The Changing Faces of Theological Education: Implications for Clinical Pastoral Education

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Approaches to clinical pastoral education (CPE) have in part been determined by the kind of students being supervised: what learning issues they present and personality styles and character structures they exhibit. The aim of this essay is to identify the changing demographic profile of seminary and CPE students and the changing styles and cultures in CPE and theological education in the past three decades. Although clinical pastoral education is the primary context for these observations, they are relevant for other instances of formation and supervision for ministry as well.

 I come at this topic primarily from my perch as a retired seminary professor of pastoral theology for over thirty years. Seminary teaching is, of course, a different enterprise than clinical supervision, and I make no pretense to have the kind of expertise and experience that you all have in your discipline. At the same time, teaching pastoral care and counseling and pastoral the-

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ology and related disciplines has kept me in close touch with the supervisory dimension of our field both in the classroom and in numerous clinical teaching and consultative sessions. I have had extensive CPE and pastoral counseling experience myself. Since most CPE students are or have been seminary students, we have faced common challenges in response to the changing student population over these thirty years. So I feel a real kinship with what you all are experiencing as changing supervisory issues with CPE students, as well as changes within the culture of CPE itself. The aim of this essay is to name and illuminate some of these changes.

Like any typology, this one offers types that seldom occur in pure form. The various types of CPE may mix together in a single group with a single supervisor, and individual CPE residents may have elements of more than one type of issue that calls for multiple emphases in supervision. I think it is useful to identify these types, however, even if they never exist in pure form because they give us a way to sort out the confusing mixture of what is going on in the world of clinical pastoral supervision and theological education today.

CLASSIC CPE

Personal Recollections

My experience of CPE in the 1960s was not necessarily typical of all CPE at that time. For purposes of this essay, however, I will use my experience as a window into what I will call "Classic CPE." My first unit of CPE in the summer of 1965 was at Trenton State Hospital in New Jersey. Trenton State was then a battered, old-line mental hospital which was crammed with long-term psychiatric patients.

I remember vividly my first encounter with Chaplain Kendrick Lee. Ken was an experienced, old-school CPE supervisor who inhabited a small, disorganized office crammed with papers and books. In my screening interview, Ken sat back in his old swivel chair gazing at me incredulously through a cloud of cigarette smoke, saying painfully little, letting me squirm as I attempted to answer his penetrating questions. I could tell he was not particularly impressed with me, an Ivy League hotshot recently admitted to Seward Hiltner's doctoral program. Finally, he asked, "Are you in pain?" In my self-assured sophistication I had never been asked such a question, not at home, not in church, not at Yale, not at Princeton. It felt like

a dagger through the heart. I could think of nothing to say. I knew it was an honest, good, important question. At length I stammered out my reply. "Yes." That was the beginning of my first unit of CPE.

It was a long hot summer at Trenton State. I am still filled with images and recollections of the suffering people in that ancient institution and my feeble efforts to relate to them as their pastor, very much wanting to feel professional and authoritative. I envied the authoritative medical and psychological people in white coats. As a group, we did verbatim analyses, reading discussions, and terrifying "open" group sessions that lacked a structured agenda, and required agonizing attempts to become honest with each other. It was a place where it could all hang out—indeed, where it was expected that it would all hang out. Our task, expressed in the mantra Ken repeatedly imprinted on our anxious hearts, was to become "open," meaning emotionally available, undefensive, stripped of everyday character armor. We were to learn how to give up our social pretenses and become expressive and emotionally honest. Such a thing was light years removed from my previous world of intellectual sophistication and cultural achievement. But however difficult and painful it was to let go of defenses and become, in the language of the 1960s, "real," it felt profoundly right to make the attempt. In fact, it felt truly religious. It seemed that what was at stake in becoming open was the very salvation of my soul.

