Sacred Spaces

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A Note from the Editors

Thank God we do not know the trials, obstacles, and travails that await us when we embark on a journey, otherwise we might think of easier excursions or simply set up our tent on the beach. Of course, when we begin packing for the trek we may have inklings, but these are only specters of what waits. Four years ago, James Hyde and I chatted about the need for a journal that specifically addressed pastoral counseling, as well as a journal that would take advantage of 21st century technologies in making connections to other national and international groups. A week later we had a conference call with Doug Ronsheim, who loved the idea. The first step, he suggested, was to write up a proposal for the Action Council. We developed a draft proposal that was sent to various folks (e.g., Joretta Marshall, Andy Lester, Emmanuel Lartey, Bill Harkins, and Kathleen Greider) in AAPC for comments. After some months of labor, we submitted the proposal to the Action Council and they enthusiastically accepted it, including it in AAPC's strategic plan.

The next step involved roping people in to be part of the implementation team. Sam Lee, Bill Schmidt, Evon Flessberg, and Elizabeth Walker volunteered. This team came up with creative ideas about how to structure the journal and invite people to participate in contributing their work. Sam Lee's wonderful idea of asking elders in AAPC to share their history and wisdom became one of the changes we made to the journal. [Carol Saussey's reflection and Rob Henderson's interview with Orlo Strunk fall under this genre.] The implementation team also had to deal with numerous issues regarding publication, as well as developing a web platform for the journal. After receiving grant money, David Haight answered many of our questions and constructed a platform for the

journal. We thought this would be our biggest challenge, but we soon discovered that it is very difficult for a new journal to develop a submission base. We continue to find ways to encourage contributions.

As we entered the final year, we asked the implementation team to serve as the first editorial board. Unfortunately Sam Lee had numerous other commitments. With Sam leaving, we invited three other scholars and clinicians—Kathleen Greider, Horace Griffin, and Bill Harkins. We are deeply grateful for the time and energy these folks have given to realize the goal of an AAPC e-journal.

One may set out on a journey, not knowing of the obstacles and challenges ahead, but one never reaches the summit alone or without a map. There are many people one meets on the way who offer needed companionship, help, humor, and hospitality. Of course, we know that the journey is not finished and, in many ways, has just begun. The journal's first issue is the initial phase of the journey. In fact, James and I know that the journal must become a possession of the members of AAPC if it is to continue and flourish. Your support, interest, encouragement, feedback, and contributions are needed as we set out to establish an e-journal that reaches out to pastoral counselors in the United States and throughout the world. We hope that the journal becomes a platform for learning and connecting—connecting with other members and members from cognate groups.

The map that led us to this first summit is the mission statement that was collaboratively constructed.

Sacred Spaces is a journal that endeavors to include a variety of theological and human science perspectives as well as quantitative and qualitative research in

addressing issues and topics relating to the theory and practice of pastoral counseling. It is our hope to encourage students, clinicians, supervisors, and teachers to write scholarly and reflective articles on topics that address clinical and theoretical issues in pastoral counseling. Sacred Spaces also seeks to partner with other organizations in developing creative educational, conversational, and writing opportunities for its members.

You will read in this inaugural issue articles that address diverse clinical and theoretical issues. In addition, we have included the voices of two prominent contributors to the field of pastoral care, counseling, and theology. Our hope is to have elders in the field share their wisdom and history so that the present generation and future generations of pastoral counselors deepen their appreciation of their history and increase their compassion and wisdom. We hope that you will join us on this journey and contribute to the life of this new journal. Please let us know if you have any thoughts and suggestions about the journal articles or the journal itself (rlamothe@saintmeinrad.edu).

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Cura Vitae: The Cure of Life and the Search To Be Real[1]

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Abstract

Cura animarum–the cure of souls–has defined much of Christian caregiving. A world suffering from poverty, health pandemics, and war may require a new paradigm. The cure of life–*cura vitae*–offers a new understanding of caregiving and seeks to find meaning for all people, regardless of their religious or philosophical orientation. In the counseling relationship, *cura vitae* is closely related to counselees searching to be real. Realness requires inner security and ego-strength, imagination, abilities to embrace one's destructiveness and to repair relationships, accessing one's emotional life, discovering self and others anew, and being playful. Persons who achieve realness can live creatively in a world come of age.

Key words Pastoral counseling, object relations theory, *cura vitae*, *cura animarum*

Introduction

How can one best describe a pastoral care for a world come of age, a world where firm foundations are deconstructed? This question is not new, since Christian caregivers throughout history have discerned ways to offer care. Historians William Clebsch and Charles Jaekle (1994) argue that at least eight paradigms of care can be identified since the first century, each closely following the culture of that specific era. As the fledgling Christian tradition began, caregiving focused on sustaining individuals in anticipation of the final judgment (the first era until 180 AD). This was followed by paradigms that focused on reconciling sinful persons to God (130-

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[1] This essay is based on an address given at the American Association of Pastoral Counselor's Midwest Region Conference, Fort Wayne (Indiana), September 2009.
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306 AD); on educative guidance during the time of the imperial church (306-500AD); and on inductive guidance during the Dark Ages (500-900AD). During medieval times, the focus was on sacramental healing (11th-13th centuries), followed by an emphasis on renewal and reconciliation during the Renaissance and the Reformation (13th-16th centuries). Shaped by the Enlightenment, the Christian tradition responded by sustaining pious and pure souls (17th-18th century). Finally, caregiving in the post-Christian era primarily addressed pastoral guidance towards spiritual growth and religious privacy (late 18th and 19th centuries). Today, we can identify a new paradigm, one best described not in terms of *cura animarum*, the cure of souls, but as *cura vitae*, the cure of life.

