why she stayed, one reason was her low expectancy of what others will give to her.

"...[R]emember that I'm used to it. It's not like I expect anything more. Everyone treats me that way. People hate my looks. No one *ever* touches me.....And, even though you wouldn't look at me, you at least seemed interested in what I had to say--no, no, that's not right--you were interested in what I *could* or *might* say if I stopped being so jolly. Actually, that was helpful. Also, you didn't fall asleep. That was an improvement on Dr. Farber."<sup>11</sup>

There are at least *four important insights* which can be gleaned from this case. The first is that shame-prone persons expect to be treated badly. Consequently, Betty's expectancy of what Yalom would and should give her was initially very low. While he was more absent than present during the first six months, the fact that he could at least keep his eyes open was encouraging! Constancy, a pretence of self-giving, may be enough to keep a shame-dominated person in a counselling relationship, but it is not enough to facilitate the overcoming of her deep feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. It was Yalom's movement from constancy to availability which facilitated a healing dialogue. The whole complexion of the relationship changed when he found himself able to prize Betty.

It is instructive, secondly, to reflect on the impetus for this progression to genuine presence. Yalom found himself able to engage more fully with Betty when she was prepared to risk disclosure, to drop the 'jolly fat lady' act and be

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 114-116.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 116.



honest and authentic. The positive change in Betty awakened Yalom's 'presential' (a word coined by Marcel) capacities. His repulsion from obese women, together with his client's talent for boring chatter, resulted in a solid block to his natural tendency to be available. Betty's movement towards real presence helped clear away this obstruction to the flow of Yalom's compassion, empathy and intimacy.

It is interesting to contrast this change with the movement in another leading psychotherapist, Heinz Kohut, in the course of his involvement in the treatment of a man with narcissistic personality disorder.<sup>12</sup> The case study refers to his supervision of an analyst in training whose patient was a lonely man suffering from deep feelings of shame and emptiness. In his childhood, the man had to contend with a 'bizarre and unpredictable yet powerful mother' and 'the emotional distance of his more humanly predictable but weak and retiring father'. At one point in the analysis, the patient gave accounts of his profound cruelty to animals. This was something which, Kohut reports, 'strained our empathic capacity, our tolerance, to the utmost'. While the patient usually pampered his cats, on occasion he would throw them against the wall. Kohut interpreted this bizarre and cruel behaviour as 'a wordless description of how he had felt as a child'. He had been cruelly tossed around by an unpredictable and, at times, deeply hurtful mother. Just when he would expect understanding and support, which she could sometimes give, she would react with ridicule and contempt. This interpretation of the behaviour was affirming or 'mirroring' for the patient. It also, I think, helped the analysts in their attempts to affirm a man whose actions they found repulsive. The extent of their struggle to understand is indicated by Kohut when he reports:

[W]e felt close to abandoning the analyst's tolerant attitude of readiness for empathic comprehension. We felt close, in other words, to following the example of those therapists who have reported wholesome consequences when, in analogous circumstances, they openly expressed their indignation and, as they saw it, reacted honestly and appropriately to a patient's wrongdoings. We did not take this road, but gritted our teeth and continued to attempt to understand.....<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Kohut, 'The Psychoanalyst in the Community of Scholars', in P. Ornstein ed., *The Search for the Self*, vol. 2, pp. 685-724, p. 710ff.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 710.

In this instance, the change took place *entirely within the therapist*. Initially, Kohut was almost overwhelmed by his feelings of revulsion and indignation. In his attempt to mirror he found himself 'gritting his teeth'. His formulation of an empathic interpretation helped him reframe his view of his patient. Seeing the behaviour of this lonely, wounded man as an acting-out of the cruel 'tossing about' he had experienced as a child made it easier for him to understand. Although Kohut does not explicitly say so, it is reasonable to think that after this insight empathic responses would come more freely and spontaneously. Nothing had changed in the patient. He had not given up his cruelty to his cats. It was Kohut's capacity for empathic reframing which helped him move beyond his feelings of revulsion to a genuine desire to mirror.

Kohut's gritting of the teeth, progressing now to our third insight, is matched by Yalom's 'inner groans'<sup>14</sup> in listening to Betty's surface chatter. Attempting to hide one's negative reactions, far from maintaining rapport, will weaken it. The act of concealment will rarely, if ever, be successful. The chances are, then, that the counsellee will lose confidence in the counsellor as a person of honesty and integrity. Further, it is very likely that the aim of protecting the feelings of the counsellee will fail. Sensing the displeasure of the counsellor, shame feelings will be reinforced in the counsellee. She will take it as yet another indication of her inferiority.

As we have seen, shame-prone persons develop a keen sense for veiled signals of disinterest or disapproval. It is really not possible to hide behind a pretence of availability when one is with a narcissist (or anyone else for that matter). 'Ho! ho! ho!', says Betty in response to Yalom's careless handling of the truth concerning his presence with her. An experienced and gifted therapist he may be, but he still felt the need to attempt a concealment of his true feelings about his client. He was afraid of broaching the issue of his prejudice against overweight women. We have all been exposed to Rogers' relentless insistence on congruence; cases like this, along with our own counselling and relational experiences, remind us just how difficult it can be sometimes.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

While Yalom was unable to raise the shameful fact of his own prejudices, he did tackle the difficult issue of Betty's dull, surface conversation. It is instructive to follow Yalom's mental processes as he attempts to formulate a line of approach.

I dared not use the word *boring*--far too vague and too pejorative. I needed to be precise and constructive. I asked myself what, exactly, was boring about Betty, and identified two obvious characteristics. First of all, she never revealed anything intimate about herself. Second, there was her damned giggling, her forced gaiety, her reluctance to be appropriately serious.

It would be difficult to make her aware of these characteristics without hurting her. I decided upon a general strategy: my basic position would be that I wanted to get closer to her but that her behavioral traits got in the way. I thought it would be difficult for her to take offense with my criticism of her behavior in that context.<sup>15</sup>

One can understand Yalom's fear of hurting Betty. A counsellor, and this brings us to our fourth and final insight, will naturally be reluctant to probe those issues which go to the heart of the counsellee's shame experience. It seems that in addressing the behaviours which manifest the inadequacy and failings of the person, her shame will be heightened rather than healed. The paradox in the situation is, however, that in temporarily intensifying shame the way is opened to overcome it.<sup>16</sup> When a person is brave enough to respond to the challenge and expose her shameful self to the counsellor, and he in turn responds with acceptance, affirmation, and admiration, the deadly grip of shame is forced open.

One is reminded of the fact that Jesus was secure enough in himself, and confident enough in the healing power of his presence, to go directly to a person's sense of shame. The woman at the well (Jn. 4:3-30) comes alone at noon to collect water. Women would typically come in groups and at an earlier or later hour. Perhaps, as a result of her morally suspect past, she experiences a public shame and the sense of isolation that goes with it. She clearly wants to avoid the taunts of those who think of themselves as morally superior. Jesus wastes little time in going right to the heart of her guilt and shame: 'Go and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. D. Capps, *Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), pp. 91-92.

bring your husband', he says (v. 16). The New Testament scholar, Don Carson, observes that this fact is sometimes overlooked in treatments of this well-known passage. Having noted the flexibility is Jesus' dialogical approach, he comments that '[n]o less startling (though more often overlooked) is the manner in which Jesus commonly drives to the individual's greatest sin, hopelessness, guilt, despair, need.'<sup>17</sup>

To return to our counselling 'text', we can sum up this way. In trying to hide his negative feelings about Betty and her obesity, Yalom, far from maintaining rapport, actually weakened it. His constancy reinforced Betty's feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. And when he became aware of his failing, he too felt shame (although his shame in this instance is moral in nature, whereas hers is an inferiority shame). In a counselling relationship *there is nowhere to hide*. It is destructive to the counselling process to attempt to hide one's blind spots and to hide from painful issues. Both genuineness and the exposure of shame are essential in the work of healing narcissistic injury.

Above we worked with a report by a secular therapist. We now turn our attention to counselling in a congregational context. Here we will explore the shame-inducing potential in 'technocracy'.

### ***COUNSELLING 'TECHNOCRACY' AS A FORM OF NONAVAILABILITY***

Given that we live in a 'therapeutic culture', it is to be expected that some ministers at least will want to develop good counselling skills. In itself, this is a good thing. It becomes problematical, however, when a minister becomes so intent on the technical side of his counselling that he fails to tune-in to the very basic needs of those he seeks to help. In this case, the minister's presence is distorted. A 'failed wholeness' and shame rather than unity and a sense of hope characterise the pastoral relationship. In the following case study,<sup>18</sup> the pastor wonders whether the failure in rapport with his parishioner, Mrs. T., was caused by his faulty counselling technique. The question he should

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<sup>17</sup> D. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 1991), p. 221.

<sup>18</sup> The case study is taken from N. Cryer and J. Vanhinger eds., *Casebook in Pastoral Counseling* (Nshville: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 167-171.

have asked, I suggest, is: Did I give enough of myself? What she needed from him was empathy, compassion, and presence.

Mrs. T. has undergone three or four operations in the past three years. She has to cope with the fact that at almost any time she may have to face surgery again.

**Pastor:** Mrs. T., it's good to see you again. I had just heard that you had gone to C\_\_\_\_\_ to the hospital, and the next day heard that you were home again. Are you feeling pretty well again?

**Mrs. T.:** Oh, I'm as well as I can ever expect to be, I guess. Pete told me I ought to let you know I was going into hospital, but I said never mind. This hospital business is getting to be an old thing with me, it seems like.

**Pastor:** Don't tell me you're getting used to being in the hospital!

**Mrs. T.:** Oh, no, nothing like that. But I just didn't want to bother you with all my troubles. And to tell you the truth, I didn't feel as if it would do much good whether you knew it or not. I've just about lost all my faith, after all those operations, all I've been through.

**Pastor:** You've suffered so much that now it's hard to believe in God, is that it?

**Mrs. T.:** Well, sort of. Of course, I believe there is a God--I just don't feel much like having faith in God, though. I've had so much trouble, seems like, and I wonder what all this stuff about faith in God--what good it has done me.

**Pastor:** It makes you feel as if God has let you down.

**Mrs. T.:** That's about it. I just began feeling as if I wasn't going to ask him to make me well again. I've prayed so much and it didn't do much good. We're supposed to have faith, and all that, but I still haven't got my real health. But you know, I did pray in the hospital. There was another woman there, she had it so much worse than I did, I prayed for her all the time--I couldn't help it.

**Pastor:** So you found someone who seemed to be suffering more than you and found that you had to pray for her. This was a kind of faith that seemed even bigger than your doubts, wasn't it?

**Mrs. T.:** I suppose so. But I still didn't--I still don't have any faith for myself. You know what I mean. It don't seem real for me. Why should I have to suffer so? Then there's Julie. It seems now like she will be able to see pretty good, but why did I have to worry about her for so long?

**Pastor:** You feel as if you've had more than your share of worry and pain.

**Mrs. T.:** Well, I've had a lot of it. Oh, the pain isn't so bad, but it's just knowing I might have to go back and have it done all over again; that's the discouraging part. That's why I've lost my faith. Then there's Pete. You know, Mr. T., you wouldn't believe it, but that man used to be in church every Sunday. Now he don't go hardly at all, and he acts like I'm a burden to him, with all these doctor and hospital bills. He used to be a real help to me, but now I guess he thinks I cost him too much money. (*Here she seemed close to tears.*) The girls and I

try to get him to go to church, but he just won't do it. And it's pretty hard for me to go by myself.

**Pastor:** You feel then that Pete resents all your medical expenses.

**Mrs. T:** Yes, and Julie's too.

**Pastor:** And you wonder why he no longer seems to want to go to church.

**Mrs. T.:** Yes. He just sort of laughs at church now, and he used to go every Sunday. Sometimes he'd make me go when I'd thought I'd stay home, and now I can't get him to go hardly at all. He doesn't seem to have faith anymore. Maybe that's why I've lost mine. Gee, it used to be so much better! When the girls were little and before Julie's eyes went bad and before I was sick so much. Seemed like we were closer then, and now I don't know what's going to happen to us.

**Pastor:** Things seem pretty dark to you now.

**Mrs. T.:** Yes, they do. Oh, of course, I'll get to feeling better, and then I won't be so gloomy. Thank you for calling, Pastor. You'll be sorry you came, I was so down in the dumps.

**Pastor:** That's all right, Mrs. T. Feel free to call on me any time, and I'd be glad to talk with you or Pete in my study any time you like.

**Mrs. T.:** Oh, you'll never get Pete there. Me, I'll be all right, when I get to feeling better. Good-by.

The pastor made a second call two weeks later. He reports that Mrs. T. made only small talk, and that when he asked her about her faith she responded by commenting that she thought it was 'going to be all right'. 'I got the feeling', says the pastor, 'that she was uneasy and unwilling to talk with me, so after a few more remarks, I left.'<sup>19</sup> In reflecting on the two visits, the pastor has this to say:

I felt as if I had a good rapport with Mrs. T. during that first call, but the second call seemed to me to be a complete failure. Why this failure? ....Very probably....my technique was somewhat faulty, or I may have been overly anxious to help her. My second question, however, is theoretical. Must we not allow for human freedom and agree that there are those who will refuse help, be it ever so skillfully offered?<sup>20</sup>

The pastor wonders whether the failed relationship can be put down to faulty technique. He seems to be suggesting, on the other hand, that he is actually a skilled counsellor and that the visits were unsatisfactory because Mrs. T. simply did not want help. He would be better served, perhaps, to focus on whether or not he allowed himself to become aware of the claim Mrs. T. was making on

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 169.



him. She was asking him, I believe, to be prepared to enter into her pain and struggle, and into the associated faith crisis, in a real way. She needed him to give of himself in the dialogue rather than simply offering stock-standard counselling responses in a detached manner. He is clearly very intent on picking up on Mrs. T's feelings and reflecting them back to her, but his responses seem to lack 'heart'. It is of course impossible to be sure about this with only the printed page to work with. Still, I wonder if it is the case that while feelings have been identified and appropriate responses offered, there has been no genuine meeting between Mrs. T. and the pastor. Carroll Wise's comments on this case reflect my intuition. He poses these questions: 'Were [the pastor's] reflections of feeling, and other comments, just mechanical statements, or in responding in this way, did he give something of himself? Did he feel a deep love for this woman and a deep concern about her problems, and did he have any confidence in her inner capacities to grow to the place where she could deal more creatively with her situation?'<sup>21</sup>

It is a very good thing for pastors and counsellors to reflect from time to time about their technique and their application of personality theory. If, however, they are more in love with theory than with their clients, they will fall into what might be called 'technocracy'. They have allowed technique and theory to dominate their work. When technology rules, there cannot be real compassion and empathy.

There is no indication of whether or not Mrs. T. has a propensity for shame. She may simply have been annoyed by her pastor's detached, almost mechanical, way of responding to her pain. In a person with low self-esteem, however, there is a tendency to refer a lack of warmth and caring to the self and its failings. 'Of course he wouldn't', she thinks, 'care about a person like me. No one really cares about me.' The pastor's failure to dispose of himself serves to reinforce her tendency to shame.