All of this looks a bit quaint and naïve today, almost forty years later. I am now a bit more grown up and aware that human authenticity does not require the shedding of culture or the trappings of civilized social interaction. I have come to see that being "real" and "open" in the manner of the sixties was itself a kind of cultural artifice and not the pure, unadulterated expression of an irreducible and universal human nature. And I have learned much more about pastoral care since those naked existentialist lessons in the mental hospital. Nonetheless, I still value the insights gained in those hothouse group sessions, and believe that CPE left me a permanent and valuable legacy of emotional freedom that has enabled me, with all of my continuing personal limitations, to minister helpfully to hurting people.

General Features of Classic CPE

My experience of CPE in the mid-sixties was not unique. Ken Lee, a product of the old Council for Clinical Training, was perhaps a bit extreme in his methods even at that time. But in a fundamental sense, I believe his super-

vision and my experience as a first-quarter student, as we were then called, were typical of the clinical pastoral world of that time. I would identify the principal features of Classic CPE as follows:

- **Openness**. We were in the business of reducing or letting go of emotional defenses, interacting openly, and in particular sharing our ambivalent, shameful, or painful feelings. This expectation was assumed to be fundamental to establishing and sustaining pastoral relationships and providing pastoral care; it was also considered essential to being an authentic human being and was assumed to be self-evident and universally true.

- **Loosening Up**. Being open required loosening up legalistic and moralistic tendencies; becoming free, self-expressive, and flexibly contextual in moral life, not bound by rigid rules. "Rigidity" was indeed a cardinal sin—tough medicine for this Presbyterian, though it somehow felt salutary and corrective of my uptight Calvinist upbringing.

- **Achieving Authoritative Selfhood** Authority in human and pastoral relationships originated within the self, not in one's education, ecclesiastical identity, or professional competence. But one could only claim this authority interactively, mainly by asserting it over against the towering, intimidating presence of the clinical pastoral supervisor who, in old-time CPE, carried himself (it was always a "him") with the authority of God. Though he was Unitarian, Ken did a terrific impersonation, however unconsciously and unintentionally, of the remote, forbidding, yet strangely gracious God of high Calvinism. We all trembled at his feet, loving and hating him with equal passion. Salvation may have been by grace through faith, but it had to be realized and claimed through concerted effort and painful change in our personal relationships. Each of us, in our individual ways, resembled Jacob wrestling with the angel to achieve a blessing.

- **Peer Relations**. The powerful dynamic between supervisor and student (that I later learned to identify psychoanalytically as "oedipal") shaped our experience with peers as well. We learned to fight and love each other under the watchful eye of the father-supervisor, always seeking his praise when we were able to express authenticity, vulnerability, and openness, while dreading the curse of being found "closed," "defensive," or "rigid," which was as terrifying to our souls as any Calvinist damnation. Socially, our peer group was a crucible of existentialist struggle to "be with" each other and to form an "authentic" human community. It was easy to conclude that the whole church ought to be like a good CPE group—a place where people could be "real" with each other, where the phoniness of

everyday life could be left at the door, where life could be lived in its depths, where God is.

- **Theology**. Traditional CPE challenged us to engage the symbols and doctrines of faith existentially: to discover, for instance, what salvation or church "really" mean, what their cash value (as William James would have put it) is. This did not mean reducing religious ideas and symbols to psychological meanings (though it sometimes moved in that direction). At its best, Classic CPE deepened religious symbolism, made it more, not less, real and powerful. My summer at Trenton State was a time of both personal emancipation and religious renewal. However, the new wine of existential and psychological insight also threatened to burst the wineskins of my old faith.

Supervisory Methods and Philosophy

Confrontation. The main element of supervisory practice in my experience of Classic CPE was loving but firm and insightful confrontation. The supervisor challenged defensiveness and sought to dismantle the student's socially isolating "character armor," which was believed to be the most seriously limiting factor in pastoral relationships and caregiving. This required the supervisor to ask probing, uncomfortable questions under threat of disapproval if one evaded them. It assumed that the supervisor's own emotional warmth and ability to support and work with the student's painful struggles would be enough to deal with the deeper personality and character issues that inevitably arose. I am sure the balance between personal confrontation and support varied widely even among traditional supervisors, but some combination of the two was, I have gathered, central to the Classic CPE model.