In his book, *Cura vitae: Illness and the cure of life*, South African theologian, Daniel Louw (2008) argues for this new paradigm in pastoral caregiving. In a scholarly manuscript, Louw, deeply touched by the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa, explores pastoral care that seeks meaning in suffering, trusts a futile world, and empowers living in the face of death (p.9), while questioning whether traditional approaches to caregiving can speak into today's world. *Cura vitae* is primarily preparatory and preventative: it prepares persons to face illness and death even as it empowers persons not to become ill or stuck in dysfunctional systems (p.10). Also, pastoral care as *cura vitae* is affirming of all lives, restorative, and transformational (p.13).

Embracing the uniqueness of personhood, *cura vitae* as the cure of life affirms individuality within multiple relational systems. It finds health in the presence of meaning rather than in the absence of illness. *Cura vitae* awakens hope. Louw summarizes his argument as follows (p.11):

> Cura vitae is about a theology of life and the healing of life… It is about hope, care, and the endeavor to give meaning to life within the reality of suffering, our human

vulnerability, and the ever-present predicament of trauma, illness, and sickness… Cura vitae is a theological attempt to create a paradigm shift in care giving from a predominant focus on our "knowing and doing" functions to our "being" functions.

Working within a (Dutch Reformed) Christian paradigm, Louw's work draws heavily on Christology and eschatology. In this article, I would like to build upon Louw's basic challenge to embrace a paradigm shift in pastoral care and counseling to focus on lives (and not souls or spirits or even problems) and to instill hope and restore human dignity. I will not be following Louw into the Christian tradition. Instead, I explore how an approach to caregiving informed by object relations theory can shape caregiving as *cura vitae*. More specifically, I focus on responding to *the search to be real* as a way to answer the challenge of curing lives. *The search to be real* was first identified by D.W. Winnicott (1896-1971) and followers of the Middle Group within object relations theory as a basic desire of a person; a desire that may have led the person to seek counseling in the first place.

Object relations theory: A seven-object psychology

The search to be real is central to an object relations understanding of emotional and relational health. Laplanche and Pontalis defines object relations as (1974, p.277):

> a designation for the subject's mode of relation to [his or her] world; this relation is the entire complex outcome of a particular organization of the personality… [It implies] interrelationship… involving not only the way the subject constitutes [his or her] objects but also the way these objects shape his/her actions."

Object relations theory asks about the relationships that formed a person and the person's relationships with himself or herself, other persons, and the outside world. The "object" within

object relations theory is most often a person, but can also be an inanimate object or even a belief system (See also, St. Clair, 1994, pp.7-8).

The relational emphasis within object relations theory is not limited to an individual or the individual's immediate relationships. Rather, due to its wide-ranging nature, object relations theory is well suited to inform caregiving as curing lives. Christopher Bollas describes this wide-ranging interest of object relations theory when he distinguishes between a "one-person psychology", a "two-person psychology" and object relations theory "overlapping circles of influence" (1999, pp.55-58). In a one-person psychology, thoughts and feelings derive fundamentally from the dream works of a self. In a two-person psychology the "ideas and feelings derive from the work of two engaged subjectivities" (p.55). Further describing the multi-dimensional nature of object relations theory, Bollas builds upon Marion Milner's concept of "overlapping circles" of influence (p.57). The circles, each identifying a psychology in itself, are 1) the self and the unconscious, 2) the self and mother, 3) the self and family, 4) the self and groups, 5) the self and society or culture, 6) the self and the universal order, and 7) the self and (transitional) objects that can move between circles 1-6. Bollas writes that one can "add further numbers designating other domains of mental life…" as counselees experience their world in unique ways (p.57). Even though Bollas does not identify it as such, one can argue that object-relations theory is a seven-object psychology covering all spheres of a person's life that informs meaning for a person.

The search to be real

From within this seven-object psychology comes the question: *What does it mean to be real*? The search for realness is as old as the humanity itself. It is beautifully described in Margery William's character, the Skin Horse, from her book, *The Velveteen Rabbit* (1922):

> "What is real?" asked the Rabbit one day . . . "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?" "Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become real." "Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit. "Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are real you don't mind being hurt." "Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?" "It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time . . . but once you are real, you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always."

The Skin Horse, in his wisdom, reminds us that realness is a process and closely tied to someone who loves another. One is loved into realness, loved into becoming alive. The holding environment that welcomes a person into this world is a determining factor. One's childhood home is such an environment. So too the counseling relationship. (Do you want to leave this as an incomplete sentence?)

In *HomeIs Where We Start From*, Winnicott distinguishes himself yet again from Freudian thought when he reflects on "The concept of a healthy individual." Winnicott writes: "I want finally to look at the life that the healthy person is able to live. What is life about? I do not need to know the answer, but we can agree that it is more nearly about BEING than about sex" (1986, p.34). He then continues (p.35):

> Being and feeling real belong essentially to health, and it is only if we can take being for granted that we can get on to the more positive things. I contend that this is not just a

value judgment, but that there is a link between individual emotional health and a sense
of feeling real. No doubt the vast majority of people take feeling real for granted, but at
what cost? To what extent are they denying the fact, namely, that there could be a danger
for them of feeling unreal, of feeling possessed, of feeling they are not themselves, of
falling forever, of having no orientation, of being annihilated, of being nothing, nowhere?
Health is not associated with denial of anything.

