

PASTORAL PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION IN DIALOGUE: IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL CARE

Isabelle Noth, Christophe Morgenthaler, and Kathleen J. Greider (Eds)
Stuttgart : Kohlhammer, 2011. Soft cover. 240 pp. €29.90

*Reviewed by Pierre-Yves Brandt
University of Lausanne*

The aim of the book is to give space for an interdisciplinary dialogue between religion psychologists and pastoral carers. Eight topics are discussed: health, psychoanalysis, anthropology and neuroscience, meditation, multireligiosity, developmental psychology, gender, and gerontology.

For each topic, an essay written in English is followed by an answer in German. As explained by the editors in the introduction, the concept of the book originally was to have some chapters in German, followed by answers in English. Unfortunately, this concept was impracticable, since so many of the English speaking scholars could not read chapters in German. The result is nevertheless quite challenging, in terms of moving back and forth between essays and answers. Shafranske notes this challenge in considering whether to integrate these chapters in his afterword or dialogue with the essays and answers. He decides for dialogue, showing that the answers try to complement the arguments exposed in the essays, offering other viewpoints on the same topics. In that sense, the dialogue is collegial and collaborative. This is especially the case for the two first topics presented in the book. Klessmann, a professor of practical theology, offers a response to Pargament, a professor of psychology, and Abu-Raiya, a professor of social work. Similarly, but reversing the roles, Murken, a professor of psychology of religion, responds to Cooper-White, a professor of pastoral care.

Nevertheless, the integrative aspect is more dominant in the parts of the book devoted to the six other topics. Three essays are written in each case by two authors representing together both perspectives of the psychology of religion and of pastoral care: on anthropology and neuroscience by Brown (a professor of psychology) and Strawn (a professor pastoral care), on gender by Noth (a professor of pastoral care and psychology of religion) and Jonte-Pace (a professor of religious studies), and on gerontology by McFadden (a professor of psychology) and Ramsey (a professor of pastoral theology). Although each of the three remaining essays is written by a single author, they are all integrative, combining the two perspectives of the psychology of religion and of pastoral care. These are the essays on meditation by Doehring (a psychologist and professor of pastoral care), on religious multiplicity by Greider (a therapist and professor of practical theology), and on human development by Kelcourse (a mental health counselor and professor of pastoral care). For that reason, the

dialogue is not so much a dialogue between pastoral psychology and psychology of religion, but much more, for each topic, a dialogue between two viewpoints on how to articulate these two fields. For two topics, the answer is also given by a couple of authors representing an integrative perspective: on multi-religiosity by Morgenthaler (a psychologist and professor of pastoral care) and Noth (a professor of pastoral care and psychology of religion), and on gerontology by Kunz (a professor of pastoral care) and Martin (a professor of gerontopsychology). The answer on religious development is given by a professor of psychology, Perrig-Chiello, who writes her text as a complement to Kelcourse's essay. The three remaining answers are given by practical theologians: on anthropology and neuroscience by Steinmeier, on meditation by Kohli Reichenbach, and on gender by Wagner-Rau.

This asymmetry in the origin of the respondents is indicative of the research field to which these writings are addressed. It is pastoral psychology more than the psychology of religion. One main objective of many texts of the book is to improve the practice of pastoral care, especially in a Christian context. In that sense, this book also helps pastoral care to take into account criticisms from a psychological viewpoint; psychology is seen in the service of the education of pastoral carers. From that perspective, the book is really stimulating and opens a variety of paths.

A second objective is addressed to clinical psychologists: recommendations are made for a better integration of spirituality in their relations with patients (e.g. Abu-Raiya and Pargament in the chapter on health). However, the answer is not given by a clinical psychologist, but by a theologian. It would have been interesting to have the opinion of a clinician on the conditions for the integration of spirituality in a therapeutic practice.

Among the variety of psychological theories mentioned in the book, psychoanalysis and its legacy receives a large reception. Besides the specific section devoted to psychoanalysis (essay and answer), Freudian theory is dominant in the essay on gender. The essay on human development mentions, among others, Freud, Spitz, Stern, Winnicott, but also Erickson. Stern and Winnicott are also mentioned in the answers on anthropology and on gender; Winnicott alone in the essay and the answer on gerontology. In total, half of the texts refer to this tradition. This is not a coincidence. The first debates between pastoral care and psychology were those between Freud and Pfister, as referred to in the essay on gender. Psychoanalysis was the dominant psychological model which was received by the pastoral theologians. Nevertheless, it was not the only one, and after it, Carl Rogers, for example, became an alternative model for those who were introducing the *Clinician Pastoral Training* (CPT). Surprisingly, Rogers is totally absent from the book.

Another psychological model which constitutes a main trend in the psychology of religion is the psychology of coping. Pargament is not only one of the authors of the first essay published in the book, but he is also, as a major

figure of the psychology of religious coping, one to whom the essays on meditation and on gerontology refer. The essay on meditation discusses how different kinds of meditation can help people cope with stress. One of them is a practice called mindfulness. Inspired by Buddhist practices of meditation, this technique has become recently one of the possible treatments for coping with stress and depression. Considered by some psychiatrists a secular practice, it is included here among spiritually-integrative practices.

If most of the texts are written from the background of pastoral care in a Christian context, some of them broaden this context to other religious or spiritual traditions. The essay on meditation opens it to practices inspired by Buddhism. The essay on health includes results of studies conducted in an Islamic context. More specifically, the section on multi-religiosity discusses how to practice pastoral care with persons describing their own religious affiliation as double belonging or their identity as hybrid or their religious participation as multiple. These cases open the question of multicultural care of souls and the question of the cultural aspect of religion. These questions are carefully addressed by the answer of this essay.

This book offers a very rich panel of contributions. Some topics like human development or pastoral care with elderly people belong to the classical discourse on pastoral care, which is principally rooted in Christian theological proposals. Some other topics like meditation or multi-religiosity open new issues. They raise the question of how general a model of pastoral care can be. Should it be built inside a particular religious system? Or is it possible to integrate aspects from different cultures and religions in a single framework of pastoral care?

These questions make necessary a critical reflection on the anthropological foundations which underlie pastoral care. Philosophical aspects of these foundations are carefully discussed in the section on anthropology and neurosciences. Unfortunately, the viewpoint from anthropology as a social science is missing. It would have helped to compare how pastoral care takes place in various cultures, subcultures, and religious traditions.

To conclude, I recommend this book to anyone involved in pastoral care and to all psychotherapists interested in the integration of spirituality into their practice. One access limitation should however be mentioned: half of the book is in German. Access limitation to German texts by English speaking scholars will probably hinder the reception of this book by these scholars.