Supervisor's Selfhood and Authority. Supervisors were expected to model emotional openness themselves. They needed to show that they were able to be intimate and nurturing as well as confronting, always honest, at home with their feelings, and able to claim their inner sense of authority and identity. Supervisors were at home with the full range of human feelings and experiences, yet able to acknowledge failings, blind spots, defensiveness, and immaturity. To be a supervisor was a big deal, and for a time I aspired to be one myself. It was also not uncommon, however, for traditional supervisors, out of their vaunted inner freedom, to fancy themselves as rebels, mavericks, and renegades, given to boasting of their unconventionality. My former Emory colleague, Charles Gerkin, once himself a

pretty good specimen of a Classic CPE supervisor, used to say that to "make supervisor" in those days, before today's complicated standards and elaborate bureaucratic procedures, candidates had to be able "to drink their certifying committee under the table!"

Theological Themes and Rationale
Existential Authenticity. An implicit theological justification accompanied this process: openness and honesty with self, neighbor, and God was construed as trust, the essence of faith. The intimate interpersonal group was an instance of sacred community, a model for the church. And the meaning of theology lay in its personal, existential significance for the self in its struggle for freedom, authenticity, and community. It was an interpersonal existentialist theology, not incompatible with traditional faith, but forged, tested, and authenticated in the fires of personal experience.

Social Alienation and the Human Problem. Classic CPE assumed that the basic human problem (grandly termed, following Hannah Arndt, "the human condition") involved the danger of loss of true self in an unauthentic, alienated collective identity. The collective identity included phony forms of selfhood devised to impress others (what Jung has taught us to call an over identification with one's "persona" or public image) and a tendency to hide behind formal, abstract religious institutions, doctrines, symbols, and rituals. CPE's task was to reverse these distancing and abstracting tendencies, to free us up for presumably more authentic living. It is not surprising that many supervisors favored existentialist theologians like Paul Tillich. Classic CPE in mid-twentieth century America reflected a wider existentialist protest against the threat of mass conformity.

SOCIAL-CRITICAL CPE

Many of the themes of Classic CPE continue today in varying degrees. I do not regard them as entirely anachronistic or inappropriate for our own time. There is still much of value in these ideals and practices, though today I believe most of us would want to broaden, temper, and revise them significantly. Since the 1960s and 1970s, two new patterns of philosophy and practice have emerged in CPE, creating a new cluster of issues for clinical pastoral supervision and new supervisory styles.

The first of these I call "Social-Critical CPE" to indicate a reorientation of the discipline toward issues of social location, power, and justice. Increasingly, it matters how one grasps and responds to one's place in the social order from a critical and moral perspective. This involves understanding how that social order was constructed and how it needs to be changed. It now matters a lot whether one is a male or female, black or white, Hispanic or Asian, or gay or straight.

This development began in the 1970s and 1980s with the influx of women and, to a lesser extent, racial and ethnic minorities into predominately white, male, Euro-American theological education. For these students, the problem of defensive character structure, interpersonal isolation, and authenticity was usually not a priority—at least not compared to what really mattered in their everyday life. The overwhelming fact of their experience was their minority or marginal status and their limited social and economic power. Concerns about character armor, defensiveness, and becoming open seemed the preoccupation of a privileged, powerful elite concerned with saving of their own souls from the phoniness and social isolation engendered by their own dominant and privileged status. What needed to be addressed was the game itself, the social structure, the way human beings were blindly categorized and relegated to the margins of power and status solely because of race, gender, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation.

Indeed, for many women, white and non-white, the whole idea of struggling to be become emotionally open was scarcely an issue. Whether for reasons of nature or nurture, women students in seminary and CPE typically felt more at home in the experience and language of emotion, self-expression, and personal relationships than most of their male colleagues. They soon became aware that Classic CPE, including its confrontational tactics and oedipal power struggles, was pitched to deal with the typical psychological issues and dynamics of white males and was, therefore, at best more or less irrelevant and at worst oppressive.