Being real, which for Winnicott is central to creative living, includes the ability to embrace
paradoxical tensions in one's own being. It also takes us back into early childhood fears, such as
being annihilated or a fear of falling forever, fears that follow us into adulthood in different
forms, such as the fear of failure and the fear of dying. When we deny the deep fears we carry
due to environmental breakdown or failure, Winnicott believed, realness cannot be achieved.

Counselors want to foster realness in their clients. Realness might also be the unspoken
wish that brings many counselees into counseling. For a counselor to facilitate realness in a
counselee, the quality of the relationship and not necessarily the technique used is the
determining factor. Realness within the counselor is thus important. Harry Guntrip (1901-1975),
the Methodist minister and object relations theorist best known for exploring schizoid
phenomena, those feelings of emptiness, detachment, and withdrawal a person can embody,
broached this sensitive topic of realness in the counselor. In his book, *Psychotherapy and
Religion,* Guntrip writes: "The psychotherapist has got to take the risk of being a real person,
with all [his or her] limitations as well as skill and experience, to the patient, so that the patient
may have a chance of becoming a real person with [him or her]" (1956, p.155). When counselors
are filled with "pretensions," Guntrip continues, when they "shelter behind technique" or when
they are "immature" they inevitably prohibit not only realness in their counselees, but the

counselors also are at risk of exploiting their counselees in the interest of their own unresolved emotional problems. Sketching an even worse scenario, Guntrip states that the counselor who does not achieve realness may even repeat the original injury of a counselee. If the cure of lives are best done when one life touches (or one can say loves) another, realness in the personhood of the counselor is of paramount importance.

Anticipating our argument that the cure of lives is central to our caregiving, Winnicott identifies realness as possibly more important than seeking a cure. In an essay entitled "The location of cultural experience," Winnicott asks: "What is life about? You may cure your patient and do not know what it is that makes him or her go on living," Winnicott continues (1993, p.100). For Winnicott, life is about living creatively, about being real. As a metaphor for life, however, realness is a rich and varied construct.

As of yet, I have not defined realness. I appreciate Winnicott scholar Dodi Goldman's definition as it guides *cura vitae* (1993, p.xvi):

> The notion of the real is about being alive, creative, spontaneous, and playful; cherishing one's uniqueness, accepting one's insignificance, tolerating one's destructive impulses, living with one's own insanity; feeling integrated while retaining the capacity for unintegration; being receptive and open and knowing how to make use of the world without needing to react to it; finding and contributing to the inherited cultural tradition; tolerating one's essential isolation without fleeing to false relationships or retreating into deleterious insulation.

A counselee can grow towards realness by facilitating within the counselee self-confidence and inner security and by helping the counselee to imaginatively and creatively engage his or her inner world, objective reality, and the world between the subjective and the objective.

Furthermore, as the counselee's emotional life is explored, the counselee learns that the counseling relationship is a facilitative relationship, changing his or her experience of self as well as the experience of others. As the counselee sees himself or herself in more nuanced ways, that skill is carried over into the counselee's relationship with others, discovering who they are as persons while refraining to engage persons from internalized preconceived notions. In addition, the counselee discovers a playful and creative approach to living while experiencing realness. In the remainder of this essay core moments along the path towards realness are explored.

Healing the basic fault within the devalued child

Reflecting on becoming a real person, Harry Guntrip states that most people hold a memory of being a "deflated and devalued child" (p.135). To this feeling persons respond by either becoming "hard" or "defiant" or "naughty", or they shrunk into themselves like snails. Guntrip continues (p.137):

> It is impossible for the individual to remedy this internal weakness by his own unaided efforts, so far as it is perpetuated in his unconscious by the repression of earliest phases of his life history, chiefly the experiences of the first five years…Bad-object relationships in infancy and childhood prevent the child from developing a strong and consolidated 'ego-structure', a firm sense of definite selfhood with positive characteristics and creative powers... The individual whose early ego-development has been stunted feels unequal to every task and feels that [he or she] will 'go to pieces' under every pressure.

For Guntrip, the person "never at bottom feels that [he or she] is one" and carries feelings of being "hollow, empty, unreal, or feeling a vacuum inside" (p.137). Feeling unequal in every task,

the person who lacks inner security dreads revisiting their childhood where they received their wounds. When dread and stress sets in, "cracks begin to appear and anxiety begins to break through from the deep-down inner world" (p.138)..

Almost forty years later, but in language similar to Guntrip's, psychiatrist and analyst Michael Balint identified "a basic fault" in a person with a compromised sense of self. He describes "patients [who] feel there is a fault within [them], a fault that must be put right. And it is felt as a fault, not a complex, not a conflict, not a situation" (1992, p.21). Persons with a basic fault carry a feeling that someone has failed them even as they carry much anxiety around their basic fault. The goal of counseling, Balint writes, then becomes assisting the counselee to "find himself, to accept himself, and to get on with himself, knowing all the time that there is a scar in himself, his basic fault, which cannot be 'analyzed' out of existence; moreover, he must be allowed to discover his way to the world of objects–and not be shown the 'right' way by some profound or correct interpretation" (p.180).