We now shift our attention from the counselling context to that of pastoral visitation. Whereas above we were directing our attention primarily to

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

the shame of the recipient of care, now we focus on nonavailability as a source of shame feelings for the care-giver.

### ***THE PROBLEM OF FIDELITY AND THE SHAME OF THE PASTOR***

The main idea we are working with in this chapter is that where there is a failure in availability on the part of the provider of care there is a potential for shame. Thus far, we have emphasised the shame reaction in the recipient of care. When a counsellor is inattentive and/or feigns affirmation it is likely that the tendency to shame in the counsellee will be strengthened. The negative feelings she struggles with -- inferiority, inadequacy, and worthlessness -- will be reinforced.

What about the counsellor? When he becomes aware of his distorted presence, as Irvin Yalom did, he may well feel shame also. It is a different variety of shame, though, to that experienced by the counsellee. Hers is inferiority shame; his is moral shame. He realises that he has fallen short of his ideal of genuine presence, has harmed his client, and consequently feels ashamed.

I want at this point to explore further the shame dynamics in the care provider by referring to a specific case, namely the emotional reaction a pastor may feel as a consequence of being caught in Marcel's 'problem of fidelity'.

Our attention here is given to pastoral visitation. I will suggest that as a result of the ebb and flow of compassion a pastoral visitor inevitably experiences, she is prone to a shame reaction. However, I will also contend that in being faithful to her pastoral calling and in endeavouring to be fully available even though her feelings of compassion may not be particularly strong, she is entitled to feel good about herself.

Let us cast our minds back to chapter 3 where we reflected on Marcel's struggle to reconcile himself to the fact that a promise of presence is sometimes followed by a drop in one's level of disposability. This is the problem of fidelity. How is it possible, he asks, to make a promise of availability when one knows that the compassionate feelings one has today may all but be gone

tomorrow? We saw how he uses the example of a promise of a return visit to a friend who is dying in a nursing home. It is a commitment 'moved by a wave of pity'. By the time he is ready for the next visit, however, the wave has subsided. This fact produces in Marcel an inner struggle. At first, he reflects, '[m]y whole being was concentrated into an irresistible impulse towards him, a wild longing to help him, to show him that I was on his side, that his sufferings were mine.'<sup>22</sup> But how different he feels now. 'I have to recognize that this impulse no longer exists, and it is no longer in my power to do more than imitate it by a pretence which some part of me refuses to swallow.'<sup>23</sup>

This last expression indicates constancy. His reflection that it is a pretence which he cannot swallow points to the experience of shame. He feels a sense of unworthiness in acting out before his friend a show of compassion. Indeed, Marcel actually uses the word 'shame' to describe this distressing ebb and flow of moods.

The silence I feel within me is strangely different from that other cry of pity from the heart; yet it does not seem to me altogether mysterious. I can find a good enough explanation for it in myself and the rhythm of my moods. But what is the good? Proust was right: we are not at our own disposal. There is a part of our being to which strange, perhaps not altogether conceivable, conditions give us sudden access; the key is in our hands for a second; and a few minutes later the door is shut again and the key disappears. I must accept this fact *with shame and sorrow* [emphasis added].<sup>24</sup>

I believe that most, if not all, pastors struggle with this problem of fidelity as described by Marcel. We are not at our own disposal; the key is in the hand for just a second and then the door closes. There may be those with a rare capacity for compassion who feel the tension only slightly and on rare occasions. Most of us engaged in the ministry of care, though, find ourselves plagued by a nagging, often non-thematized, sense of unworthiness. The shame feeling, I suggest, is usually not identified. A minister will experience a vague feeling of uneasiness associated with the sense that his act of care lacks authenticity, and at the same time may be unable to thematize the dynamics

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<sup>22</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, p. 48.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

associated with the distress. Marcel's analysis provides us with the insight we need. There is for those engaged in pastoral care an unavoidable 'rhythm of moods' which necessitates a pretence of availability. It is this sham form of being-with-the-other which generates the shame feelings.

Insight is always liberating. The fact that one is aware of the dynamics behind these vague and unsettling feelings of unworthiness helps to keep them within appropriate limits. A pastor's sense of shame, moreover, should be balanced by an awareness that she is in fact expressing faithfulness despite the fact that her feeling-state militates against a caring presence. It may be that the level of compassion she is feeling is low at the moment, but nevertheless she is offering the best care she can. This should provide a boost to her self-esteem.

The problem of fidelity, as it relates to acts of care, carries with it what might be called a *bipolar affective dynamic*. On the one hand, the recession in the tide of compassion, carrying with it as it does a fall into a pretence of availability, may produce a sense of shame. On the other, there is also a wholesome sense of pride associated with the fact that one has been faithful, despite the counter-urges, to one's commitment to the provision of care.

### **CONCLUSION**

We began by reflecting on the movement in a therapeutic relationship from constancy to availability. In trying to hide his negative feelings about Betty and her obesity, Yalom, far from maintaining rapport, actually weakened it. His constancy reinforced Betty's belief that she is inferior, defective. And when he became aware of his failing, he too felt shame (although his shame was moral in nature, whereas hers is an inferiority shame). In a counselling relationship there is nowhere to hide. It is destructive to the counselling process to attempt to hide one's blind spots and to hide from painful issues. Both genuineness and the exposure of shame are essential in the work of healing narcissistic injury.

Next, we identified 'technocracy', a preoccupation with counselling technique, as a form of nondisposability. A pastor may fall in love with the latest therapeutic techniques, but may forget to love his people. Where there should be an experience of unity and hope in his pastoral relationships, he will find only the 'failed wholeness' that is shame.

We also discussed the relationship between shame and nonavailability in the context of pastoral visitation. Connections were made between Marcel's reflections on the problem of fidelity and what we called a bipolar affective dynamic. A recession in the tide of compassion results in a pretence of availability. This may produce feelings of inauthenticity and unworthiness. Constancy generates shame. On the other hand, a recognition of the fact that one has dismissed all counter-urges and has chosen to be with the other in her need produces a boost to self-esteem.

## 10. Shame and Disconfirmation in Counselling and in Care

There are those who hold the view that while counselling may sometimes not do any good, it cannot hurt. In fact, a counsellor, even an experienced one, *can* do harm to her clients. Psychotherapists Russell Meares and Robert Hobson have identified and discussed this possibility, and have coined the term, *the persecutory therapist*.<sup>1</sup> They use the following categories to describe this lamentable phenomenon in therapy: intrusion, derogation, invalidation of experience, opaqueness of the therapist, the untenable situation, and the persecutory spiral. Our major concern in this chapter is the establishment of links between various forms of disconfirming presence on the part of the counsellor and shame reactions in the counsellee. With reference to the six features identified by Meares and Hobson, the first two are immediately suggestive of shame inducement. Probing into hidden secrets (intrusion) and launching covert attacks on a person's worth (derogation) are obviously shaming. I intend to develop and expand these categories by connecting them with the notion of disconfirmation.

I also want to complement the work of Meares and Hobson by adding a category, namely, *reductionism*. Confirmation involves a capacity to appreciate and affirm uniqueness. There is a tendency in some counsellors to view those they see through a grid of personality theory. It will be argued that this approach results in reductionism; the particularity of the counsellee is lost. Further, we will discuss the fact that the counsellee records this subjection to ready-made psychological categories as a devaluing of his worth as a person.

In the final section of the chapter, we will shift our attention from the counselling context to that of care in the parish. Our focus will be on the shame associated with a turning away from the struggle of a confirming dialogue. Whereas in discussing counselling we will be concerning ourselves with the

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<sup>1</sup> See R. Meares and R. Hobson, 'The Persecutory Therapist', *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 50 (1977), pp. 349-359.



shame feelings of the recipient of care, here we will concentrate on the shame of the person offering care, *viz.*, the pastor.

Before proceeding to a discussion of shame and a disconfirming therapeutic style, a word needs to be said about the primary case study material we will be using. Meares and Hobson point out that it is rare to find a client's account of her experience with therapy. They do, however, identify one such source, namely, the journals of Anaïs Nin.<sup>2</sup> Since we will be making extensive use of her reflections on her treatments by Drs. René Allendy (founder of the French Psychoanalytic Society) and Otto Rank (a one time special protégé of Freud), it will be well to begin with a portrait of this interesting and insightful woman.

### ***SHAME AND 'PERSECUTION' IN COUNSELLING***

#### ***A Biographical and Psychological Sketch of Anaïs Nin***

Anaïs Nin was born in Neuilly, a suburb of Paris. As a child she accompanied her father, the famous Spanish composer-pianist Joaquin Nin, on concert tours all over Europe. In her teens, long after her father had left the family, she broke out of the demoralising confines of a poor existence with her Danish-born mother in New York to become an artists' model and later, a Spanish dancer. As a novice writer, she made her way back to Paris with its literary and cultural atmosphere. In 1929 she settled at Louveciennes and there, as after the outbreak of World War II in her apartment in New York's Greenwich Village, she welcomed a host of little known, but destined to be famous, creative people.

Anaïs was the friend and confidante to important literary figures such as Henry Miller and Antonin Artaud. In the case of the former, she was more than a friend; she was also a lover. Her relationship with Miller was taut and volatile. Anaïs lived an intense and multi-dimensional life, moving with zest and vitality through the cosmopolitan world of art and society.

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<sup>2</sup> A. Nin, *The Journals of Anaïs Nin, 1931-1934*, G. Stuhlmann ed. (London: Peter Owen, 1966).

While one recognises that it is not possible to develop psychological categories with any degree of certainty from a collection of remarks and reflections in a personal journal (even one as detailed as Nin's), it does seem possible to identify a number of quite clear indications by Anaïs of (a mild at least) narcissistic disturbance. Recall that we alluded to narcissistic personality disorder in chapter 2 where we discussed the work of Heinz Kohut. The symptoms include inferiority feelings, propensity for embarrassment, shame, depression, and a feeling of not being fully real. Kohut attributes the condition to acute empathic failures on the part of 'selfobjects' (parents and caregivers). His clinical experience led him to the conclusion that what narcissists most need is to admire (or idealise) and to be admired (or 'mirrored'). An indication that Anaïs suffered with narcissistic personality disorder is found in an entry in her journal referring to inferiority feelings. She identifies a lack of self-confidence as a major source of distress in her life:

[With Dr. Allendy] I talked about my work, and my life in general. I said I had always been very independent and had never leaned on anyone.  
Dr. Allendy said, "In spite of that, you seem to lack confidence." He had touched a sensitive spot. Confidence!<sup>3</sup>

This lack of confidence she relates to her figure. She feels inferior when she compares herself to women who are well-endowed. Men only love 'big, healthy women with enormous breasts', she laments.<sup>4</sup> She recalls the Spanish proverb quoted often by her mother, 'Bones are for the dogs.' To compensate for what she perceives as physical undesirability, she decided early to shape her persona around her artistic gifts. 'It was to forget this [a petite body] that I decided to be an artist, or writer, to be interesting, charming, accomplished. I was not sure of being beautiful enough...'<sup>5</sup>

A further indication of narcissism is the way in which Anaïs recalls for her analyst the painful experience associated with the extreme empathic failures of her father:

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<sup>3</sup> A. Nin, *The Journals*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

My father did not want a girl. My father was over-critical. He was never satisfied, never pleased. I never remember a compliment or a caress from him. At home, only scenes, quarrels, beatings. And his hard blue eyes on us, looking for flaws. When I was ill with typhoid fever, almost dying, all he could say was: "Now you are ugly, how ugly you are."<sup>6</sup>

As writers on narcissism repeatedly observe, in reaction to these traumatic childhood narcissistic injuries a person usually develops an intense craving for affirmation and approval.<sup>7</sup> This was certainly the case with Anaïs. She acknowledges her fear of being hurt and laments over the associated need for constant confirmation of affection. 'I despise my own hypersensitiveness', she writes, 'which requires so much reassurance. It is certainly abnormal to crave so much to be loved and understood.'<sup>8</sup>

In order to develop a full and accurate picture of a person's psychopathology it is necessary to spend many hours in face-to-face conversation. All we have before us is a small collection of personal, psychologically-oriented reflections. And yet one cannot help but be struck by the appearance of a number of classic symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder. The notes of a propensity for shame seem to be sounded clearly enough to be recognised. We turn now to a consideration of the way Anaïs felt shamed by the intrusive presence of Dr. Allendy.

### ***Intrusion: Shame and 'The Look' of the Counsellor***

Psychotherapists have long recognised the existence of what might be called a 'pathogenic secret'. 'As soon as man was capable of conceiving the idea of sin', writes Carl Jung, 'he had recourse to psychic concealment -- or, to put it in analytical language, repressions arose. Anything that is concealed is a secret. The maintenance of secrets acts like a psychic poison which alienates their

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, D. Capps, *The Depleted Self* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 14-15; R. Hutch, 'Confessing the Dying Within', *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1994), pp. 341-354, pp. 347-348; H. Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971), chp. 5, esp. pp. 114-116, and idem, *The Restoration of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1977), chp. 4.

<sup>8</sup> A. Nin, *The Journals*, p. 77.

possessor from the community.’<sup>9</sup> Such a secret is harmful because it is guilt-laden. The ‘cathartic method’ consists in helping a person bring the repressed material to the surface. When it is exposed, the pathological force of the secret is weakened and emotional healing begins.

There is, however, as Russell Meares<sup>10</sup> has observed, another kind of secret. This secret is not guilt-laden ideo-affective content but rather a constellation of ideas that the person feels constitutes the substance of the self. To share these intimate thoughts is somehow to lose the self. Meares uses the words of a shy, ill-educated and somewhat depressed woman to illustrate the concept.

I suppose I’m scared that if I talk, there’ll be nothing left to say. Say I told you all my thoughts, ideas and whatsit, it’d be like me piled up beside us, with nothing left to say.<sup>11</sup>

She seems to be afraid of somehow becoming invisible. Meares refers to the fear and anxiety a person like this young woman feels when ‘the secret is out’.<sup>12</sup> Now a part of the self is outside and vulnerable. Others may damage it and then it would be almost like suffering bodily harm. The inner secret is not thought of as something dark which must be hidden (the pathogenic secret), but rather as a cluster of precious ideas which is the substance of one’s existence.

To expose one’s substance to another is to take a great risk. If it is handled roughly, without proper respect and sensitivity, irreparable damage is done to the self. In Buber’s language, the being of the other is disconfirmed. Confirmation involves a double movement of distancing and relating.<sup>13</sup> The distance pole indicates the independence, uniqueness, and particularity of the other. Intimacy, the I-Thou relation, is a togetherness which respects otherness. Confirmation, then, involves respecting, valuing and affirming otherness. In repaying with respect the trust the other places in one by sharing her secret, one

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<sup>9</sup> C.G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1945), p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> See R. Meares, ‘The Secret’, *Psychiatry* 39 (Aug. 1976), pp. 258-265.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>12</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. M. Friedman, *The Confirmation of Otherness in Family, Community and Society* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983), p. 29.

confirms her personhood. Confirmation of the other through a sensitive handling of her secret is the fundamental act in establishing intimacy. 'Secrets are disclosed with care', writes Meares, 'in a developing dialogue with others who can be trusted to share and respect them. They then become the coins of intimacy, and the currency of its transactions.'<sup>14</sup> (One is reminded of Marcel's idea that the sharing of the secret is 'the mainspring of intersubjectivity'.)