Underlying Assumptions of Social-Critical CPE
- **Social Inequality and Injustice** CPE supervisors and programs were challenged to turn their attention to the inequalities and injustices of the social order. Inner conflicts came to be viewed less as root causes or ineradicable expressions of personality problems or, more grandly, the "human condition," than as byproducts of repressive, unjust, and historically contingent structures of oppressive power. These in-

cluded male privilege, bias, and dominance over women; white and Euro-American supremacy over persons of color and non Euro-American cultures; assumptions about the superiority of western over non-western cultures, including western psychology, philosophy, and theology, and later, the presumptive superiority of straight over gay and lesbian persons. All of these were found to have been built on centuries of patriarchy, suppression, homophobia, colonialism, economic exploitation, and violence against those deemed inferior and marginal. Thus, "power" became a key concept in SocialCritical CPE. Power analysis subordinated or supplanted the analysis of emotional dynamics and psychological development in pastoral reflection.

- **Student Issues in Supervision** Inner and interpersonal psychological issues did not, of course, disappear; many concerns of Classic CPE continued to function forcefully. But such concerns were often in competition with or subordinated to a critique of the social context and its influence. Not infrequently, psychological issues themselves acquired new socially critical interpretations, as when, for instance, maladaptive patterns of personal behavior were ascribed to the debilitating effects of sexism or racism. The practical consequence was a commitment to expose, name, judge, and change the patriarchy, racism, and sexism within the CPE setting and within the process of CPE itself (and also in the seminaries). It also entailed learning new social skills, not the least being nonsexist, inclusive language.

- **Inclusiveness**. In the attempt to reverse the divisive and exclusionary practices of traditional society, socially-critical CPE students and programs seek to form socially diverse, inclusive communities, especially with respect to gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, and sexual orientation. In terms of individual subjectivity, this translates into an attitude of welcoming and hospitality toward other human beings regardless of social identity, power, or prestige. It also entails minimizing or depreciating the value of institutional and cultural boundaries and, hence, a marked preference for informality and unconditional acceptance in interpersonal relations.

- **Religion.** In Social-Critical CPE, the role of religious meanings and symbols shifts from an experience of their inner or existential meaning to their public and political significance and, more specifically, to their role in the dynamics of social dominance and oppression. One aim of pastoral care, insofar as it is socially critical, is therefore to critique concealed patterns of sexism and racism in their religious symbols and practices and to find ways to reform or eliminate them.

- **Theology**. These changes in religious orientation entail a shift from CPE's traditional themes of theological anthropology (personality, health and illness, character, sin, grace, faith, love, and so forth) to theological ethics and, specifically, to social ethics, social and cultural criticism, and the theology and practice of liberation (for example, feminist, womanist, black, gay, and lesbian). Large-scale, systemic evil looms as more problematic and threatening than individual sin. Justice, consciousness raising, social advocacy and liberation increasingly vie with healing and psychological growth as priority concerns.

- **Practical Limitations**. CPE students (and supervisors) also found that social-critical principles can be applied to the structures and CPE supervision itself. Though socially critical CPE residents and supervisors may spot the dynamics of oppression and exclusion in clinical pastoral situations, it is often hard to know whether or how to address them, given the immediacy of the families' emotional needs. Thus, social-critical perspectives often live a hybrid existence, combined eclectically with more traditional existentialist-personalistic theologies under the pressure of the immediate emotional needs of hospitalized patients and their families.

- **Contextualism and Relativism**. Accompanying these features of Social-Critical CPE is, I believe, a latent contextualism and moral relativism. By this I mean the conviction that human thinking and valuing is embedded within particular historical and cultural power arrangements. Social interconnectedness inextricably shapes thought and moral orientation and qualifies all claims to absolute or universal validity. No one's theology, it is believed, should be "imposed" upon or claimed to be applicable to anyone else because theologies, belief systems, and systems of moral value cannot be legitimately universalized. Thus, socially critical CPE students often seek a theology that merely "works" for them individually, or they adopt fragments of multiple theologies that "work" pragmatically in different kinds of situations.