Guided by *cura vitae*, a counselor's first task might be to secure a sense of ego-strength and to address the basic fault within counselees. This will change the self-experience of persons who might protect themselves with defiance and hardness or who hide in their shells. Christopher Bollas, in his book, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*, identifies counselors as "transformational objects," persons changing the self-experience of others. Bollas writes that "[w]e have failed to take notice of the phenomenon in adult life of the wide-ranging collective search for an object that is identified with the metamorphosis of the self. In many religious faiths, for example, when the subject believes in the deity's actual potential to transform the total environment, [the person] sustains the terms of the earliest object

tie…" (1987, pp.15-16). Pastoral counselors follow Bollas in becoming transformational agents by changing the self-experience of their counselees.

Inviting a person into the intermediate area of experiencing

A second possible task for the counselor embracing *cura vitae* is stimulating and increasing a counselee's imaginative capacities. Without imagination experiences of hope, creativity, and engaging symbols, all central aspects of *cura vitae*, are not possible. Imagination takes us to that world between dreaming–the imagination of the inner-self–and sense perception, which belongs to the objective world. Winnicott argues for a "third world" in which one can live and without entering that world, health is not possible (1992b, p.230):

> There is the third part of the life of a human being, a part that we cannot ignore, an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which the inner reality and the external world both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping the inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related.

For Winnicott, this "area" between subjectivity and objectivity is an area filled with illusion, which held positive connotations for Winnicott. It is the "area" where one finds art, culture, tradition, and also religion. And just as adults do not challenge a small child who believes her teddy bear can speak, so too is the intermediate area of experiencing best left unchallenged.

The intermediate area of experiencing is a potential space were one finds not only objects of art and religion, but also a space where a person can imagine painful experiences in the past to avoid horrible experiences in his or her future. Imagining the pain one carries or even the

madness that is within us can deepen our sense of feeling real, as Michael Eigen writes (2004, p.26):

> Winnicott touches a place where madness makes us feel real. If we fail to reach the most frightening point of all, we may miss what is most personal in our beings. If we fail to reach for the most frightening point of breakdown in our search as persons, we will be leaving a crucial fact of self out.

"Therapy" Eigen continues, "seems a feeble response in light of the immensity of what we face, but it provides a place where people sit together and dip into processes that all too readily spin out of control in the world at large" (ibid). Pastoral care that does not have a generative component, leaving the world a better place for the current and future generations, is not curing lives.

The imaginative power and freedom one finds in the intermediate area of experiencing not only induces hope and diminish mad destruction, it also fosters creative living, which goes far beyond being creative. Creative living touches all aspects of one's life, one's relationships, one's behaviors, one's wants and needs. Reflecting on this freedom, Christopher Bollas finds no imagination or creativity in being compulsive. In his *Cracking Up: The Work of Unconscious Experience*, Bollas writes that "[p]sychoanalysts come across many people who lack the unconscious freedom necessary for creative living. Their freedom is restricted, their mind bound in anguished repetitions that terminate the dissemination of the self. This obstruction to freedom is easily observed in the person who is obsessed" (1995, p.71).

Caregiving as *cura vitae* seeks to facilitate inner-personal and inter-personal freedom and is well aware that we live in an obsessed world that has spun out of control. In this world, especially women and children, but also the earth itself are the victims of personal madness and

harmful repetitions. By allowing a counselee to imagine the madness within them, the likelihood that their madness will touch the lives of others diminishes. Moreover, by recognizing the duality of our existence, that we can embody madness while we function in this world, fosters a sense of realness in us. Realness never employs denial, even denial of our own mad tendencies, for such denial is a defensive stance of a self that cannot enter the intermediate area of experiencing.

Embracing one's destructiveness

Cura vitae seeks to facilitate personal madness and destruction in fantasy so that it need not become madness and destruction in reality. Fostering realness thus includes helping counselees acknowledge their inherent cruelty and greed. It also implies facilitating the acceptance of responsibility for ones thoughts and actions and how one impacts one's immediate relationships. *Cura vitae* actually seeks to instill a healthy sense of guilt as a way of being in the world, a guilt that should not be confused as the embodying of an external moral code, but as an inner need to repair broken relationships. In an essay entitled, "Aggression, guilt and reparation," Winnicott argued that someone with a personal sense of guilt could become a "fully integrated person…that takes full responsibility for all feelings and ideas that belong to being alive" (1997, p.137). Thus, rather than feeling guilty about the fact that we can hurt someone and possibly do, owning one's destructiveness awakens a desire to repair the relationship damaged by our destructiveness. An integrated person will repair personal relationships rather than feeling guilty. A failure of integration often leads to a denial of personal destructiveness and personal responsibility.

In a violent world pastoral counseling may be seen as ineffective it if does not empower counselees to be less destructive toward themselves and to others. Pastoral counselors invite counselees to imagine their own selves as not just destroyed, but possibly even annihilated, a

form of destruction that carries little hope for there was no reparation. Counselees discover their annihilated selves birthed from the annihilated selves of parents and caregiver and other authority figures. Within the counseling relationship, the annihilated selves of counselees receive reparation as the wounded selves become known, is felt, and accepted. Michael Eigen, in his book, *Feeling Matters*, reflects on the consequences of addressing annihilated selves and destruction in a therapeutic journey when he writes (2007, pp.141-142):

> My hope is that making room for the annihilated self will enable us to be less destructive. We often injure, even destroy each other, in order to reach the realness of our annihilated beings. How much destructiveness aims at "showing" how destroyed we feel. Therapy is one place to try to contact the annihilated self without destroying ourselves. Speaking, sensing, and imagining is a less costly method of discovery than giving in to the compulsion to destroy.