A shame-prone person finds intimacy profoundly threatening. She experiences a desperate need to keep the secret which is her inner core hidden away from what is potentially the critical gaze of the other. To be exposed to the judgmental, condemning *look* of another is mortifying. Anaïs remembers with pain the experience of her father's 'hard blue eyes on us, looking for flaws' [emphasis added]. She felt oppressed and dominated by his critical eye. Admiration was only ever indirect. He could never look her straight in the face and speak gentle, affectionate words of affirmation. His communication of his appreciation of her was refracted through a camera lens. '[My father] liked', she writes, 'to take photos of me while I bathed. He always wanted me naked. All his admiration came by way of the camera. His eyes were partly concealed by heavy glasses (he was myopic) and then by the camera lens.'<sup>15</sup>

This partial and inadequate attempt at confirmation could never, however, compensate for his repeated and devastating attacks on her. The 'eyes' would sometimes 'appear' when she was feeling exposed and vulnerable; she felt under attack even when he was not physically present.

[W]hen I gave a concert of Spanish dances in Paris, I imagined I saw his face in the audience. It seemed pale and stern. I stopped in the middle of my dance, frozen, and for an instant I thought I could not continue. The guitarist playing behind me thought I had stage fright and he began to encourage me with shouts and clapping. Later, when I saw my father again, I asked him if he had been at this concert.

He answered me, "No, I was not there, but if I had been I would have disapproved absolutely. I disapprove of a lady being a dancer. Dancing is for prostitutes, professionals."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> R. Meares, 'The Secret', p. 259.

<sup>15</sup> A. Nin, *The Journals*, p. 87.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

Sadly, Joaquin's gaze brought a sense of shame rather than fatherly support and encouragement. The lack of self-confidence associated with his judgmentalism meant, as we shall soon see, that Anaïs was extremely reluctant to share her secrets with others, including her analyst.

There is an intimate connection between exposure to the other and shame. Jean-Paul Sartre has produced a perceptive and interesting analysis of this link.<sup>17</sup> For Sartre, to be exposed to 'the look' is to suffer the degradation of becoming an object.

Pure shame is not a feeling of being this or that guilty object but in general of being *an* object; that is, of *recognizing myself* in this degraded, fixed, and dependent being which I am for the Other. Shame is the feeling of an *original fall*, not because of the fact that I may have committed this or that particular fault but simply that I have "fallen" into the world in the midst of things and that I need the mediation of the Other in order to be what I am [emphasis in the original].<sup>18</sup>

Sartre begins his reflections with the example of a person seated in a public park and observing a man.<sup>19</sup> Through the person's look, he becomes 'the man-as-object'. That is to say, he becomes part of the onlooker's world. He is defined by her spatial categories (he is over there, 20 paces away) and is subject to her reflections and judgements ('I wonder what that briefcase is for?.....The hair-cut and the stud in the ear look silly on a man his age!'). An object, moreover, is defined by its relationship to a subject. The fact of his being-as-object implies her being-as-subject. The degradation of the look consists in the other's capacity to take control, to 'transcend one's transcendence'. To be caught in the gaze of another is to experience a fall from freedom and a sense of alienation from the self.

These implications Sartre works out in his 'spying through the keyhole' construction.<sup>20</sup> For some compelling reason -- morbid curiosity, jealousy, etc. -- I am looking through a keyhole at the goings-on in a room. I am in control; my 'free selfness' is expressed through the way in which I freely go about my tasks.

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<sup>17</sup> See Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 252-302.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 288-289.

<sup>19</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 254 ff.

<sup>20</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 260 ff.



But then I hear footsteps in the hallway. Someone is looking at me! My experience-of-being-there is suddenly and radically modified. A sense of freedom is replaced by feelings of shame. I become self-conscious. That is, 'I see *myself*' because *somebody* sees me...' <sup>21</sup> It is shame 'which reveals to me the Other's look and myself at the end of the look'. <sup>22</sup> I become the object of his observations and judgements. My intrusion into the lives of others in turn becomes subject to his intrusion. Associated with the shame I feel is a loss of freedom and a sense of alienation from the self. The look has delivered me into the hands of the Other. He is in control. 'The Other as a look is only that--my transcendence transcended.' <sup>23</sup> My 'possibles' are always conditioned by his; I have lost my freedom. I have the possibility of using a dark corner to hide but am threatened by the possibility that his torch-light will expose me. A more profound threat comes from the fact that I have now become subject to his categories, values and judgements. I stand in the light of his critical gaze. (One thinks of Anaïs' feelings of attack and oppression under the look of her father's 'hard blue eyes'.) Sartre observes that

[t]o be looked at is to apprehend oneself as the unknown object of unknowable appraisals--in particular, of value judgments. But at the same time that in shame or pride I recognize the justice of these appraisals, I do not cease to take them for what they are--a free surpassing of the given toward possibilities. A judgment is the transcendental act of a free being. Thus being-seen constitutes me as a defenseless being for a freedom which is not my freedom. It is in this sense that we can consider ourselves as "slaves" in so far as we appear to the Other. <sup>24</sup>

While one appreciates the depth of perception in Sartre's analysis, it seems to be overly pessimistic. The gaze of the Other may be shaming, but it may also be affirming. Recall, for example, Buber's reference to the confirming glance of the stranger (chapter 4).

Sartre's gloominess deepens when he reflects on the look of the divine. He contends that the ultimate experience of bondage is to be caught in the gaze

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 267.

of God, 'the concept of the Other pushed to the limit'.<sup>25</sup> To be known by the omniscient One is to be trapped in a state of eternal shame. Shame before God is

the recognition of my being-an-object before a subject which can never become an object. By the same stroke I *realize* my object-state in the absolute and hypostasize it. The position of God is accomplished by a reification of my object-ness.<sup>26</sup>

This situation Sartre considers to be intolerable. In one's relationship with the human Other it is always possible to effect a reversal. My shame becomes a motivation to 'turn the tables' by establishing the other as object under my subjectivity.<sup>27</sup> It is impossible, however, to object-ify God. The only way in which one can secure one's free selfness is, as Nietzsche also saw, to put God to death.

How does one respond to Sartre's challenge? Is it in fact the case that the gaze of the omniscient God represents a degrading intrusion into one's being? This would indeed be the reality if it were not for the fact of God's absolute benevolence.<sup>28</sup> God's wholly benevolent intention means that our openness before God is beneficial rather than degrading. We are able to trust God in the penetration into our secret places, our hidden recesses, because we believe in God's total goodness and love.

There is a parallel in the counselling relationship. Sharing the secret self only feels safe when the counsellor has established her trustworthiness. Openness and honesty are beneficial in the presence of a person whose heart is good, who is by nature disposed to a care-ful and sensitive handling of the revealed self. The human person can never, of course, be *wholly* good and benevolent. Buber, in recognition of this, points to the fact that there is a

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>27</sup> The whole point of the analyses of Buber and Marcel, of course, is to describe that form of presence which rules out any need to seek control and mastery over the other. 'Intersubjectivity' is Marcel's preferred term for genuine being-together. When two subjects are relating, when an I is in communion with a Thou, the threat of a degrading 'objectification' is removed.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. C. Schneider, *Shame, Exposure and Privacy*, p. 133. He quotes the contemporary philosopher, John Sibley: 'Complete openness and honesty are wholly beneficial in relation with a wholly benevolent Other.' (From his 'Masks and Fig Leaves', in J. Roland Pennock and J. Chapman eds., *Privacy, Nomos 13: Yearbook of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy* [New York: Atherton Press, 1971], p. 234.)

bipolarity in the self, a 'yes' and a 'no'. In his attempt to be responsive to the address of the other, a person is caught in a struggle between loyalty and disloyalty. The responsible person is the one in whom loyalty wins out.

Responsibility presupposes one who addresses me primarily, that is, from a realm independent of myself, and to whom I am answerable. He addresses me about something that he has entrusted to me and that I am bound to take care of loyally. He addresses me from his trust and I respond in my loyalty or refuse to respond in my disloyalty, or I have fallen into disloyalty and wrestle free of it by the loyalty of the response. To be so answerable to a trusting person about an entrusted matter that loyalty and disloyalty step into the light of day (but both are not of the same right, for now loyalty, born again is permitted to conquer disloyalty)--this is the reality of responsibility.<sup>29</sup>

The persecuting counsellor manifests his disloyalty through his rough handling of the secret entrusted to him. Under his gaze, the counsellee suffers 'the transcendence of her transcendence'. She is object-ified through his intrusive approach. It seems that he is forcing the confession of hidden ideas and feelings. When respect for, and a valuing of, closely guarded ideo-affective content is lacking, 'a therapeutic intervention is felt as a mutilation of the confessed experience -- as a destructive persecution'.<sup>30</sup> Anaïs had experienced the 'destructive persecution' of Joaquin Nin, and now she wonders whether Dr. Allendy could really have 'freed me of the EYE of the father, of the eye of the camera which I have always feared and disliked as an *exposure*'.<sup>31</sup> Sadly, she has in therapy yet another experience of the look which shames. 'Enter this laboratory of the soul where every feeling will be *X-rayed* by Dr. Allendy to *expose* the blocks, the twists, the deformations, the scars which interfere with the flow of life' [emphasis added].<sup>32</sup> Under Allendy's probing, she feels 'oppressed'; his questions are like 'thrusts'. It is as if she were 'a criminal in court'.<sup>33</sup> Finally, she can take it no longer.

Anaïs: "Today, I frankly hate you. I am against you."

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<sup>29</sup> Buber, 'The Question to the Single One', in *Between Man and Man*, p. 45.

<sup>30</sup> Meares and Hobson, 'The Persecutory Therapist', p. 350.

<sup>31</sup> A. Nin, *The Journals*, p. 88.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

Dr. Allendy: "But why?"

Anais: "I feel that you have taken away from me the little confidence I did have. I feel humiliated to have confessed to you. I have rarely confessed."<sup>34</sup>

To receive the secret which is offered with deep respect and great care is to confirm the counsellee. An intrusion into her independent space, on the other hand, is a persecution. Far from being therapeutic, it produces shame and humiliation.

### ***Derogation: The Shame of Being Set Apart***

The image that many have of a counsellor is of a person who is caring and sensitive, who guards against any comment which may be received by the counsellee as pejorative. Counsellors, though, share in the common humanity of the psychologically less aware. They are locked in a struggle with the same destructive urges. Like everyone else, they sometimes want to dominate, to feel superior, to be in control, to attack and so on. To be sure, one of the reasons that many professionals choose to go through a period of therapy is to gain insight into their own particular ways of acting on these negative urges. Insight, however, does not guarantee a complete cleansing of the soul. The dark desires have a way of finding a covert avenue for expression. For example, as Meares and Hobson point out, the provision of insight by the counsellor may in fact be a subtle form of name-calling. Telling a counsellee that he has an arrogant sense of entitlement ('You project the doting behaviour of your mother onto your wife, your friends, and your co-workers.') or that he is passive-aggressive ('Whenever you feel angry and hostile your Child gets hooked and you punish others with your sulking.') may constitute a personal attack smuggled into the conversation under the guise of interpretation. As Meares and Hobson express it, '...an angry, destructive and manipulative person feels that the therapist is confirming what he, the patient, feels that he is -- bad and worthless.'<sup>35</sup> Insight-

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>35</sup> Meares and Hobson, 'The Persecutory Therapist', p. 350.

giving which is poorly formulated or motivated by a destructive urge on the part of the counsellor is shame inducing.

This does not mean, of course, that a counsellor should never confront. In chapters 6 and 9 we discussed appropriate forms of challenge. Irvin Yalom's approach to the issue of Betty's boring chatter is a good example of constructive confrontation. Recall that he told her that he wanted to get close to her but her insistence on keeping the conversation on a surface level prevented him from doing that. Yalom was motivated not by an urge to attack or belittle, but rather by a desire for an authentic relationship.

A repressed hostility towards the client is one urge that may negatively affect the counselling relationship. Another is a desire to feel superior, to place oneself on a level higher than the client. When this dynamic is operating, a sense of alienation is the inevitable result.

By subtle means, the patient is made to feel that he is 'bad', 'ill' and 'abnormal'; and, hence, completely different from the therapist. Such patronizing intimations, implying 'It is all your problem which I do not share' induce a sense of alienation.<sup>36</sup>

The shame dynamic operates within a strong-weak polarity. When a person compares himself to another and makes a judgement of inferiority he feels shame. 'Patronizing intimations' by a counsellor evoke feelings of worthlessness and a sense of alienation. Anaïs was quite distressed by the fact that Allendy could be dismissive of her and yet would establish an unassailable position for himself in the face of her challenges.

Today I find flaws in Dr. Allendy's formulas. I am irritated by his quick categorizing of my dreams and feelings. When he is silent I do my own analysis. If I do, he will say I am trying to find him defective, inadequate, to revenge his forcing me to confess my jealousy of his wife. At that moment he was much stronger than I.<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to reflect on what may lie behind this tendency to set the client at a distance, to assert superiority. There are no doubt a number of

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 350.

<sup>37</sup> A. Nin, *The Journals*, p. 108.

reasons. Let us start, though, with the observation that counsellors and psychotherapists are, by definition, very committed to the cause of mental health. They are especially concerned with their own level of psychological integration. Many have worked conscientiously in their own therapy, and continue to diligently address dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours. There is, however, a negative side to all forms of zeal, namely, a tendency to feel superior. It is quite difficult to avoid a patronising approach to those lower down on the ladder of success.

One immediately thinks of the New Testament parallel, the Pharisees. They have functioned for generations as the symbol of derogation (there are, however, New Testament scholars who believe that the gospel image of the Pharisaic movement is something of a distortion<sup>38</sup>). The paradigmatic example is found in Luke 18:9-14. Jesus tells the story of two men going up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The former stands up and prays about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like all other men -- robbers, evildoers, adulterers -- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get' (vv. 11-12).