Social-Critical Supervisory Methods and Philosophy
Social Selfhood and Social Analysis. In the social-critical perspective, human beings are first and most fundamentally constituted by social relationships and the configurations of social power and meaning. Thus, analysis of political and economic power arrangements trumps previous efforts to discover individual meaning and motivation. Who has power over whom and why? Who are abused, oppressed, or left out of society's power game? It is more the social system that must change than the individual student.

Egalitarianism and Supervisory Authority In Social-Critical CPE, a new ethic of egalitarianism replaces the older hierarchical configuration of authority and obligation. Supervisors are no longer awesome authority figures identified with a universal, unchanging religious and moral order, but senior peers on the journey to a more just church and society. They are distinguished from their students more by practical experience, expertise, and institutional responsibility than by formal status or characterological superiority. They are, therefore, fellow travelers in a moral and spiritual universe where all are pilgrims and seekers and where all have as much to learn from their supervisees as they have to teach. At the opposite extreme, supervisors and other senior authorities are sometimes disparaged as fossils embedded in a discredited culture of white, male patriarchy and dominance, hung up on their own authority, which they are perceived to abuse in the discharge of their supervisory duties.

Consciousness Raising. In Classic CPE supervision, the aim is depth confrontation. The moral and religious framework of the student is held constant, and the student is expected to change internally in order to discover the "true" or "inner" meaning of the normative culture. In Social-Critical CPE supervision, the aim shifts to a kind of conscious-raising in which students awaken to the gender, race, ethnic, and class bias and the embeddedness of their lives and of those whom they serve. This includes a comparable shift in their understanding and practice of ministry, whose principal concern becomes the promotion of just, nonviolent interpersonal relationships, social change, and justice for the oppressed and marginalized.

Critique of Supervisory Methods and Supervisors What once were regarded—by white male supervisors and CPE residents alike—as liberating encounters with paragons of pastoral compassion and authority, from a social-critical perspective are often viewed as struggles with oppressive, self interested authority grounded in the caste system of gender and race. Women and minorities often experience classic supervisory methods as abusive. Supervisors who define the goals of CPE as the achieving of openness and relationship through confrontation find themselves accused of exercising domineering power, exploiting student vulnerability, and requiring submission to their own authority in ways that replicate what these students had experienced all their lives in church and society. Consequently, many traditional supervisors

find themselves in the dock with their women and minority students, defending themselves against charges of patriarchy, sexism, and racism.

Challenges to the Supervisor's Own Development. For supervisors, this means learning to recognize ingrained patterns and practices of dominance and to think and act in new ways that no longer assume the privileges of social power and advantage. As many supervisors (and professors) from culturally dominant groups have discovered to their dismay, being an authority figure offers no immunity from the humbling experience of unexpected sexist or racist critique. Supervisors must learn to resist the temptation to respond to social critique by reflexively accusing students of "resisting" supervision in order "to avoid dealing with themselves," at least until after the social critique has been honestly weighed and personal issues carefully distinguished from valid social-critical concerns. Less confrontational, more supportive and socially critical forms of supervision often need to be learned as well. And supervisors must learn how to share power and become more conscious and affirmative of the existence, dignity, worth, and potential contributions of marginalized groups.

Challenges to Women's and Minority Students' Development. Marginalized students and supervisors themselves need to learn not only to name and challenge patterns of exploitation and dominance, but also to claim appropriate and effective power and responsibility for themselves within, or in relation to, unjust systems. This entails confronting the demons of racism and sexism that have taken residence within their own souls. Being a member of an oppressed minority gives one no free pass.

Theology. The theological game is played differently in SocialCritical CPE. The older theology—insofar as CPE had a "house theology"—was largely rooted in existentialism and a spirituality of personal authenticity. The social-critical outlook, by contrast, is closely tied to social criticism and power analysis and is typically rooted in a liberation theology of one sort or another (feminist, black, Asian, and so forth).