To be a real person is to be someone mindful of one's destructive potential, someone who can destroy in fantasy with an ability to repair relationships in reality. As Winnicott argued, realness required integration. Ann Ulanov, in her *Finding Space: Winnicott, God, and Psychic Reality*, echoes Winnicott when she writes that "[w]e reach the possibility of integration when we release our aggression from an omnipotence where we believe we can possess everything in reality that we desire in fantasy, touching the sober depths of imagination where we realize one thing at a time…" (2001, p.138). Ulanov follows Bollas who finds that within a counseling relationship the destruction is not contained to unconscious mental processes, but when the counselee destroys the counselor's wording and the counselor survives, for example, the patterns of repetition in the counselees mental structures are broken (1995, p.203). Similarly, Joyce Anne Slochower reminds us that a counselee's attacks towards the counselor might be ongoing and

unremitting even to the point of destroying a counselor's capacity to think. Tolerating such attacks is not only necessary and useful, but "crucial to therapeutic movement." (1996, p.80). Survival brings hope and restoration, while annihilation leads to despair.

Since aggression and the potential for much destructiveness are inherent to being human, *cura vitae* seeks creative ways to educate persons about their own destructiveness and to empower them towards owning responsibility for their own potential. Moreover, *cura vitae* provides persons with opportunities to not only re-experience some of the destructiveness they experienced before, but also to repair some of their annihilated selves they carry deep within themselves. This diminishes the likelihood of living out destruction within reality.

Becoming an emotional being

Despite Descartes more well known dictum, *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), we are more precisely defined by *sentio ergo sum* (I feel, therefore I am) (Forencich, 2006, p.63). *Cura vitae* envisions persons who can access their emotional lives and who are comfortable in their own skin. Being comfortable in a one-body relationship and resisting the desire to spill over into especially inappropriate two-body relationships signifies maturity. The emotional journey towards maturity takes many paths, including moving beyond a natural tendency to think one's emotions rather than feel them; growing away from loneliness to enter solitude, and inevitably revisiting the pain of emotional and other wounds. In short, one has to discover the unique history of our childhood, as Alice Miller urges in her book, *Prisoners of Childhood* (1981, pp.3-4). Being responsive to one's emotional life can cause much pain before we experience freedom. However, the freedom we receive is an enduring defense against the possibility of mental illness.

Counseling without a significant engagement of feelings is impossible to imagine. What Michael Eigen verbalizes for psychotherapy is true for pastoral counseling as well (2007, p.2):

Psychotherapy is based on the premise that feelings matter… It does so not as dogma but as exploration, tentatively, for wherever we dip into existential fields, more happens. The therapist is not someone outside the emotional universe. No one is. It is not that the therapist removes herself from the emotional field. It is more that she is more used to working with it from within. It is an illusion to think we get "outside" our emotional life…. Now the truth: no one gets used to working with emotion from within. To work within emotional fields is always more than one can do.

The emotional field is a challenge to engage because it is fraught with our wounds. When we receive emotional wounds in especially childhood, when the holding or facilitative environment failed us, Winnicott found that those moments become "frozen moments" (1992a, p.284). These moments take much emotional and spiritual energy to keep them from thawing, leaving little room for inner freedom and even spontaneity. In the counseling relationship those frozen moments are reached and they are allowed to become unfrozen. This thawing process, however, is not without pain and resistance. The result of entering one's pain is living without defenses such as grandiosity, narcissism, depression, shame, contempt, or the compulsion to repeat.

Cura vitae, as it seeks to cultivate emotional wellness in persons, recognizes that emotional health might not be possible without discovering the truths we carry about our childhoods. The counselor as an agent of *cura vitae* becomes a mirror in which the counselee can discover himself or herself anew. In this relationship, healthy inter-dependence is found and the counselee need not flee to false relationships nor retreat into isolation. The counselor becomes an echo (Miller, 1981,p.35), someone completely centered on the counselee's affective experience.

Paying close attention to the emotional lives of people is the positive contribution pastoral counselors offer. Like a midwife facilitating the birth of a baby, counselors witness the birth of emotional selves. This process, Eigen reminds us, can be time consuming, but then caregiving always offers others the gift of time (2007, p.1).

Discovering one's self and other anew

To be real is to discover oneself and others anew. Typically, we engage others and the world through preconceived notions or through projective mechanisms such as splitting, projection, projective identification, or through the lens of personal need. Splitting is the handling of anxiety or tension by seeing another person or group in either one of two ways: either good or bad, thereby splitting the loving and hurtful facets of experience (Ogden, 1986, p.50). Projection is the operation whereby qualities, feelings, wishes, or even objects, which a person refuses to recognize or accept in himself or herself, are expelled from the self and located in another person or group (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1974, p.356). Projective identification, in turn, is a concept that addresses the way in which feeling states corresponding to the unconscious fantasies of one person (the projector) are engendered in and processed by another person (the recipient), that is, the way in which one person makes use of another person to experience and contain an aspect of himself (Bollas, 1987, p.243). When these projective mechanisms are in operation, realness cannot be found since the other person cannot be engaged as an independent, subjective being.

Winnicott spoke about discovering the other in terms of object usage. He introduced the concept in a lecture titled "The Use of an Object and Relating through Identifications" given to the New York Psychoanalytic Society on 12 November 1968, a lecture that received much criticism (Winnicott, 1994). Winnicott noted that clients must place him as "*analyst outside the*

area of subjective phenomena" before they can make use of him (p.219). It is important to emphasize the fact that Winnicott used the word "use" in a very particular manner, as it refers more to the independent existence of an external object than to the subjective use of an object. He stated emphatically (p.226):

> By 'use' I do not mean 'exploitation.' As analysts, we know what it is like to be used, which means that we can see the end of the treatment, be it several years away. Many of our patients come with this problem already solved–they can use objects and they can use us and can use analysis, just as they have used their parents and their siblings and their homes. However, there are many patients who need us to be able to give them a capacity to use us. This for them is the analytic task.