Granted, most counsellors would not be as extreme as the Pharisee in their feelings of superiority. Nevertheless, there are those who do not have the capacity to include themselves in the experience of their clients. Inclusion in the

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<sup>38</sup> James Dunn observes that there is a widespread consensus in NT and in Jewish scholarship that the Pharisees have been misrepresented in at least some degree in the Gospels. See his 'Pharisees, Sinners, and Jesus', in J. Neusner et al. eds., *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 264-289, pp. 264-265. The NT scholar who has most vigorously and comprehensively challenged the negative image of the Pharisees in the gospels is E.P. Sanders. See his *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) and idem, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM Press, 1990). Sanders argues that the Pharisees would not have been critical of those who were not as strict as themselves in Torah observance. He also contends that they would not have condemned the ordinary people as 'sinners' because they failed to incorporate a number of the halakoth advocated by them, the Pharisees, in their daily activities. Attacked also by Sanders is the view of the Pharisees as exclusivist. While they had a positive concern for purity (the ritual cleanliness rules were applied to daily living) they would not separate themselves from the less scrupulous. Finally, he argues that while they no doubt considered themselves to be stricter and holier than most, they did not claim to be the only true Israel. While one accepts that the gospel accounts have been coloured by post-70CE antagonism between earliest Christianity and Judaism, it may well be the case that Sanders has over-corrected for the distortion (cf. Dunn, op. cit., p. 275). In any case, the fact that the movement sponsored by the Pharisees had many positive features not mentioned in the gospels does not exclude the possibility that there was within that movement a small group which was in fact characterised by self-righteousness and exclusivism.



inner reality of the client obviously does not often refer to *direct* experience. While there are recovering alcoholics and substance abusers who counsel addicts, and quite a few counsellors suffer from some form of anxiety, depression or phobia, it is often the case that the counsellee's ailment is completely outside the counsellor's personal experience. Buber recognised the fact that in dialogue the partners must contend with their fundamental and sometimes substantial differences. One must recognise 'that this one or that one does not have merely a different mind, or way of thinking or feeling, or a different conviction or attitude, but has also a different perception of the world, a different recognition and order of meaning, a different touch from the regions of existence, a different faith, a different soil...'<sup>39</sup> Given these very significant differences in the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, values and convictions which define each other's being, there needs to be an imaginative capacity which facilitates a bridging of the gap. This, as we have seen, Buber calls 'imagining the real'. It is an 'intensive stirring of one's being' in which one swings into the life of the other.<sup>40</sup> Imagining the real is of the essence of confirmation. One needs to imaginatively include oneself in the inner reality of the other in order to recognise and validate her personhood. The patronising stance of the counsellor, the tendency to set himself apart from the counsellee, represents a failure in inclusion.

Buber also uses the expression 'experiencing from the other side' to describe inclusion.<sup>41</sup> He gives the example of a man caressing a woman. He feels the contact from two sides: with the palm of his hand and also with the woman's skin. Experience of the other side has both 'abstract' and 'concrete' forms. The former Buber illustrates with reference to two persons engaged in a disputation.<sup>42</sup> They have a very different vision of life, of the world. At first, they are preoccupied with their own arguments. But then, in an instant, each one becomes aware of the other's 'full legitimacy' as a person. There is an immediate grasp of the spiritual dimension which grounds the other in 'the

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<sup>39</sup> Buber, 'The Question to the Single One', in *Between Man and Man*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>40</sup> Buber, 'Elements of the Interhuman', *Psychiatry* 20 (1957), pp. 105-113, p. 110.

<sup>41</sup> See Buber, 'Education', in *Between Man and Man*, p. 96.

<sup>42</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 99.

Present Being', and as such is the source of both his particularity and his validation. Buber uses the word 'abstract' to describe this experience because while there is a recognition of the other as a spiritual being, there is no swinging into his concrete experience of life (very little may be known of this).

In the context of education, a *concrete* form of inclusion is required.<sup>43</sup> The educator, says Buber, must be over there, standing with the student she is communicating with, as well as standing in her place on the rostrum. It is not enough to simply grasp the spiritual dimension in the student -- as important as this is -- the teacher must also be able to concretely feel what it is like to be taught. The inclusion, however, (as, one might add, in the counselling context) is not mutual. '[The teacher] stands at both ends of the common situation, the pupil only at one end. In the moment when the pupil is able to throw herself across and experience from over there, the educative relation would be burst asunder, or change into friendship.'<sup>44</sup>

The derogatory counsellor fails at the level of both abstract and concrete inclusion. She is incapable of orienting herself fully to the spiritual dimension in the client. It is this inclusive act which sparks a profound recognition of a common humanity and dignity. Derogation arises in the counselling relationship when the counsellor is oriented to the dysfunctional behaviour which defines difference rather than to the spiritual dimension which is the source of commonality.

The derogatory counsellor is also incapable of standing concretely over there with the client. She cannot enter fully enough into the experience of bringing to another the secret which is the self. While she has some grasp of what that is like -- perhaps she has been in therapy herself -- she cannot reach deeply enough into the reality of exposing one's pain and chaos to another person. In the end, she stands apart from the client and he feels belittled and alienated.

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<sup>43</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

### *Reductionism: The Shame of Being Categorised*

Confirmation involves a validation of otherness. Buber writes, 'This person is other, essentially other than myself, and this otherness of his is what I mean, because I mean him; I confirm it; I wish his otherness to exist, because I wish his particular being to exist.'<sup>45</sup> As has already been noted, in order to reach into otherness we need the capacity to imagine the real. When this capacity is lacking, we see the other, as Maurice Friedman puts it, 'in our own image or in terms of our ready-made categories'.<sup>46</sup> The reduction of one's feelings, thoughts and values by a counsellor, I suggest, to fit his ready-made categories is a form of persecution. One feels misunderstood and devalued; it is as if one only exists in the terms defined by the counsellor. To be understood in one's own terms is confirming; to have one's personhood compressed to fit another's mould is shaming.

There is a warning here for counsellors, I think, against sitting too closely to any particular personality theory. In those who have a doctrinaire approach to their chosen school of psychotherapeutic thought there is an almost irresistible temptation to view all counsellees through a theoretical grid. In this situation, one cannot see the person for the theory, so to speak. What is the root of this tunnel vision? It is to be found, I think, in the universal human tendency to use an ideology to establish a sense of security. To turn again to our New Testament parallel, we see it very clearly in what was probably an extreme group within the Pharisaic movement. The members of this group looked for safety and certainty in the application of the Law. All of life is defined and shaped by their understanding of the divine commandments. People and relationships are constructed in terms of *torah* categories. Jesus, on the other hand, wanted to assert God's confirming grace and love in the divine-human relationship. God did not intend the covenantal boundaries to be oppressive. The aim was not to take away human initiative, to deprive people of the possibility of creative thought and action. 'The Sabbath', Jesus teaches, 'was made for the human, not the human for the Sabbath' (Mk 2:27). Counsellors do well to

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<sup>45</sup> Buber, 'The Question to the Single One', in *Between Man and Man*, p. 61.

<sup>46</sup> M. Friedman, *The Confirmation of Otherness*, p. 43.

remember that theories of personality and psychotherapeutic technique need to be applied within a person-centred orientation. When Anaïs finally gave up on Dr. Allendy, she found in Otto Rank an analyst who valued her freedom and dignity as a person. In their first meeting, she shared with her new analyst her dissatisfaction over Allendy's categorisation. Rank, in turn, communicated his valuing of particularity.

"I felt that Dr. Allendy's formulas did not fit my life. I have read all your books. I felt that there is *more* in my relationship to my father than the desire of a victory over my mother."

By his smile I knew he understood the *more* and my objection to oversimplification.....

Immediately I knew that we talked the same language. He said, "I go beyond the psychoanalytical. Psychoanalysis emphasizes the resemblance between people; I emphasize the differences between people. They try to bring everybody to a certain normal level. I try to adapt each person to his own kind of universe."<sup>47</sup>

In counselling we do need maps to guide us around the psychological territory. They are, however, *only* guides. A person is more than the sum of the psychodynamic interpretations we can apply to her life. The reductionistic counsellor attempts to fit the person into a theory, rather than to locate her in her 'own kind of universe'. To have one's particularity recognised and validated is an experience of grace; to be categorised is to be reduced to the status of an object and to suffer under a disgrace.

There is, of course, a place in counselling for theory-informed analysis. It is appropriate and helpful for the counsellor to work with the categories developed in the leading personality theories. In every relationship, the Thou must at some point revert to being an It. Buber recognised the important and essential role played by the I-It modality. Our world is the world of space and time, of cause and effect. A movement into a spatio-temporal-causal context is an entry into the realm of the It. A Thou analysed, categorised and described becomes an It. That this transition takes place is not cause for regret; it is as it should be. A vital balance is kept, though, through the immediacy and directness of the I-Thou meeting. The confirming glance of the other person brings vitality,

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<sup>47</sup> A. Nin, *The Journals*, p. 271.

meaning, joy and hope to our existence. In a counselling relationship, there will be moments of reflection and analysis. However, it is only when the counsellor is able to make his presence felt, to establish the creative tension of the 'between', that the counsellee feels confirmed at the deepest level. One hears notes of joy and pride sounded in Anaïs' recollection of her first impressions of Dr. Rank: 'He was agile, quick, as if each word I uttered were a precious object he had excavated and was delighted to find. He acted as if I were unique, as if this were a unique adventure, not a phenomenon to be categorized.'<sup>48</sup> In stark contrast, her lamentations concerning her experience with Dr. Allendy have the tone of sorrow and shame. By way of introduction to these sad reflections, it needs to be noted that what Anaïs particularly appreciated about Rank was the way he viewed neurosis as a distortion in the creative spirit. She was in his eyes not a sick, disturbed person, but rather an artist whose creative energies have been wrongly directed. Allendy, on the other hand, had no appreciation of the value she attached to creativity and imagination; he could not fit these things into his ready-made categories. Anaïs writes:

The scientific rigidity acts very much like a trap, a trap of rationalization. The patient who is a hypersensitive person cannot help being influenced by what he is expected to say, by the quick classification barring the structure too obviously. The neurotic feels his next statement is expected to fit into a logical continuity whose pressure he finally succumbs to.

The more this process becomes clear to him, the more he experiences *a kind of discouragement* with the banality of it. The 'naming' of his trouble, being in itself prosaic, links it to his physical diseases, and deprives him of that very illusion and creative halo which is necessary to the re-creation of a human being. Instead of discovering the poetic, imaginative, creative potentialities of his disease (since every neurotic fantasy is really a twisted, aborted work of art), he discovers the de-poetization of it, which makes of him *a cripple* instead of a potential artist.....

To raise the drama instead of *diminishing it*, by linking it to the past, to collective history, to literature, achieves two things: one, to remove it from the too-near, personal realm where it causes pain; the other, to place the neurotic as a part of a collective drama, recurrent through the ages, so that he *may cease regarding himself as a cripple, as a degenerate type*.....

It is in this difference between individual expression that we find a new dimension, a new climate, a new vision. To reduce a

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 272.

fantasy is only a means of *dredging the neurotic imagination, of diminishing the stage* on which the neurotic must live out his drama with the maximum of intensity, for the sake of catharsis [emphasis added].<sup>49</sup>

The confirming counsellor has a broad vision. He is able to see a creative potential in a person. In contrast, the counsellor controlled by psychodynamic theory and its neat categories runs the risk of shaming his client. Note the shame cognates Anaïs uses in her reflections: ‘discouragement’, ‘a cripple’, ‘a degenerative type’, and ‘diminishing the drama’. A counsellor with a big vision of life and of humanity will find a way to frame the story he hears in a way which communicates admiration and approval (Rank focused on Anaïs’ artistic gifts). The reductionistic counsellor, on the other hand, allows himself to be blinkered by his theoretical constructs. While he thinks he is providing insight, he succeeds only in discouraging and diminishing his client. Technical prowess without a capacity for confirming dialogue is of very limited value.

In the above discussion on intrusion, derogation and reductionism, the focus has been on the shame feelings induced in the recipient of care. Obviously, the counsellor may also feel shame as a result of her failures in presence. It will be, though, a moral shame, and thus different from the type of shame the counsellee feels. He has done no wrong. It is simply the case that he found himself in the unfortunate situation of being ‘persecuted’ by his counsellor. As a result his tendency to feel inferior and inadequate has been reinforced. The counsellor, on the other hand, has failed herself and harmed her client. In reflecting on that fact, she may feel ashamed.

I wish to explore this type of shame reaction further by referring to pastoral care in a parish context. In turning from the challenge of a confirming dialogue, a pastor may feel a sense of moral failure.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 298-299.



## **THE SHAME OF THE PASTOR IN TURNING FROM THE STRUGGLE**

While the situation in a parish is usually quite different from that of a counselling centre, ministers -- or some at least -- share the tendency to intrude, to subtly belittle people, and to put them in boxes. There is another way, too, in which they fall into disconfirming others. Quite simply, they opt out of the struggle that is confirmation. Rather than engage in genuine dialogue, they take the easy route and avoid difficult issues.

As we saw in chapter 4, confirming the other involves struggling with him, often against himself, as he reaches for his psychological, moral and spiritual potential. In our pastoral relationships, we are constantly receiving a call to enter into a confirming dialogue. Sometimes we respond and sometimes we do not. While there may be a valid reason for turning away from the struggle (e.g. one makes the judgement that at this point one does not have the time and/or the energy to commit to an intense relationship), it may also be that behind the turning away is some personal failing. Some of us, for example, like life and our relationships to be clearly defined, relatively predictable and under control. As soon as one begins to wrestle with another person who is caught between a 'yes' and a 'no', between wanting to find a positive direction and wanting to hold on to the status quo, one is plunged into uncertainty, confusion, and ambiguity. The thought of trying to bring order to the chaos is too unpleasant, too daunting, and so one turns away.

There is clearly a significant cost for us in committing ourselves to the struggle that is confirmation. Let us look at other 'cost factors'. To begin with the obvious, time must be made available. Then there is the fact that we will have to expend mental and emotional energy. Finally, we will have to deal with the negative and/or frustrating reactions from the person we are trying to help (anger, 'game-playing', rationalisations etc.).

I found Janice to be most interesting on the one hand, and confusing and annoying on the other. Quite early on, I picked up that she was constantly projecting an image, a persona. She was clearly quite intelligent, witty and creative. And she used her talents to weave together the most fascinating stories about her past. Unfortunately, many of them were simply untrue. She told me, for example, that she

had played tennis for her State. As a young lad, I played in tournaments, including State titles, on a regular basis; so I know something about the game. I invited Janice to join in a game of doubles with two of my children. I can tell you, she can hit a ball, but she has never represented her State! Janice also had stories about her many overseas trips, but when I asked her about some of the cities she was supposed to have seen (and which I had visited), it was evident that she had never been in them. I could go on and on about Janice's stories.

She needed the grandiose tales, I supposed, to compensate for her lack of self-confidence and her sense of inferiority. As a teenager, she got caught up with the wrong crowd and fell into petty crime. As a consequence, she found herself in a residential institution for delinquents. When she left there, she began experimenting with Eastern religions in order to 'find herself'. She married a young man on the same journey of spiritual exploration. Sadly however, like most of the things she had tried, the marriage failed.

More recently, she had found Christianity and arrived at my church. She was full of enthusiasm and very quickly began to suggest ways that she might serve God and our parish. It seems that she had helped a minister in another city in his ministry with the homeless. I was understandably wary, so I contacted the minister. 'Of the record', said James, 'don't touch her. She's more trouble than she's worth.' I found a strategic way to decline her offer of assistance.