For most supervisors (and professors), the preferred supervisory philosophy is probably, in principle, a "both/and" approach, combining both classical and social-critical philosophies. Many older or more experienced supervisors, for whom the Classic CPE model is most familiar, have probably found themselves trying to incorporate some of the aims and concerns of Social-Critical CPE into the traditional approach. At the same time, youn-

ger, newer supervisors who may feel more at home with Social-Critical CPE nevertheless find themselves trying to draw from the enduring values of the earlier heritage without replicating its authoritarian, sexist, and racist attitudes and practices.

<center>POSTMODERN CPE</center>

A further major cultural shift has been taking place, more or less simultaneously with the social-critical turn, and is now evident in increasing numbers in our student bodies and training groups, generating its own special form of challenge, turmoil, and uncertainty. I will call this third cultural type "Postmodern CPE." "Postmodern" is a fashionable and easily abused term. In its generic form, it is an orientation to the world, and specifically to ministry and the learning process in CPE, that rejects all literal claims to universal, objective truth and to the possibility and legitimacy of comprehensive interpretive schemes concerning the meaning and purpose of life ("grand narratives"). Instead, it favors more modest, contextually relative, subjectively and pragmatically affirmed narratives.

If modernism was wedded to objective, universal understandings of truth and goodness, and to the power of science (including social science and psychology) to disclose such truth and goodness, postmodernism is the inverse—a more humble, reluctant voice that knows all too clearly its own subjectivity and contextual boundedness. It nevertheless finds it possible to get by, religiously, pastorally, and professionally, with poetic imagination, a non-literal appreciation of religious symbols, and a pragmatic ethics. It is more comfortable searching than asserting, more willing to tolerate ignorance or uncertainty than to build on what are regarded as deceptively solid foundations, more eager to trust poetic insight than the claims and methods of conventional science and psychology. Claims to objective fact, external authority and obligation, and well delineated intellectual, moral, or social boundaries are all suspect. They are insufficiently aware of their own contextual and subjective relativity—thus their tendency to support abusive and domineering social institutions and practices.

Negative Postmodern CPE

- **General Features**. With respect to CPE and theological education, postmodernism comes in two flavors: positive and negative. In the

negative form, postmodernism's valid insights are ironically absolutized. Relativity becomes relativism; a recognition of the subject and contextual nature of human knowing becomes a loss of confidence in any authoritative knowing; the social boundaries necessary for moral life and professional practice become blurred or are repudiated; and the inescapably subjective character of moral judgment and commitment give way to narcissism, that peculiar absorption with self that seems full of grandiosity and a sense of entitlement, lacking a sense of "centeredness."

• **Psychological Aspects**. Underneath this superficial, grandiose yet hungry self, according to the psychology of narcissism, lies rage: rage at externals—authority, standards, objectivity, and any one and anything that would seek to define the self, place boundaries on it, or hold it accountable. It includes rage at oneself—one's infinite emptiness and lack of direction—a rage that can easily turn despairing and violent. Some believe that this condition results from features of the contemporary American family, which, despite its material abundance, is often impoverished in terms of true caring and empathy and substantive, non exploitive, moral education.

• **Pedagogical and Vocational Aspects**. In seminary classes, there are students, often intelligent and charming, who regard any paper they write or any comment they make in class as inherently wonderful simply because they wrote or spoke it. It is, therefore, immune from critique and deserving of the highest appreciation and grade. They are often the ones who come to seminary from no particular religious or traditional background. They come seeking self-fulfillment in a profession that appeals to them on vague and impressionistic grounds. They are infatuated with something called "spirituality" but resistant to the requirements of spiritual discipline and institutional life, unwilling or unable to make significant commitments of self, and suspicious of theological formulations. They show up in CPE groups searching in the same way, groping for a future in which they can be "spiritual" through a ministry of care and counseling, yet resentful of what is required institutionally and professionally to realize their sense of vocation.