In arguing for the use of an object, Winnicott distinguished object relating and object usage. In object relating, through projection mechanisms such as splitting and projection, something of the individual is found in the object, although it is enriched with feeling. *Object usage*, however, takes object relating for granted. It differs from object relating in that, to be used, the object must necessarily be real in the sense of being part of shared reality, and not a bundle of projections and identifications. The object's nature must be known and its independent existence must be accepted. The object within object usage is outside the fantasized omnipotent control of the individual and not part of a projective reality.

The growth from object relating to object usage indicates a central dynamic that occurs in the fantasy of the individual (p.222):

> This change [from relating to usage] means that the subject destroys the object. In other words, [the arm chair philosopher] will find that after 'subject relates to object' comes 'subject destroys object' (as it becomes external); and then may come '*object survives*

> destruction by the subject.' But there may not be survival. A new feature thus arrives in the theory of object-relating. The subject says to the object: 'I destroyed you,' and the object is there to receive the communication. From now the subject says: "Hullo object. I destroyed you. I love you. You have value to me because of your survival of my destruction of you. While I am loving you, I am destroying you all the time in unconscious *fantasy.*"

An object that survived subjective destruction becomes real. That is, as a person denies his or her presuppositions and preconceived notions to determine the nature of another person or group, the other person becomes a real entity with an independent subjectivity. This destruction in fantasy is a hopeful act leading to realness in the counselee who engaged in subjective destruction. It also offers the possibility of realness in the lives of whomever the person engages. When we meet someone as a real person and not as a subjective projection, we are less likely to injure or wound or dismiss that person, for we have entered into a significant relationship. Every person, for example, has to discover that their intimate partner or child is not the same person as the image alive in their minds. If that image can be destroyed, the person can discover a familiar person anew.

Becoming playful

A sixth theme within an object relations perspective on *cura vitae* addresses play and creative living. A person with a deep sense of inner security, someone who is imaginative, less destructive, able to hold emotion and repair relationships, and skilled at entering into deep relationships will be a playful person, for these capacities and skills are the building blocks for the capacity for play. Play is a transformational experience that can instill a sense of peace and

well-being even as it can defuse moments of tension and hostility. Play of course, can also awaken powerful emotions, emotions best held in a one-body relationship. Furthermore, even preoccupied play denies repetition and compulsion. As one loses oneself in play, its life-affirming nature and preventative and restorative functions are discovered.

In Ian Suttie's (1898-1935) classic text, *TheOrigins of Love and Hate* (published in 1935), he reflected on the impact of the early environment on one's capacity to love and hate. Reflecting on play, Suttie wrote (1988, p.18):

> Necessity is not "the mother of invention"; Play is. Play is a necessity, not merely to develop the bodily and mental faculties, but to give to the individual that reassuring contact with [his or her] fellows which [he or she] has lost when the mother's nurtural services are no longer required or offered. Conversation is mental play…

Pastoral counseling, rich in symbolic play as words, images, time, and other objects become "toys" to play with, is a form of mental play as Suttie envisioned. Play needs a play space and the counseling relationship offers that to a counselee. The mental play within the counselee and between the counselee and the counselor awakens the ability of play in a counselee. The counselee learns how to engage in subjective play but also how to play with others. When a counselee can play with his or her counselor, the counseling journey might be close to its conclusion. Play then describes *a way of being in the world* and not necessarily an activity. Winnicott believed that the presence of play allows a person to live creatively in the world (In, Davis & Wallbridge, 1990, p.61):

> Put lot in store on a child's play. If a child is playing there is room for a symptom or two, and if the child is able to enjoy playing, both alone and with other children, there is no very serious trouble afoot. If in this play is employed a rich imagination, and if so

pleasure is got from games that depend on exact perception of external reality, then you can be fairly happy. The playing shows that this child is capable, given reasonably good and stable surroundings, of developing a personal way of life, and eventually of becoming a whole human being, wanted as such, and welcomed by the world at large.

For object relations theorists, there is a direct relationship between the creative gestures of an infant and the more sophisticated living of an adult. For the infant and the adult alike, however, a feeling that life is worth living is the result. "Because of the continuing overlap of inner and outer worlds, the intensity of feeling and of the sense of Real invested in infantile experience and in playing is carried over into adult life" (In, Davis & Wallbridge, 1990, p.64). Elsewhere, Winnicott wrote that "[t]o be creative a person must exist and have a feeling of existing, not in conscious awareness, but as a basic place to operate from. Creativity is then doing that arises *out of* being..." (1986, p.39). Fostering a sense of being and not finding one's identity in doing, playing and creativity opens the possibility of seeing the world afresh, with new senses.

Cura vitae as the cure of life seeks to empower a basic form of living, a personal way of engaging the world. This creative experience allows for meaning to be discovered in the midst of life's ups and downs, for playing is filled with potential.

Conclusion

In his insightful book, *Against Happiness: In Praise of Melancholy*, Eric Williams asks: "What then, is America becoming?" He answers his own question (2009, p.20):

 It is turning into a nation of true consumers, people bent on taking in huge mouthfuls of Happy Meals, hoping too for a special prize, earned just for eating an imitation of a real

hamburger. What, really could be wrong with this? Apparently a lot could be wrong.