Occasionally I would gently challenge Janice. Once, for example, she saw me after a service to 'correct' a mistake in the pronunciation in a Greek phrase I had used in my sermon. She had been studying NT Greek by extension for three weeks now, and due to her 'extraordinary facility' with languages had 'just about mastered it'. Hence, she could tell me where I was going wrong. My pronunciation probably left something to be desired, but hers was just ludicrous. At first, I thought I would simply let it slip by. I had a quick re-think, though, and decided that as I had been thinking that I should begin challenging her stories and begin to help her face up to some of the underlying issues, here would be a place to start. I told her that her suggestion was way off. But I did not go further and tell her that no one, no matter how gifted, could possibly master Greek or any other language in a matter of weeks.

Unfortunately, this was my pattern in relating to Janice. I suppose I just did not want to get into the struggle with her. I did not want to pay the price. She used to tell me how she had overcome her violent temper and her tendency to revert to physical violence when angered. Indeed, I had seen her anger begin to flare on occasion, and it was not a pretty sight. It seemed safer to humour her. I was also concerned about what might happen to her emotionally if I stripped off her masks. Mostly though, I was concerned about my own emotional equilibrium.

When I reflected on my unwillingness to really engage with Janice I realised that I could not justify it. It was simply the case that I was not prepared to give the mental and emotional effort required, nor was I prepared to deal with (what would almost certainly be) her angry reaction. I was aware that I could help Janice, or at the very least, relate to her in a more authentic manner. What was I feeling when I

reflected this way? Well, I felt guilty. The dominant feeling, though, was shame. I prided myself on my integrity and courage, but when I admitted to myself that these qualities were nowhere to be seen in my relationship with Janice, I was ashamed of myself.

What did I do with these shame feelings? The answer is, 'not much'. I simply let them sit there and continued to relate to Janice in 'bad faith' because it was easy.

If I had attended to my shame and responded to the prompting of my conscience I would have made a positive change. Sadly for Janice and for me, I chose to turn away from the call to enter the struggle. We will take up this theme of shame and a movement towards genuine presence in the final chapter. Shame feelings alert us to our failures in presence. The challenge is to find the courage and the commitment, under God, to change.

### **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, we began by considering the ways in which counsellors may harm their clients. While a confirming presence validates particularity and enhances a sense of worth, a distorted presence is persecutory and reinforces a sense of inferiority. We have identified three forms of distorted presence which induce shame, namely, intrusion, derogation (from Meares and Hobson) and reductionism (our own).

The intrusive counsellor handles the secret which is the self roughly. His clients feel as though they are being attacked; it is as though he is trying to force a confession out of them. Under the intrusive gaze of the counsellor, the client feels 'objectified' and humiliated.

Psychodynamic interpretation, moving to the second category, can be a covert form of name-calling. The various labels applied to the counsellee reinforce his sense of being a defective, inferior person. The fact that the counsellor sets herself apart from the counsellee and his psychological dysfunction adds to the sense of shame.

The reductionistic counsellor tends to view the client through a grid of personality theory. He is unable to grasp the fact that a person is more than the sum of psychodynamic interpretations. As her thoughts, feelings and values are shrunk down to fit into a theoretical container, the counsellee finds her self-

esteem diminishing along with them. Counsellors need to be aware of these and other 'persecutory' attitudes and behaviours. With awareness comes the possibility of transcending the tendency to distorted presence.

Finally, we turned our attention to the shame a pastor feels when he turns aware from the challenge of a confirming dialogue. It is possible to use those shame feelings to set a course towards genuine presence. However, one must find the courage and the determination, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to change one's behaviour.

## 11. Shame, Sin and 'Conversion' to Genuine Presence

In the previous two chapters, while we have made references to the shame of the person offering help our major focus has been on the shame of the person receiving help. Here our attention shifts to the affective reactions in the pastor or counsellor. Our aim is to identify a positive function for shame in relation to their ministries. The idea that shame feelings may serve as a stimulus to a critical evaluation of one's capacity for presence will be developed. In working with this notion, we will need to carefully work out the relationship between shame, sin and conscience.

In his book *The Depleted Self*,<sup>1</sup> Donald Capps shows a deep sensitivity to the pain and distress suffered by shame-prone personalities. He argues that in what may be called a narcissistic age, a 'sense of wrongfulness' (sin) is more likely to be experienced in terms of shame than guilt. The narcissist senses the distortion in her way of being in the world and it causes her pain. She connects this distortion and pain, however, not with moral failure but rather with personal inferiority and worthlessness. Capps claims that we need a shamed-based understanding of sin if we are to connect with the suffering in the narcissistic culture. In a radical move, he reinterprets sin in terms of self-injury. The victim when the shame dynamic dominates is the self.

While I appreciate the importance of linking sin to the shame experience, I will be arguing that there is a serious difficulty with Capps' analysis. The problem, I will suggest, is that in making the connection between sin and self-victimisation, Capps fails to take account of the fact that in most, if not all, major theological interpretations of sin a reference to the human's relationship with God is primary. As Cornelius Plantinga puts it, sin has 'first and finally a Godward force'.<sup>2</sup> An interpretation of sin as self-victimisation

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<sup>1</sup> D. Capps, *The Depleted Self: Sin in a Narcissistic Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> C. Plantinga, 'Not the Way It's S'pposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin', *Theology Today* 50, no. 2 (1993), pp. 179-192, p. 184.

necessarily lacks this 'Godward force'. Karl Barth's<sup>3</sup> approach to the relationship between sin and shame, I will be suggesting, presents as more adequate than Capps'. Barth's analysis, characteristically, has a christological orientation. He argues that Christ's exemplification of human existence shames us. When we are open and truthful we internalise Christ's shaming and we feel ashamed. Ashamed, we are aware of our need of conversion.

This saving conversion has a parallel in another kind of conversion. Marcel refers to the way in which contemplation of one's way of being in the world can lead to a conversion to a more authentic existence.<sup>4</sup> The main aim in this chapter is to show that *shame provides an impetus to conversion to genuine presence*. In order to develop this idea, use will be made of James Fowler's observation that both discretion-shame and disgrace-shame have an important function in the operation of conscience (as discussed briefly in chapter 8). While Capps is concerned exclusively with the negative dimension in shame and links it to the 'sin' of self-damage, our argument is that *shame also has a positive function and is more properly associated with conscience*.

### **SHAME, SIN AND CONSCIENCE**

Capps' primary aim in his book, *The Depleted Self*, is to demonstrate that in the narcissistic culture of the modern industrialised nations persons are more likely to experience a sense of 'wrongfulness' ( sin) in terms of shame rather than guilt. He suggests that if people are asked to talk about feelings of pride, envy, and anger most would use guilt language.<sup>5</sup> His contention, however, is that while some guilt is no doubt involved, the 'deeper layer of emotion' is in fact shame. 'For the victim in each of these cases is felt to be the self, and the feelings involved express and even contribute to a sense of self-depletion, of self-diminishment.'<sup>6</sup> In experiencing these feelings we feel small, vulnerable, empty. We may recognise that others are indirectly hurt by our feelings and attitudes, and for this we should feel sorrowful and repentant. 'But the primary

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<sup>3</sup> See Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV*, 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), p. 405ff.

<sup>4</sup> See Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, vol. 1, p. 126ff.

<sup>5</sup> See Capps, *The Depleted Self*, p. 71.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.



victim of such feelings and attitudes is the self.’<sup>7</sup> This self-victimisation, says Capps, can be described in terms of three ‘problematics of the self’. He uses the terms ‘the divided self’, ‘the defensive self’, and ‘the depleted self’ in his analysis.

***The Divided Self.***<sup>8</sup> The split in the self, Capps notes, can be characterized in a number of ways. For example, some theorists refer to a division between the ideal and real selves. In the shame experience, the real self -- the self who has acted or was acted upon -- fails to meet the criteria of evaluation established by the ideal self. Under normal circumstances, there is relative harmony between the two. In a situation of shame, however, their incongruity is painfully to the fore.

Heinz Kohut, Capps observes, depicts the division with his concept of the bipolar self. According to Kohut, either the grandiose or the idealizing self may experience shame, depending on the circumstances. A *faux pas* is an example of the grandiose self experiencing shame. When, on the other hand, a person’s actual performance is judged to be below the standard established as ideal, the idealizing self is the locus of shame. Whether it is the grandiose or the idealizing self that experiences shame, observes Capps, the end result is the same, namely, an experience of painful disharmony in the relationship between the two selves.

***The Defensive Self.***<sup>9</sup> In introducing the defenses shame-prone personalities utilise, Capps is endeavouring to address the problem of talking meaningfully about sin when these personalities are usually the victims and have not harmed others. Victimisation of the self can lead to a tendency to victimise others.

He refers to Gershen Kaufman’s work<sup>10</sup> on the defensive strategies aimed at avoiding or reducing the painful effects of shame. In ‘contempt for others’, one adopts a judgmental, condescending attitude toward others. If one is doing the shaming, one can insulate oneself against being shamed. ‘Power

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>8</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 87-94.

<sup>9</sup> See *The Depleted Self*, pp. 94-97.

<sup>10</sup> See G. Kaufman, *Shame: The Power of Caring*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1985), chp. 3.

striving' refers to an attempt to gain control over others. While in 'transfer of blame', one looks for a scapegoat. In using these strategies, then, an attempt is made to deal with shame by shaming others. Capps introduces this discussion to address 'the predictable charge that a theology of shame is likely to be soft on the issue of personal culpability'.<sup>11</sup> More will be said about this below. I simply point out here that introducing the idea that self-injury may turn into injury of others is not enough to defend the notion of sin as victimisation of the self.

*The Depleted Self.*<sup>12</sup> Depletion of the self, observes Capps, is the way Kohut talks about the long-term effects of shaming. It is, Kohut points out, a less severe form of self-pathology than self-fragmentation. He refers to global feelings of emptiness and depression to describe the condition. Patients have the impression of not being fully real, of simply going through the motions of life as routines carry them along. They have lost the zest for life, their emotions are dulled. For Kohut, the link between shame and self-depletion is 'the dejection of defeat'. There is a failure to achieve one's goals, coupled with the realisation that there is little or no time left to rectify the situation. Kohut has coined the descriptions a 'nameless shame', and a 'guiltless despair'. For Capps, he captures here the essence of the painful plight of the depleted self.

In Capps' view, the experience of depletion corresponds to that of anxiety in guilt theologies. Tillich<sup>13</sup> identifies anxiety as a response to the judgement -- in both its internal and external dimensions -- that one has misused freedom. A theology of shame, however, places greater emphasis on self-failures than on a distorted use of freedom. For the depleted self, anxiety is not the key factor; but rather, a sense of having failed to live a life of significance and meaning. Over a period of time, shame has operated to drain the vitality and joy out of a person. 'The words that capture this deeper, inner experience of shame are not humiliation and embarrassment, but words like empty, exhausted, drained, demoralized, depressed, deflated, bereft, needy, starving, apathetic,

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<sup>11</sup> *The Depleted Self*, p. 97.

<sup>12</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 97-100.

<sup>13</sup> The reference is to Tillich's essay entitled, 'What is Basic in Human Nature?', in P. LeFevre ed., *The Meaning of Health* (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1982).

passive, and weak.’<sup>14</sup> These depletion words, notes Capps, suggest a link with the deadly sin of apathy.

Capps, then, in his attempt to relate sin to shame dynamics wants to construe it in terms of self-victimisation. While we may recognise, he says, that our feelings and attitudes indirectly hurt others -- and for this we should be sorry and repentant -- the primary victim is the self. This self-injury is related to the three ‘problematics of the self’: the divided, defensive, and depleted selves.

It is, in my judgement, a mistake to use the category of sin to describe the injury to self that is associated with emotional distress. Following Capps’ logic, we would need to define a whole range of psychic suffering in terms of sin. As soon as one thinks of other common forms of emotional distress -- such as anxiety, depression, and phobic behaviour -- it is immediately obvious that the primary victim is always the self. This is in fact what constitutes the tragic element in emotional suffering, namely that the sufferer becomes her ‘own worst enemy’. Consider a person who is facing major surgery and has a strong propensity for anxiety. The weeks and months before the surgery become a ‘living hell’. She feels the anxiety eating away at her stomach. Sleep is often restless or impossible. And in the period immediately before the procedure the emotional distress is almost unbearable. Or think of a person who suffers from performance anxiety -- say a talented pianist. He has the talent and the drive to fulfil his dream of being a concert pianist, but time and time again he defeats himself at the piano as anxiety grips his fingers and they simply refuse to flow over the keys.

The phobic person victimises himself through unnecessary fear and self-restriction. One person cannot enjoy the possibilities and convenience that plane travel affords because of a fear of flying. Another person cannot even enjoy the possibilities beyond the front door-step because he is in the grip of agoraphobia.

There are all kinds of ways in which psychic dysfunction results in a victimisation of the self. We would not want to refer to anxiety and phobias in terms of sin; nor should we associate the sense of inferiority, self-hate and self-depletion that is associated with the narcissistic condition with sin. It is a

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<sup>14</sup> *The Depleted Self*, p. 99.

mistake to construe self-victimisation in terms of sin because in such an understanding the Godward orientation fundamental in the doctrine of sin is necessarily missing. While sin does involve damage to self and others, the primary focus in most, if not all, major interpretations of sin is on offence against God. Whether it is Augustine, or Karl Barth, or Karl Rahner or the liberation theologians speaking, the message always has a Godward force.<sup>15</sup> Sin

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<sup>15</sup> Augustine identifies *pride* as the root-cause of all human failings (see, for example, his *City of God*, Bk. XIV, chp. 13, and idem, *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones*, chp. 17, para. 27). Pride is 'a perverse kind of exaltation' in which the mind is fixed on the standard of the self rather than on the standard of God. Here is found the *falsehood* which characterises all sin. Our will is naturally oriented to the promotion of our welfare. Our vulnerability to falsehood, however, leads us into a paradoxical situation. We pursue a course contrary to God's will and purpose believing that it will actually contribute to our welfare. Instead, we end up in misfortune. Adam and Eve, observes Augustine, were caught in this trap of falsehood as they attempted to snatch from God the knowledge of good and evil. We all inherit a legacy of sin and death from Adam (original sin). Not only do we imitate Adam's tendency to self-assertion and disobedience, we are actually 'infected' with it from birth. We share in Adam's sin by *generation* as well as by *imitation*. We add our personal sins to original sin.

This notion of pride as the source of sin is also important in the reflections of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, although it takes a different turn (see Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. 1 [London: Nisbet & Co., 1941], chp. VII; and Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 [London; Nisbet & Co., 1957], chp. XIV). Though there are important differences in emphasis in the two treatments, the central message is much the same. The human person is caught in a tension between finiteness and freedom. Living with this tension produces an anxiety which pervades our whole existence. In a misguided attempt to overcome our *angst*, we seek to elevate ourselves to the sphere of the divine. This 'will-to-power', as Niebuhr calls it, expresses itself in the pride of power, knowledge and virtue. In a vain attempt to overcome our lack of power, our poverty of understanding and our moral weakness we seek to raise ourselves to that divine level which is beyond limitations and bounds.