Supervision of Negative Postmodern CPE Students
Supervisory Difficulties. In CPE as in seminary teaching, students embodying a postmodern perspective present novel and frustrating problems. The relationships such trainees have with supervisors fluctuate from idealized adoration to rageful contempt, since there is little well formed "self" at the

center to which the supervisor can relate, much less engage with clinical critique. Patience, support, empathy, and gentle nudging seem unavoidable if such students are to be supervised or taught—if they can be supervised or taught at all. And that is a very real issue. For while such students may shine brightly for a time, eagerly drinking up our wisdom and apparently finding themselves under our wise and beneficent guidance, disillusionment inevitably sets in when the real work of teaching or supervising begins in the form of critique and accountability. The supervisory temptation in working with such students, in classroom or clinic, is to avoid criticism, return praise for praise, and build an unholy alliance of mutual admiration and "support," hoping to avoid their inevitable rage.

The Needy Self. Such needy and empty persons seek theological education and CPE to get fed, to suck on our personal and institutional breasts, to be cared for, and to find in us persons who will help them sustain not just their sense of self-esteem but their very sense of existence as real human beings. They require structure and support; they drain us with their needs and demands; and they easily enrage us with their sense of entitlement. They have difficulty functioning responsibly and professionally, taking initiative, and exercising judgment. Their future as pastors or care giving professionals is, at best, problematic.

Theology and Negative Postmodern CPE Students
Cheap Grace. There is, I think, a theology that often goes along with this: it is a pseudo-theology of "grace" that emphasizes an infinitely compassionate, loving, caring God devoted to human welfare—meaning basically to "my" welfare—who feeds the hungry without limit and makes no demands. Such a God sets no conditions and requires nothing that we would not willingly and eagerly give. Not transformation, certainly not repentance and forgiveness, but simple self expression is enough to satisfy this indulgent deity.

Community and Church. Social relations are equally undefined: such students idealize inclusive spiritual associations without institutional form, requirement, boundary, economic demand, authority, or historical substance. It is spirituality-lite, weak in tradition and institution, at bottom a projection of the underdeveloped self's infinite demands and desires.

Deceptions. Negative postmodernity may masquerade as theological sophistication or clinical professionalism. But over time, as institution (embodied in supervisor or professor) or theological tradition (in the form of aca-

demic or church authority) impose their requirements and resist the narcissist's rageful demands for unqualified approval, such students reveal their profoundly narcissistic core and the shallowness of their theologies of grace, inclusion, and entitlement.

Positive Postmodernism

- **General Features**. There is another, more positive form of postmodernism, however, one in which pluralism and relativity are recognized without the emptiness and formlessness of the narcissistic self. The positive form occurs as an expression of well-developed selfhood and community that are grounded in specific tradition but have come to value the form and demand of their tradition in a wider, more generous and appreciative way that recognizes its limitations and the richness of other traditions without abandoning the critically limited validity of its own.

- **Pluralism and Relativistic Perspectives** In positive postmodernism, pluralism and relativity do not function as corrosive acids that destroy substantive tradition or selfhood, but as enhancements to tradition and selfhood, liberating them from narrow, provincial boundedness to participate in a wide community of difference and diversity. Positive postmodernism yields not nihilism and despair but a critically cautious, positive hopefulness. It is life affirming for all, not just for oneself or one's community and tradition.

Supervision of Positive Postmodern CPE Students
Interpathy and the Widening of Horizons. The challenge of CPE and supervision for positive postmodern students lies in the opportunities it holds for intercultural and interracial experience, for seeking new meanings and possibilities in their own and other traditions for living and ministering in a multicultural world. For them personally, the challenge in learning the art of pastoral care lies in developing what David Augsburger has so helpfully named "interpathy," that expanded version of empathy that reaches across the chasms of cultural difference—between Asian and westerner, between Hispanic and Caucasian, between Black and White, even between men and women—and develops care and community within the acknowledgment of fundamental differences.