Look at what sort of people this culture is creating. I have seen them. You have too. They

haunt the gaudy and garish spaces of the world and ignore the dark margins. They tilt

their heads to the side, feign bemusement, and nod knowingly….

Pastoral counseling that cannot speak into our contemporary world where those at the margins

are ignored, a world where some individuals seem to thrive while billions are suffering in

poverty and violence, needs to revisit its own foundations. Building a pastoral care that focuses

on the cure of life is one possible path to reclaim relevance in a world come of age, a world

where "soul" and "care" can be informed by many religions leading into different directions.

Dodi Goldman might be correct when he writes that "[f]eeling real is more than existing,

it is finding a way to exist as oneself, and to relate to objects as oneself, and to have a sense into

which to retreat for relaxation" (1993, p.xx). Goldman believes that counselees, with increased

frequency, have the need to feel real. If a counselee leaves a counseling relationship feeling more

real compared to starting the journey, the journey was successful.

Cura vitae cultivates persons and families and systems to feel alive, creative,

spontaneous, and to be playful. It empowers persons to cherish their uniqueness while accepting

their inherent insignificance; persons who can tolerate their destructive impulses and embrace

their own insanity. It instills in persons the ability to hold the tension between feeling integrated

and unintegrated; to be receptive and responsive to their relationships and the world. And as real

persons, they avoid false relationships.

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Give Me a Doll!

Brian Grant, Ph.D[1]

Abstract A 30-year treatment of a DDNOS woman is presented, highlighting her introduction of play, art, and movement into a process otherwise structured by object relations theory. The therapy is interpreted from the standpoints of contemporary mentalization, attachment, and trauma theories, illustrating the gains achieved by making space for client-initiated broadening of the primarily verbal psychoanalytic psychotherapy frame.

Keywords play, art, mentalization, dissociation, object relations

"Give me a doll!" the client demanded, several months into our individual work. Nothing in my *ad hoc* training as a psychoanalytically oriented therapist provided a clear mandate about how to respond. This woman, then in her early 40's and suffering from what we would now diagnose as Dissociative Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified (such categories weren't clear, at least to me, 30 years ago) had been mute during many sessions (echoing six months of elective mutism as a pre-school child), glowered angrily at me much of the time, and experienced muscular events resembling *grand mal* seizures (neurologist said they weren't) when we approached traumatic memories. Being loyal to my admittedly unsystematic theoretical home wasn't getting us very far, so I was ready to be led.

I looked for dolls at a few garage sales and offered a couple of badly worn ones, which were spurned. A few weeks later she came into session with a bag (an event repeated many times over the ensuing years), pulled out a new Cabbage Patch doll, and

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said "Give me <u>this</u> doll!" It obviously was important that I do the giving, and important that this doll had the name "Kitty," my client's nickname as a toddler, etched on the little cubes that formed the bracelet on her left wrist.

Three critical events followed within weeks: (1) She asked to meet in a room where she could use paints (my office was carpeted), and in that room used finger-paints to relive a scene of molestation at a very early age; (2) She began experiencing difficulty sitting up in session—the couch wasn't long enough to lie on—so we moved to the floor; and (3) in the same session, she took Kitty by the arm and threw her viciously across the room. As we pieced those dramatic scenes together, it became clear that she remembered, in a state in which she could not sit up, being molested by her father in her crib, then being thrown across the room in his nearly fatal (to her) self-disgust. She never saw her father again. Kitty retains a little mark on her face from the collision with a piece of my office furniture.

Other dolls followed, at widely separated intervals. The first was a snarling protector, "Yttik," non-verbal like Kitty, but powerful, invulnerable, angry, and sadistic. For years he regulated Kitty's access to relationships, education, and self-expression. Subsequently a much smaller doll appeared called by the name the client uses in daily life. She is approximately kindergarten age, and was followed years later by a slightly older wisdom figure the same size as Kitty and Yttik. After another year or two a spider was introduced, and placed in the weekly tableau of figures (on my side of the room). Then a fearsome little tiger, also on my side, who is prominent when she finds me too curious. More recently a much smaller spider was introduced, who occupies Kitty's side of the shared space and whose web connects her various parts in drawings and tableaus.

In the process I've been taught about internal objects, trauma, dissociation, the dangers of knowing too much and the pain of experiencing a radical not-knowing ("what the **** am I doing?") while carrying the obligation to participate in healing. This has been terribly serious, moving, powerful play.

Peter Fonagy and colleagues (Fonagy, et. al. 2002) endorse Vygotsky's (1978) argument that children's play is often at a more advanced mental age than anything else they can do. "Playing or pretending … reveals surprising competencies, while at other times it offers opportunities for regression and the expression of unconscious concerns" (Fonagy, et. al., 2002, p.262).

This brief paper is not about the therapist's creativity and playfulness. Rather, it is a reminder that the client's creativity and playfulness, especially with the materials of the client's own life, is the primary therapeutic fuel. Our task is to simultaneously provide the structure in which play can safely happen, keep out of clients' way so they can learn and experience, and be available to be led into shared spaces we did not know existed.