Karl Barth identifies a form of sin which in comparison to 'the heroic form of pride' is mundane and trivial, but for all that is no less toxic, namely sin as *sloth* (see his *Church Dogmatics* IV, 2 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958] p. 403 ff). Sloth refers to the tendency in the human to be sluggish, slow, to be gripped by inertia. He is sluggish in responding to God's gracious call in Christ to reconciliation. Hence sin-as-sloth fits with the general notion of sin-as-disobedience. However, this form refers also, and even more seriously, to *unbelief*. God has graciously offered salvation in Christ; through his sloth the human hardens himself against this offer. 'He turns his back on God, rolling himself into a ball like a hedgehog with prickly spikes' (op. cit., p. 405).

This 'no' to God's offer of grace is central in Karl Rahner's interpretation of sin. At the centre of Rahner's theology is the notion of *the supernatural existential* (see his 'Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace', *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1 [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961], pp. 297-318). Grace -- really God's offer of Godself -- is at the heart of our existence in freedom and knowledge. This offer can be accepted or rejected (the human is free and God has freely offered it). The supernatural existential factor determines our being ontically (with reference to the order of being) and ontologically (in terms of our concrete existence in the world). Moreover, it determines our existence *a priori*, transcendently. That is, even when the offer is refused it continues to shape and define what it is to be human and to live in this world. This 'no' is what constitutes sin and the loss of grace. 'Guilt in the concrete order as "sin" is the free no to God's direct, intimate love in the offer of his self-communication by uncreated divinizing grace...' (Rahner, 'The Need of Redemption', in K. Lehmann et al eds., *The Content of Faith: The Best of Karl Rahner's Theological Writings* [New York: Crossroad, 1992], p. 200).

involves a free choice to act in a way which distorts God's good intentions for the personal and socio-political order. Sin is a 'no' to God's offer of grace. Sin is 'agential' evil (an act of an agent with an evil intent) which impedes the extension of God's Realm.

Capps is obviously aware of the difficulty of endeavouring to talk meaningfully about sin in the absence of an agential dimension. As a consequence, he introduces the idea of the 'defensive self'. Victimisation of the self leads to victimisation of others. In an attempt to shield oneself from further shame experiences, one adopts strategies such as contempt for others, striving for power and control, and transfer of blame. It is only in this context, I suggest, that sin language is appropriate. It does not fit with descriptions of a division between the real and ideal selves (the divided self), or of a self devoid of joy, zest and hope (the depleted self).

A more adequate description of the relationship between shame and sin is, I suggest, that offered by Karl Barth.<sup>16</sup> An important difference between the approaches by Barth and Capps is that the former works with moral shame while the latter focuses on inferiority shame. It is impossible, as I have tried to show, to stretch the theology of sin to the point where it can include the self-victimisation associated with feelings of inadequacy and incompetence. To start as Barth does with disgrace-shame (Carl Schneider's term) opens the way for

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Liberation theologians are attuned to the biblical notion of sin as 'oppressing the truth through injustice' (Rms. 1:18). The distinctive contribution they have made is to highlight the importance of the *structural* element in sin (see, for example, J. I. G. Faus, 'Sin', in J. Sobrino and I. Ellacuría eds., *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology* [New York: Orbis Books, 1996], pp. 194-206). Structural sin refers to the way in which personal egoisms, manifested through a lust for material things and for power, are crystallised into permanent structures designed to maintain the privileges of the elite at the expense of the suffering majorities. In this context, it is evident that sin results in damage to others. However, the orientation of the liberation theologians is not exclusively, nor even primarily, anthropological and socio-economic. Damage to others, Faus rightly points out, is also *offence against God*. That economic and political oppression is offensive to God is evident when one takes into account two fundamental truths. First, God wills equity, fairness, a right use of power, and a life of dignity for all. The human, secondly, is God's image recapitulated in Christ. An attack on the sisters and brothers of Christ is an attack on him.

This survey of influential interpretations of sin has necessarily been sketchy. Further, no critical assessment of the various positions has been offered. It has been presented with one aim in mind, namely, to support the assertion made above that most, if not all, important theologians identify the central place of a Godward force in the notion of sin. While much more could have been said, perhaps there is enough here to achieve this aim.

<sup>16</sup> See Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV, 2, p. 384 ff.



creative thought about sin which maintains the all-important Godward orientation.

Barth structures his reflections around the fact that in the context of the person and work of Christ a person is able to see herself, her existence, her life as it truly is -- morally and spiritually flawed.

Jesus is distinguished from all other men, and the knowledge of Jesus from that of all other men, from that of all real or possible objects of knowledge, by the fact that they involve our incontestable shaming. When we say this we affirm in the first instance the purely factual element in the relationship between Him and us that He is the One who shames us and we are those who are shamed, quite irrespective of whether we are aware of the fact and are ashamed of ourselves, or still close our eyes or close them again to that which has happened and still does so.<sup>17</sup>

The human person is shamed, despite all attempts to hide or repress the fact, because she is in the position of being compared to God. Some may object that it is inappropriate, unfair or even nonsensical to compare the human with the divine. However, all these objections overlook the fact (from a faith perspective) that God took on the form of a human in and through Jesus. Whether or not we accept it, we all stand in relation to Christ. We cannot avoid a comparison of our lives with his. Alongside the life of Christ we must place our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Against his we must measure how well we have used the time and talents given to us. By his standard we must judge our ordering of our relations to God, neighbour and self. When we measure our lives against that of Christ we are put to shame. '[I]n this comparison with His', writes Barth, 'of our actions and achievements, our possibilities and actualisations, the true expression of that which is within us, and the inwardness of that which we express, our whole whence and whither, the root and crown of our existence, we are genuinely shamed.'<sup>18</sup>

The fact that Christ shames us can neither be denied nor avoided. We may attempt to close our eyes to this unpleasant reality, but where does it get us? Our freedom and reconciliation depends on opening our eyes, on accepting the fact that we compare poorly with Christ, on allowing ourselves to *feel*

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 384.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 386.



*ashamed*. An acceptance of one's shame opens the way to repentance and the joy and freedom of reconciliation. Barth uses the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk 18:9ff) to illustrate the possibility of both pride and humility in the face of our shaming by Christ. The parable, he says,

speaks of two men who are both equally shamed before God but who are completely different because of their knowledge or ignorance of the fact.....The shame of both is already disclosed. But the one knows that this is the case and the other does not. The one can only humble himself whereas the other sees many things which encourage him to exalt himself. It is by this problem of shaming, whether it becomes acute or remains latent, that the decision is made and the ways divide.<sup>19</sup>

Barth's analysis, I suggest, helps us see the relationship between shame and sin in its proper perspective. *To feel shame is not in itself sinful; but it is a sin not to feel ashamed in the light of Christ's life.*

Capps is right in his intuition that shame is closely allied with sin, with a feeling of 'wrongfulness', as he puts it. Unfortunately, his analysis goes astray because of his insistence on working with the concept of shame associated with narcissistic personality disorder. There is no offence to God or others caused in any *direct* way by one's feelings of incompetence, inferiority and worthlessness.<sup>20</sup> (Inferiority shame can trigger behaviours -- including shame defenses -- which represent moral failure.) Consequently, Capps must resort to defining sin in terms of self-injury. Barth's use of disgrace-shame, on the other hand, moves us into the realm of *conscience*. In the depths of our being we honestly compare ourselves to Christ and we feel ashamed. This is another reason why Barth's analysis is attractive to us. Our focus in this chapter is on counsellors and pastors and the work they do. In the course of their ministry, they sometimes have feelings of failure and inadequacy. They will from time to time experience a strong sense of shame associated with the feeling that they

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 385.

<sup>20</sup> When a person suffers the deep emotional pain associated with these feelings God, along with those who know and love her, is grieved. God's intention is that all God's children should enjoy healthy self-esteem and a sense of pride and satisfaction through achievements. The fact that this is not actually the case is the result of evil in the world. God is grieved by narcissistic injury, but it does not in itself constitute an offence against God..

have failed those in their care.<sup>21</sup> While Capps' orients himself exclusively to the negative side of shame (Kohut's Tragic Self), we are interested in the positive function of shame. *It can stimulate conscience*. In the context of pastoral care and counselling, conscience can lead a person to a conversion to genuine presence.

In the work of James Fowler we find a helpful analysis of the interlinking between sin, shame and conscience.<sup>22</sup> He offers insights which we will be able to make good use of in describing the process of conversion to pastoral presence. Fowler asserts that shame is not itself sin, but rather an innate affect which activates the conscience and interrupts the pursuit of sin. '*Shame is not the act of sin*', he writes. '*Rather, it is the subjective amplification of the objective fact of the potential for separation or destruction of relation involved in the sinful act*' (his emphasis).<sup>23</sup> Fowler here uses the key notions of both Silvan Tomkins and Carl Schneider (see chapter 8 above). Tomkins views the affects as the primary psychological motivating mechanisms. When an affect is triggered it *amplifies* that with which it is associated (e.g. hunger pains, sexual urges, an interest in history). As Tomkins puts it: 'Without [the affect's] amplification, nothing else matters, and with its amplification anything can matter.'<sup>24</sup> With this in mind, Fowler asserts that the shame affect has the function of amplifying one's awareness that a current course of action has the potential to cause a serious breach in a relationship. The shame experience thus

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<sup>21</sup> No doubt, they will sometimes also feel some guilt. Shame and guilt tend to get tangled up together. Nonetheless, I believe it is right to identify shame as the dominant affect associated with presential failures by pastors and counsellors. Due to personal shortcomings, a helper sometimes falls into inauthentic ways of relating to those in his care. When he becomes aware of the fact that he has allowed his personal failings to impede the healing process, he will feel, I suggest, mainly shame. The shame ideation might, for example, run like this, 'What sort of counsellor am I when I am so often distracted and find it so difficult to be warm and empathic?' He will probably also feel some guilt: 'I feel bad that I said some things that were insensitive and obviously hurt Joe Bloggs' feelings'. However, in the context of failures in presence guilt tends to be somewhat in the background. The dominant feeling will be shame. The helper has not acted intentionally to hurt; rather, he has fallen short of his ideal for authentic relating and that has militated against his helping intention. He feels ashamed that he has not been able to transcend his fears and flaws. In contrast, think of a case of sexual abuse by a pastor or counsellor. Then guilt would be felt at least as strongly as, and probably more strongly than, shame. The primary reality confronting him is the fact that he is guilty of serious wrongdoing and has deeply hurt and traumatised the woman in his care.

<sup>22</sup> See J. Fowler, *Faithful Change*, chps. 6-8.

<sup>23</sup> J. Fowler, *Faithful Change*, p. 136.

<sup>24</sup> S. Tomkins, 'Shame', in *The Many Faces of Shame*, p. 137.

has a pre-emptive or anticipatory function. Fowler is referring, then, to the notion of shame-felt-before, *discretion-shame*, developed by Schneider. He, Schneider, connects it with the French concept of *pudeur* which refers to modesty or propriety.<sup>25</sup> Shame feelings can be anticipatory; we use them to protect ourselves from exposure and embarrassment. We take precautions in private activities such as intimate conversations and sexual intercourse to avoid unwelcome intrusion. To take the first case, two people wanting to talk confidentially will seek out a private place and they will converse in hushed tones. Discretion-shame functions here to guide the choices of where and how to speak. Now it may be that a third party walks in on the conversation and overhears part of it. Discretion-shame operates at this point to bring the conversation to an immediate halt. Both the partners in the previously private *tête-à-tête* naturally wish to limit the damage done. It is this experience -- damage limitation -- which Fowler is particularly interested in. In the context of relations with valued others, discretionary shame functions to interrupt an action or a particular line of conversation which may weaken the relationship. Consider, for example, this scenario. While in conversation with a friend, one is criticising a mutual acquaintance. The look on the friend's face, though, indicates that he disapproves of the attack on the other person. One feels ashamed and, wishing to limit the damage to the friendship, cuts short the critical rendition and changes the topic. In this kind of setting, observes Fowler, discretion-shame involves both 'instinctual evaluative responses' and the use of the 'moral imagination'.<sup>26</sup> Discretionary shame, he concludes, is clearly important in the operation of *conscience*. Below we will explore the way in which a counsellor may use discretion-shame to avoid a fall into distorted presence.

Above we saw how Barth associates disgrace-shame, shame-after-the-event, with a humble turning toward God and God's gracious offer of healing. Disgrace-shame, however, has links with sanctification as well as with justification. Here again, Fowler's thought is helpful. A person may feel ashamed of an isolated word or deed. More seriously, he may feel a sense of

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<sup>25</sup> See C. Schneider, *Shame, Exposure and Privacy*, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> See Fowler, *Faithful Change*, p. 105.

disgrace concerning an overall pattern of distorted attitudes and behaviours. Fowler observes that release from a sense of disgrace-shame involves revealing one's defects to a trusted person. One can work with a friend, pastor or counsellor in an attempt to change the destructive pattern defining one's way of being in the world. Thus, he concludes, disgrace-shame plays an important role in 'the punitive and self-reformative aspect of conscience'.<sup>27</sup>

Fowler has helpfully identified the intimate connection between, on the one hand, both discretion- and disgrace-shame, and on the other, conscience. Alongside the negative aspect of the shame dynamic is its positive role in activating conscience and promoting wholesome, constructive ways of relating to others. This observation will be used to demonstrate the important role of both discretion- and disgrace-shame in converting pastors and counsellors to genuine presence.

### ***THE DISCRETIONARY FUNCTION OF SHAME IN COUNSELLING***

Discretion-shame is shame-felt-before. A counsellor may experience shame feelings even though she has not at this point in time done anything wrong. A feeling of unworthiness may come, for example, because she is contemplating taking an easy, non-threatening route in the counselling process. That is, an awareness that opting for avoidance rather than constructive confrontation is a very real possibility leads to shame feelings. Counsellors avoid issues because, like anyone else, they wish to spare themselves the anxiety associated with tackling a difficult problem. It may be, say, that a counsellee has an aggressive tendency. In challenging him to work on attitudes and behaviours he feels defensive about it is likely that he will initially react angrily. If the counsellor feels especially vulnerable in the face of angry outbursts, she will be tempted to avoid areas about which the counsellee is sensitive. She knows, though, that to save herself means sacrificing his improvement. Even the thought of avoidance shames her.

The counsellor may attempt to defend against the shame feelings with rationalisations. For example, she may say to herself: 'We need more time to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

develop trust and rapport'. Or: 'A non-directive approach is what is required here; confronting him will be counterproductive'. The rationalisations may succeed in holding off shame feelings for a time, but it is likely that eventually the counsellor will have to face the fact that she is failing in her covenant of care. Reaching a point of honesty, she will be able to acknowledge that her subtle approach is not so much, as she would like to think, an indication of sensitivity and patience, but more a strategy for self-protection. As she grows in the conviction that her inaction is a sign that she cares more about 'self-defence' than client-improvement the shame feelings will intensify.