Challenges. The challenge in teaching and supervising positive postmodernists requires enabling such students to hold together the wide, pluralistic range of perspectives with which they operate without becoming

confused, lacking in boundaries, or despairing—to affirm the value of "the other" while maintaining a critical appreciation of and commitment to one's own tradition and identity in some post-critical form. It also requires developing one's own capacities for interpathy as supervisor or professor. One needs to become genuinely multicultural and comfortable with ambiguity, difference, and continuous change.

Theology and Positive Postmodern CPE Students
General Features. The kind of theology that resonates best with positive postmodern thinking and styles of professional conduct gives priority to narrative forms over logically organized systems, appreciates ambiguity, paradox, and pluralistic modes of thought, and is open to interfaith dialog and reflection. Students and supervisors working from a Postmodern CPE perspective will tend to distrust all literalism in theology and theory in favor of metaphorical, narrative, and symbolic insight. They will be less concerned with maintaining sharp professional and personal boundaries for themselves and others than with a more contextual, fluid, and pragmatic way of organizing work and relationships.

Complexity and Paradox. At the same time, they will avoid loss of all boundaries, disciplinary identities, and theoretical commitments. In a "both/and" world of paradox, professional roles, theoretical and theological commitments, and personal identities are simultaneously asserted and qualified contextually. They travel light, both holding on and letting go, appreciative of the ambiguities, uncertainties, and contextual influences that qualify every particular stance without slipping into cynicism. They are, therefore, able to appreciate and celebrate the irony, paradox, and mystery that surround and permeate everything human and are prepared to reflect theologically in those terms.

SOMEWHAT INCONCLUSIVE CONCLUSIONS

When we step back and view the whole panoply of contemporary cultures embodied in our student bodies, from classic and social-critical to postmodern, and our own need to keep our teaching and supervision in touch with these evolving cultural patterns, could it be any surprise that we often feel bewildered, confused, and frustrated if not exhausted in our attempts to carry out our own responsibilities faithfully and effectively? Many times, we

find ourselves simply wondering what these responsibilities really entail. What exactly should we be trying to do?

First, I hope this analysis helps us see more deeply the major overlapping and competing cultural trends we have been experiencing, refracted out into a spectrum where their individual hues and identities can be examined. It may also help us see our issues not solely or even primarily in terms of the individual personalities (or pathologies) of our students but to see individuals as bearers of various cultural styles.

Second, I hope this analysis dissuades us from assuming that cultural wavelengths that appeared earlier in our history are necessarily superseded by those that have come later. Just about any CPE group or seminary class or contextual education placement today is composed of shades of all three major cultural trends, often co-existing even within individual students. There are still plenty of theology students in contextual education or CPE for whom the classic model remains salient and for whom it may still be appropriate and helpful in some critically modified form. Moreover, students who seem thoroughly identified with social-critical or postmodern cultures may present supervisory issues like interpersonal defensiveness and social distance of the kind we associate mostly with the traditional culture. Yet there are many others whose issues are profoundly different from those of the classic era. The task of pastoral supervision is to distinguish what is cultural and what is psychological and to respond appropriately to each.

Third, significant opportunities for creativity and supervisory development may also be uncovered within this confusing picture. Pastoral supervisors and professors may once have presided over professional kingdoms in which we were the chief dispensers of saving clinical pastoral knowledge and wisdom, but social-critical and postmodern cultures are now sweeping those worlds away, in principle if not always in fact. And this may be all for the good. For in their place, we have the opportunity to discover our calling anew. It may take more modest, less ego-inflating forms. It may require that we develop a new kind of authority in place of the older hierarchical model, one that is more collegial, self-critical, pluralistic, and open to its own transformation. We may need to learn how to learn from our students, and how to be led by those we had assumed the right and competence to lead. The old supervisory game may not be over but it is surely changing and, at least in part, passing away. The question is: Will we have the courage, humility, and faith to forge a new and better one?