Fowler's analysis shows us that a shame reaction is an innate mechanism which has the purpose of changing a pattern of relating before serious damage is done to the relationship. In the context of counselling this means, I suggest, that *discretion-shame has the function of bringing a counsellor to a point of crisis*. As is often noted, the Chinese character for 'crisis' indicates both opportunity and danger. Associated with the shame feelings will be, on the one hand, a tingle of excitement, and on the other, a sense of apprehension. With reference to the present scenario, the sense of excitement, faint though it may be, arises out of an awareness in the counsellor that she has within her the strength to over-ride her anxiety and to do that which is right for her client. The benefits in finding the courage to move with the client into difficult areas are twofold. First, for the counsellor there is an opportunity to strengthen in herself the virtue of presence. Every time she acts in accordance with the requirements of genuine dialogue she grows in the virtue. To use the language of the virtue ethicists, the habit of presence grows stronger with each positive expression.<sup>28</sup> The faint stirrings of excitement are, of course, not only self-referential. They are associated with an awareness in the counsellor that she has an opportunity to do that which has the potential to move the counsellee in the direction of growth

The danger signal is associated, first, with an awareness that to follow one's conscience may lead to emotional suffering. The counsellor is aware that she may have to absorb some aggression. This suggests another source of

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<sup>28</sup> Reference was made above, in footnote 47 in chapter 7, to Aquinas' notion of virtue as a habit. In saying that a virtue is a habit, he means that it is a well-established disposition to act for the good. Every time a person acts virtuously, the disposition is more firmly established in her. She is developing a readiness to act virtuously when a situation calls for it.

danger. There is a very real possibility that she will not be able to resist taking the easy path. It is very tempting to structure the relationship solely around empathy and acceptance. She is rewarded for that by the counsellee. 'Speaking the truth in love', on the other hand, is a scary thought. She senses danger because she realises that she just may not be able to resist sinning against the counsellee and against herself.

Discretion-shame will bring a counsellor to a point of crisis. There is a critical period in the counselling process in which she must choose whether she is prepared to take 'the road less travelled'. Every time a counsellor acts in accordance with the requirements of genuine presence the virtue is strengthened in her. Conversely, every time she opts for the less demanding route the virtue is weakened. Everything depends on how she handles the crisis moment associated with discretionary shame.

Theologically, the crisis moment may be interpreted as a time for a 'yes' or a 'no' to God's leading and empowering. The Spirit is prompting the counsellor to seize the moment of opportunity. The courage needed to act rightly may be found in the Paraclete, the One who comes to our side in power and possibility.

Above we have been referring to the feelings of shame associated with the contemplation of avoidance behaviour. There is, however, another situation in the counselling process in which discretion-shame plays a vital role. Recall Fowler's observation that shame operates to interrupt a behaviour which is potentially damaging to a relationship. It may be, for example, that a counsellor catches himself engaging in a persecutory style of relating (chapter 10). Perhaps he has a tendency to reductionism. He enjoys the search for the neat categories which will capture his client so satisfactorily. At a point in a particular counselling relationship he cannot resist the temptation to share his clever interpretations. The disappointment and anger he senses in the counsellee, however, serve to wrench him out of his intellectual game. In that moment he is reminded that counselling is not primarily about cleverness and theory. He finds himself in touch again with his best wisdom, namely that it is the relationship that helps and heals. He feels shamed by his dialogical failure and immediately



sets about restoring the empathic flow in the relationship. Discretion-shame functions in this kind of setting to interrupt a style of being-with the client which is damaging to the relationship.

It is worth pointing out that the discretionary function of shame is only a possibility when the counsellor is *aware* of his tendency to distorted forms of presence. Consider the categories associated with a persecutory presence, namely intrusion, derogation and reductionism. A counsellor may not realise that he is actually guilty of relating in these destructive modes. He may think that he is being brave and direct when in fact he is actually manifesting his lack of sensitivity. He perhaps continues to unwittingly derogate clients through what he judges on a conscious level to be helpful insights. Or he may pride himself on his technical skill, overlooking to a large degree the importance of wisdom, empathy and compassion. It will be quite difficult for him, however, to maintain his delusions indefinitely. There will be some clients who will challenge his relational failures. It may be that he is able to blunt these challenges by relegating them to categories such as 'resistance' and 'shame defense'. If, on the other hand, he finds the courage, openness and honesty to let the confrontational word address him, if he is able to let it into his life, conversion is possible. It is the case now that shame feelings will be associated with his presential failures. He can no longer use insight-giving as a subtle means of asserting his superiority without feeling the pangs of shame. Whenever he finds himself handling the secret of the other roughly, he will be troubled by a sense of unworthiness. Openness, honesty and self-awareness, then, are necessary if discretion-shame is to function to interrupt a dysfunctional behaviour and prevent a serious dialogical failure.

### ***DISGRACE-SHAME AND 'CONVERSION' TO GENUINE PRESENCE***

Fowler points out that shame functions not only to interrupt behaviour which is potentially damaging to a valued relationship, it also has a role in changing persistent and destructive patterns of relating to others. When a person becomes aware of a personality trait which militates against genuine presence,

he may experience disgrace-shame. If he does, his shame feelings will activate the reforming function of the conscience. It is this idea that we will develop below. To help us, we will make use of both Barth's idea of shame through comparison with Christ and Marcel's idea of contemplation leading to 'conversion'.

Barth argues that because we are asked to compare ourselves with Christ we are necessarily shamed. Two reactions to this fact are possible. We may close our eyes to our shame and attempt to exalt ourselves, as the Pharisee in the parable did. Or we can, like the tax collector, face the reality openly and honestly and allow ourselves to feel ashamed. Barth sees in the feeling of disgrace-shame following a comparison with Christ the beginnings of faith and the possibility of reconciliation. Here, however, we are interested not in conversion to Christ but in conversion to genuine presence. For us too, though, the idea of a comparison with Christ is important.

It is, among other things, the affirming presence of Christ against which we who are counsellors and providers of pastoral care must measure ourselves. I have questioned his reflections on the link between sin and shame, but I can acknowledge that Donald Capps is at his best when he describes Jesus' way of mirroring (recall that mirroring is Kohut's term for affirmation and approval). Capps refers to two biblical stories which we have also discussed, though from very different perspectives, namely, the account of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Lk. 7:36-50) and the Johannine crucifixion scene (19:26-27).<sup>29</sup>

In and through her intimate actions, observes Capps, the woman risked being belittled and rejected. Instead of being ground down even further, she is uplifted and affirmed by Jesus. Her sensuous acts -- the wetting of his feet with her tears and the wiping of them with her hair, followed by the anointing -- left her wide open for rejection. She risked, she exposed herself, she made herself vulnerable. In order to do that she needed to trust herself, and she needed to trust Jesus. Her act of trust was rewarded; there was a very positive outcome. Capps perceptively comments: 'What could do more to lift her spirits....than this response to [the] critics: "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a

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<sup>29</sup> See D. Capps, *The Depleted Self*, pp. 162-165.

beautiful thing to me” (Matt. 26:12). What could do more to inspire her to a life no longer dominated by shame and insatiable neediness than his prediction, “Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her” (Matt. 26:13)...<sup>30</sup>

Capps, secondly, sees in the crucifixion scene as it is described by the fourth evangelist Jesus’ facilitation of positive mirroring between Mary and the beloved disciple.<sup>31</sup> He invites them to behold each other and a ‘bond of love’, the stuff of community, is established. In the beholding there is mirroring. Jesus enabled the man and the woman to see what he saw in each of them. In this way, he modelled a new style of relating. Capps comments:

It is often suggested that the Christian community began with the resurrection of Christ, with the disciples’ realization that he who was dead is now alive. But, according to the Gospel of John, for those who loved Jesus the most deeply--the group of mourners gathered around the cross--it began before he breathed his last breath, as a woman and a man beheld one another, and saw, in that moment, what the one on the cross had seen in the other. In that moment, a bond of love was established, a bond much stronger than shame, the death we die daily. By inviting them to behold one another, even as he was, even then, beholding them, Jesus exercised a new kind of authority, and *ushered in a new era in human relating* [emphasis added].<sup>32</sup>

Along with his compassion, sensitivity and a willingness to affirm and encourage, we find in Jesus the courage to speak the hard word when required. In the dialogue with the woman at the well (see chapter 9 above), for example, he was not afraid to confront her concerning her inability to sustain a married relationship and the irregularity in her current relationship. Jesus could be tender, and when the situation required it, he could be firm and direct. Further, as is made clear in numerous biblical stories, his style of relating is characterised by a willingness to make himself fully available. He exemplifies what it means to be-there-for-the-other. Not only is he present in terms of the gift of himself, he also makes time for others. The gospel accounts show how he manages to achieve the proper balance between making himself available and withdrawing for prayer and personal renewal. When it is appropriate, he does

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>31</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

not jealously guard his time and his personal space. On other occasions, he temporarily drops the demands of his ministry in search of emotional, physical and spiritual renewal. Of course, for those of us who are married and have families there can be no question of a straight comparison with Jesus in terms of being generous with one's time. The whole question of the management of time for those in ministry is a complex one. Balancing one's time with one's commitments is a particularly challenging task for most. One thing is certainly clear, and that is that those of us in ministry are not called to sacrifice our families and ourselves on the altar of service. We cannot take on an impossible burden; we need to choose which calls for help we can and must respond to and which ones we are able to pass on to others. Having made a choice, sitting now with this particular person, we are obliged to give him what he needs and deserves, namely our availability. He needs to feel that his minister has time for him, that his concerns are important and not simply one more thing to be squeezed into a busy schedule.

Though Jesus' situation and experience are in some respects different to ours, he nevertheless sets the standard for us in how to relate to others. Whether the reference is to mirroring, or to compassion and availability, or to constructive confrontation, he establishes an ideal to which we aspire. Inevitably we fall short of the ideal and feel unworthy. However, our shame feelings do have a positive function. They are an impetus to conversion to genuine presence.

In order to carry forward our reflections on the relationship between feeling ashamed and growing into genuine presence, we will at this point construct two typical scenarios in ministry. While these are not actual case studies, they are shaped around real personalities and real events. The first scenario involves a minister who allows his tendency to be task-oriented to militate against effective pastoral care. The second refers to a counsellor who is reluctant to broach sensitive moral issues because she is afraid of displeasing her clients.

**Scenario 1.** The Rev. Tony Smith is highly organised and takes pride in his ability to achieve a great deal in any given day. He is a diligent visitor to the homes of his parishioners. However, in his visits he is always conscious of time and attempts to keep firm control of the visit. When a person raises a concern his tendency is to close-off

exploration of the issue prematurely. Rather than patiently sit with the parishioner in order to allow the personal story to naturally unfold, Tony grabs at the issues and hastily pursues solutions.

Not surprisingly, some of his parishioners have reacted to this rough handling of their personal concerns by emotionally withdrawing. Mary Thompson is a case in point. She was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. She spoke in a very candid and open way with her elder, Bill Johnson, about her fears and anxieties. When her minister called, however, she spoke only briefly and superficially about her problem. Bill, unsure whether Tony Smith had heard about Mary's problem, mentioned their long and quite intense conversation. The minister wondered why Mary had failed to open-up to him during his visit and felt more than a little hurt. He decided to visit Mary again the next week. He would not, of course, mention the fact that he had heard from Bill that she was much more troubled than she had indicated to him. He simply wanted to give her the chance to share on a deep level with him. 'Mary', he said after a time of light conversation, 'I guess you must be feeling pretty worried just now. We didn't really get a chance to talk about it last week, did we?' Mary's response was polite, but it had an edge to it: 'Well, I know you're a busy man. I don't want to take up too much of your time with my problems. You're got so many other things to worry about.' Tony was stung by her dismissive remarks. He responded, however, by assuring her that he had all the time in the world just now to listen. Mary did in fact share some of her thoughts and feelings, but it was evident to her listener that she was still holding back from him.

Mary's cutting comment had the effect of bringing Tony face to face with a reality he had been ignoring. He was forced to accept the fact that he valued getting things done more highly than being-with-others. The sad truth that he has a tendency to squeeze the pain of others into his carefully controlled schedule was now forcing in on him. And he felt ashamed.

**Scenario 2.** Margaret Jones is a Christian who works as a student counsellor at the local university. She is firmly committed to the non-directive approach and believes that unconditional positive regard is the most significant factor in the promotion of healing and personal growth. She is currently working with John, a medical student in his early twenties. He is feeling dissatisfied both with his studies and with the prospect of becoming a doctor. He wants to clarify the issues and his feelings. John hates the way in which his father is always pushing him to be successful in his medical studies. He wonders if the calling to be a doctor is his or his father's. It could be, he realises, that his disaffection with his course is not so much a genuine realisation that he is in the wrong slot as a reaction to his father's constant pressure.

During the third counselling session, John mentions that the young woman he is living with, Jenny, is encouraging him to continue. 'She thinks', he says, 'that I would make an excellent doctor. She's madly in love with me and likes to see herself in a support role down the track.' John goes on to say that, 'What she doesn't realise is that our relationship probably won't go on forever.' 'Well', observes his counsellor, 'no one can be sure that their love is forever.' 'No, what I mean is that I only see myself sticking around for another couple of



years. Jenny's pretty immature and lacks confidence in herself. I want to help her get her head together and then I'll probably move on.' As John sees it, he 'can do a good thing for Jenny right now, but will eventually outgrow her'. When asked whether he has raised with Jenny any of his concerns about their relationship, he simply replies, 'No, I'll just let it ride for the moment. She couldn't handle it.'

Understandably, Margaret is troubled by John's paternalistic approach. She is also concerned that he is not prepared to be open with Jenny. However, she is very gentle in her comments: 'While you can't commit to Jenny for the long-term, you do care about her and want to help her to grow. At this point you don't think it's right to raise your concerns with her.' 'Yeah', John responds, 'that's about it. I'll know when its time to move on. I'm just going to do my best for her right now and let the future take care of itself.' After a short silence, John switches the conversation back to his concerns over his father's relentless pressure.

Later, Margaret is reflecting on the session. She wonders whether she should have challenged John in relation to his paternalistic and condescending approach to his relationship with Jenny, on the one hand, and his failure to raise with her his concerns about it, on the other. As she considers why she was so soft with her client, she begins to feel distinctly uncomfortable. The reality that she has been trying to hide behind her commitment to acceptance and the non-directive approach is showing itself. Her tendency to bracket out moral issues is not so much a consequence of her commitment to the person-centred approach as an expression of her own need to please, to be liked by her clients. She needs and enjoys the warm reaction to her affirming, accepting style. The fact that her clients would likely be displeased with a challenge to their value systems is something she feels very uncomfortable about. Seeing the situation as it really is, facing up to her own insecurities and the way in which she allows them to militate against effective counselling, she feels unworthy.

Both the Rev. Tony Smith and Margaret Jones have begun a process of introspection which Marcel calls 'contemplation' (see chapter 3). To contemplate is to engage in 'a kind of inward regrouping of one's resources, or a kind of ingatheredness; to contemplate is to ingather oneself in the presence of whatever is being contemplated, and this in such a fashion that the reality, confronting which one ingathers oneself, itself becomes a factor in the ingathering'.<sup>33</sup> Ingathering describes a process in which one draws near to the reality one contemplates and allows it to impact on one's life. That reality may be a landscape, a poem, or a work of art. It may also be a character trait which distorts one's relations with others.

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<sup>33</sup> Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, vol. 1, p. 126.



In order to illustrate the last mentioned possibility, Marcel refers to Emperor Augustus' struggle with his dark side as it is described in Corneille's tragedy, *Cinna*.<sup>34</sup> Augustus is a tyrant who ruthlessly dispatches any opposition. He has just discovered that one of his subjects, a man on whom he has previously showered favours, is leading a plot against his life. At first the emperor is overcome by indignation, rage, and a lust for vengeance. There is, though, something in Augustus which refuses to yield to these vengeful urges. He forces himself to look honestly at himself; he enters his inner depths where the voice of truth can be heard.

Cease to complain, but lay thy conscience bare:  
 One who spared none, how now should any spare?.....  
 Durst then tax Fate with an unjust decree,  
 Now, if thy friends aspire to see *thee* bleed,  
 Breaking those ties to which *thou* paid'st no heed?  
 Just is such treason, and the Gods approve!.....  
 As easy lost as won, thy state remove,  
 See traitors' swords in treacherous blood imbued,  
 And die, thou ingrate, by ingratitude!<sup>35</sup>

Marcel suggests that the soliloquy, taken in the context of the reflections preceding it, reveals *two modalities of the self* in Augustus. There is the self which lusts after vengeance; and there is the self which is capable of seeing the justice in the traitorous plot. Marcel goes on to observe that while in this act of contemplation Augustus turns inward his awareness of the outer world, what is happening in him is not so much introversion as *conversion*.<sup>36</sup> He does not use the word in a religious sense; Augustus is not converted to faith in God. Rather, Marcel refers to a conversion which is 'an act of inner creativity or transmutation'.<sup>37</sup> It has the character of a *return*, 'a return in which what is given *after* the return is not identical with what is given before'.<sup>38</sup> The terms 'transmutation' and 'a return' indicate the fact that ingathering involves a *withdrawing of oneself from one's own life*.<sup>39</sup> That is to say, it produces a gap

<sup>34</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 129-132.

<sup>35</sup> Corneille, *Cinna*, Act IV, scene 2; cited in Marcel, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>36</sup> Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, vol. 1, p. 131.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>39</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 136.

between one's being and one's life. Paradoxically, 'I am not my life, but in another sense, I am my life'. The two modalities of the self refer, then, to the *actual life* I have been leading, on the one hand, and to the *potential life* I carry within me, on the other. I am not my actual life without remainder; I am also the life I can be through creative development.

While the experiences of Tony Smith and Margaret Jones are much less intense than that of Augustus, it is evident that the same dynamic is operating for all three. They are, each in their different ways, faced with the possibilities and the challenges of growth. *A sense of shame becomes the catalyst for contemplation. Contemplation, in turn, opens the way for conversion.* Neither Tony nor Margaret need remain confined by their actual way-of-being-with-the-other. They have within them the potential for a new, more authentic, way of being present. Within them also, and most importantly, is the power of the Holy Spirit moving them to change and to grow. The real question is: Will they seize hold of the opportunity put before them?

### **CONCLUSION**

We began this chapter with an attempt to find an adequate description of the relationship between shame, sin and conscience. Donald Capps' argument that sin needs to be interpreted in terms of self-victimisation was judged to be flawed. Though there is always self-injury associated with sin, the concept requires a Godward orientation. There is no offence against God associated with the experience of inferiority. God is not offended (though God is grieved) by feelings of incompetence and defectiveness. We found in Karl Barth's orientation to moral shame a more adequate treatment of the relationship between sin and shame. We are all shamed through a comparison with the person and work of Jesus Christ. In this way, Barth points us in the direction of conscience. In James Fowler's analysis we found a helpful way of linking shame and conscience. He suggests that discretion-shame has the function of interrupting behaviour which is potentially damaging to a valued relationship. Observing the disapproval of the other, one's conscience is activated. It reminds one that the behaviour is wrong and needs to be immediately dropped. Disgrace-

shame, on the other hand, serves to alert a person to the fact that not just an isolated act but, more seriously, an overall pattern of life is destructive and needs to be changed.

These insights of Fowler's were applied in the context of pastoral care and counselling. We attempted to demonstrate, first, how discretion-shame works to prevent a fall into distorted presence. It leads a person to a crisis point. In the moment of crisis, he has the opportunity to turn his behaviour in the direction of genuine presence. Then we tried to show how disgrace-shame also has this positive function in modifying distorted ways of being with others. Shame feelings, arising out of the awareness that one has a character trait which militates against effective care, provide an impetus to contemplation. Through contemplation and openness to God's reforming power there is conversion to genuine presence.

## Thesis Conclusion

The primary thesis that I have argued is that *in pastoral relationships availability is before skills and techniques and confirmation is beyond empathy and acceptance*. While it is acknowledged that techniques certainly have a place in pastoral care and may be used to good effect, in the absence of giving of self, of real emotional availability, of genuine love and fidelity, they will be only minimally effective in facilitating healing and growth. Put differently, a person feels genuinely cared for not so much because she has received expert psychological assistance, as important as this is, but rather because she has received a gift of self from her pastor or counsellor. To be sure, too many pastors operate with a woeful lack of psychological and therapeutic knowledge. There are also counsellors who pay too little attention to skills training. It goes without saying that those offering care need to have a good grasp of available theories and techniques. However, in pastoral care and counselling availability is the *foundation* which supports skills and techniques. Without this solid base, the edifice of care is very shaky indeed.

In order to demonstrate that in Marcel's concept of *disponibilité* we have the foundation for pastoral care, we attempted to establish its affinities with the biblical notion of compassion. Some writers have suggested that the biblical notion of compassion is captured by the Rogerian terms acceptance and empathy. No doubt, in being accepting and empathic one is showing compassion. However, we have argued that beyond these core relational attitudes and skills, is a more profound communication of self. In the Old Testament, compassion is understood as an expression of an intimate attachment to the other. The seat of this emotion is identified as the womb or the heart. For Paul, compassion is more than the registering of emotion, it is an expression of one's total being at the deepest level. The Greek word he uses, *splánchnon*, originally referred to the 'inward parts of the body', or to the womb. These two terms, the womb and the heart, are very closely linked to Marcel's idea of the 'home-space'. To receive the hurt and distress of another is to receive her *chez*

*soi*, at home. We have argued on this basis that availability is a cognate term for the biblical notion of compassion and therefore qualifies as a foundational quality in pastoral care.

We developed the notion of disposability as foundational in pastoral care by referring to the important Marcelian concepts of *belonging* and *substitution*. 'Belonging' is also a rich biblical and theological term. Marcel refers to belonging to Christ -- the key fact in a life of faith. For the Hebrew people, personhood was defined through the belonging established in a covenantal relationship. Using the theology of covenant as a framework, we extended our understanding of the foundational role availability plays in pastoral care and counselling. The willingness to substitute the other's freedom for one's own is an important dimension in a covenantal relationship. It constitutes a fundamental attitude for the pastor and the pastoral counsellor.

A commitment to extend oneself in a relationship of belonging is foundational in pastoral care. Beyond this foundational moment, however, is an engagement with the other in her struggle to realise her God-endowed psychological, spiritual, and moral potentialities. We construed growth towards psychological wholeness in terms of a reclaiming of disavowed sub-selves. Beyond empathy and acceptance in the counselling relationship there is a need to sensitively confront the counsellee. In this case, the need is to confront him with his disowned polarities. The process does not stop there, however. It is necessary for the counsellor to facilitate an inner dialogue, a dialogue within the community of the Self, through which disavowed selves are integrated.

We have also developed an understanding of the explicitly moral dimension in confirmation. It has been our contention that there needs to be a greater role assigned in the theory and practice of pastoral care to conscience. In stimulating the conscience, the pastor or counsellor calls the person in her care to responsibility. Here, we found it helpful to differentiate between first- and second-order responsibility. First-order responsibility refers to those responses which are commonly embraced, conventional, in the family, in the church, and in the society. Creativity and conscientiousness define second-order responsibility. Pastors and counsellors, it was suggested, need to promote both

as they each have a role to play. An active conscience, though, brings into play the disquieting, disturbing impact of shame and guilt. An important part of the minister's or the counsellor's role is helping the person find avenues for effecting *reconciliation*. In a Reformed understanding, acts aimed at repairing damage to the order-of-being cannot justify a person. The significance of reconciliation is not found in the realm of soteriology, but rather in the moral and the psychological spheres. An attempt to heal the wound inflicted in the order-of-being is a moral imperative; it is one's duty. It also contributes to psychological well-being.

The overall aim in the second part of the thesis was to describe, on the one hand, what genuine presence looks like, and, on the other, how it functions in pastoral practice to assist a person towards healing, growth and wholeness. There is, of course, another side to the coin. Pastors and counsellors may subvert their intention to help and to heal through distortions in their way of being present. This we explored in part 3. Our argument was that when this happens, there is a potential for shame in *both* the provider and the recipient of care.

So that we could be clear about our terms, it was necessary to differentiate shame from guilt. In the moral sphere, the two affects get tangled up together. It is possible, nonetheless, to distinguish one from the other. Shame has a global reference, whereas guilt is connected to particular transgressions. In observing the pain and hurt one's actions have caused the other, one feels guilt. One feels remorse and begins to think of ways to make amends. However, in thinking of the damage to the other caused by one's actions, one immediately begins to question one's worth as a person. In other words, shame ideation operates in conjunction with the recognition of one's guilt. 'What sort of person am I to have done this bad thing?' one thinks. That is to say, I *do* things which cause me to feel guilty, but I *am* my shame. In essence, shame is a failure in valuing of the self.

Shame was linked to two forms of distorted presence, namely nonavailability and disconfirmation. In relation to the former, we made use of Marcel's concept of constancy. Constancy refers to a pretence of presence. In



company with a pastor or counsellor who is only shaming availability, one's sense of self-worth may drop. His lack of commitment may be received as a confirmation of the feeling that one does not really deserve a full expression of self-giving.

We also discussed the relationship between shame and nonavailability in the context of pastoral visitation. Connections were made between Marcel's reflections on the problem of fidelity and what we called a bipolar affective dynamic. A recession in the tide of compassion results in a pretence of availability. This may produce feelings of inauthenticity and unworthiness. Constancy generates shame. On the other hand, a recognition of the fact that one has dismissed all counter-urges and has chosen to be with the other in her need produces a boost to self-esteem.

In continuing our investigation of defective pastoral presence, we described three expressions of disconfirmation: intrusion, derogation, and reductionism. All of these tendencies in counsellors have a potential to heighten a person's feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.

We also applied the concept of disconfirmation in the context of care in the parish. It was observed that in our pastoral relationships we are constantly receiving a call to enter into a confirming dialogue. Sometimes we respond and sometimes we do not. While there may be a valid reason for turning away from the struggle, it may also be that behind the turning away is some personal failing. When a pastor cannot find the courage and the commitment to engage in the wrestling which is confirmation, there is a potential for shame.

While some writers emphasise the debilitating effects of shame, even going to the point of relating the self-victimisation associated with shame feelings to sin (D. Capps), our aim was to point-up a positive role for shame. Shame feelings, we argued, should not be construed in terms of sin, but rather linked to the reforming function of the conscience. The secondary thesis argued was that *the shame feelings a pastor or counsellor experiences as a result of his distorted way of being present have a potentially positive function, namely, moving him to a period of critical introspection in which he may grasp a vision of a higher capacity for genuine presence.* Shame feelings may lead a care

provider to a time of *contemplation*. In contemplation, a person is faced with two modalities of being. On the one hand, there is the actual self with its flaws and defects. On the other hand, there is the potential self: the new person one can become if one is prepared to make certain decisive changes. Looking squarely at his tendency to defective forms of presence, a pastor or counsellor may also see a vision of himself in which he is more available, more ready for the demands associated with confirming others. In a theological interpretation, the Holy Spirit has moved him to contemplation, and now empowers him for growth towards genuine presence.

Having recapitulated the arguments developed concerning genuine presence, defective presence and shame, it is important, I think, to both acknowledge the limitations in this research and to suggest avenues for further work. I recognise that I have limited these reflections on presence on the one hand to the pastor (or pastoral counsellor) and on the other to the sphere of the interpersonal. In the theory and practice of pastoral care, we are becoming increasingly aware of two facts. First, caregiving is a community endeavour. That is to say, while the minister has a key role to play personally, she needs also to facilitate a communal project of caregiving. Secondly, pastoral care needs to be oriented not only to the individual and his or her personal crises and needs but also to the society and its institutional values and commitments.

With these two facts in mind, I suggest the following in relation to possibilities for further research. We need better strategies and models, first, for enhancing the capacity for presence in the members of our congregations. If we are to more effectively mobilise the resources we have in our faith communities for providing care, we need to do a better job of equipping people. The question is, then: How can we best help the people of God to individually and corporately embody a healing, renewing, life-giving presence in the world?

Presence may be referred to ecclesial institutions (the community of faith); it is also an important factor in social and political institutions and systems. This suggests a second avenue for further research. We need, I believe, to build on the attempts to provide a theological and ethical interpretation of corporate and political presences in our society. For example, we are all aware

of the imposing physical presence of our corporations (the huge office towers), but we are perhaps less aware of the way in which their invisible presence shapes our lives and our world. Our values, commitments, attitudes and behaviours are formed to an extent by this covert business presence in our world. Where is this presence at work? what is its *modus operandi*? and how can we resist its unwholesome intentions? These are some of the questions which have been addressed and could be pursued more comprehensively. Think, too, of political presences. There is the public persona the politician so skilfully, and yet in the end unconvincingly, projects. And there is the 'real' presence which makes itself felt behind closed doors. Building on existing theological and ethical analyses of political systems and processes, it would be interesting to interpret contemporary political presences in our society.

There is, then, a need to widen our horizon to include communal and social presences. However, the reason that I have opted to concentrate on the interpersonal is that while a real personal presence is almost universally considered to be of capital importance, to be absolutely fundamental, in the pastoral context, it is quite difficult to formalise and conceptualise. It is even harder to live. With this in mind, I wish to finish with this thought. While not wanting to underestimate the complexities involved, it seems to me that the various theories and techniques associated with the psychotherapeutic schools can be learned relatively easily. Whatever difficulties there may be in appropriating healing techniques, they are small compared to those associated with living a life of presence. A person with the requisite ability and diligence can master interventions in a few short years. It takes a life-time, however, to even begin to grasp what it means to share in a real meeting with another human being.

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