The paper's basic assumption is that developing human beings, a category including all children and clients (and hopefully most of the rest of us), will play if provided sufficient safety and freedom from obligatory tasks. The safety is provided by a concentric circle of structures—culture, nation, extended family—but most immediately by a person. Winnicott (1958) describes the "environment-mother," whose provision of sustenance, continuity, and a place for the child in her mind, allows what he terms "going on being" (p.303) the capacity of the very young child to sustain a sense of a life that is its own. Her non-impinging presence allows the infant to "be alone in the presence of the other." In that aloneness, and later with others, under broadening sponsorship, the

growing human will play. In that play, in what Fonagy (2002) describes as the "pretend mode," the fledgling person will discover/invent a vision of the world that is sufficiently his own that he can invest it with hope in its capacity for consummation.

Much of play's beauty lies in its optionality. In what Winnicott (1958) calls transitional space or Fonagy (2002) terms pretending, the child can play with different editions of reality, exploring alternate possible outcomes without having to commit to things being just a certain way. "The small child playing," Fonagy writes, can think about thoughts as thoughts because these are clearly and deliberately stripped of their connection to the real world of people and even things" (p.263). This is in stark contrast to impingement, the interruption of the child's structuring of experience. Impingement often produces cognitive arrest at the level of psychic equivalency, where there is only one possible version of how things are, imposing itself on the experiential field and obliterating all other possibilities (Ogden, 1989).

The relation between play and the other is crucial in child-rearing and central to psychotherapy. Fonagy and colleagues (Fonagy, 2002) describe the role of first the caregiver and later the playmate as developing a mental image of the child's shifting state of mind, which shows in the older person's expressions, movements, and tones of voice. The child responds to the way she is represented in the mind of the other, as shown through those responses. This echoes Bion's (1970) discussion of the mother's reverie holding the inchoate behavioral fragments emitted by the child emits, and returning them to the child in manageable form. The other's picture of the child's self becomes the skeleton around which the child's own self-awareness playfully and experimentally forms. "The child needs an adult or older child who will 'play along,' so that the child

can see his fantasy or idea represented in the adult's mind, reintroject this, and use it as a representation of his own thinking" (Fonagy, 2002, p.266).

Last week my client began the session by presenting a simple, diagrammatic, picture. There were two large circles, drawn in different colors, with a small area of overlap. In the circle on her side of the paper two thick lines were drawn, following the arc of the overlap and setting a boundary between it and the rest of her circle. There was no comparable boundary in the other circle, on my side of the paper. I commented that she appeared to want a barrier against too intense an interaction, too much influence from me. That led to a conversation about fear of closeness, about distraction caused by her husband's current illness and resulting irritability/intrusiveness, and her concern that I might have too many questions about these external details of her life. Then she asked what creates barriers in my circle, producing an exploration of the ways in which we are both alike and different. Promptly, she opened a small box and presented the spider that represents (in my thinking) her integrative process. It landed in the middle of her circle. I moved mine from the carpet—where she had originally placed it—into the circle on my side of the paper. Both smiled and the session ended.

"The child's mental state must be represented sufficiently clearly and accurately for the child to recognize it, yet sufficiently playfully for the child not to be overwhelmed by its realness," Fonagy (2002, p.267) writes. If this therapist gets too concrete, asks too many questions about events in her outside life, she will take the (hungry) tiger and turn it away from the center of our playful work. She tries again and again to remind me that the heart of what we're doing is in the relationship between her dissociated parts, between those parts and my parts; and only secondarily between me and her life outside

of therapy. The latter is both too real to allow for play, and secondary to the yearning to get these internal connections integrated.

Fonagy contends that the therapist's or caregiver's regular linking of reality and fantasy, in a way that the one cared for recognizes as accepting, creates a basis for the latter to achieve this playful mentalization herself. "The essence of the process is…play that breaks away from psychic equivalence while retaining contact with reality." The child, or client, then uses the parent or therapist's mind to "play with reality" (Fonagy, 2002, p.267).

About halfway through our years together I said something to the client about the current state of her self. She replied, "That word had no meaning to me before we started." Much psychotherapy, like child-raising, is a process of self-development. For many of us, the bulk of our time with clients focuses on the elaboration of self. The therapist's mind, informed by the offerings of the client, is the structure around which the latter's playful experimentation gradually coheres into self.

This picks up a central theme from Winnicott, one also elaborated by contemporary writers on dissociation. For Winnicott, the generation of self is a developmental achievement that completely depends on creative play. "It is only in being creative that the person discovers the self" (Winnicott, 1971, p.54). This quote directly follows his assertion that *only* play allows creativity. He contends that "*psychotherapy is done in the overlap of the two play areas, that of the patient and that of the therapist.*"(p.54 [italics his]) Winnicott states further that "If the therapist cannot play, then he is not suitable for the work" (p.54). When I cannot play, the tiger moves in and the client clams up.

Winnicott's (1971) theory of play reminds us that "playing itself is a therapy" (p.50, but, because it always carries the possibility of fear, responsible persons must be present. (I'm reminded of a cartoon caption where a therapist is warning a client, "unsupervised introspection is not recommended.") Without that necessary other, play will often not begin. There is too much awareness of the possibility of danger. The child, or client, will be too alert, wary, and conscious. Winnicott is aware that the client may be unable to play in the session, and identifies the therapist's first task in such situations as being *"bringing the patient from a state of not being able to play into a state of being able to play"* (p. 38 [italics his]). This is a corollary of Wilhelm Reich's (1933) classic mandate that there should be no content interpretation when there is a resistance interpretation still to be made, because it is the resistance, the defense, what Winnicott calls the need to make sense out of nonsense, that inhibits playing.

The play evolves in a typical developmental trajectory. Winnicott (1971) describes one child patient who was unable to play until he sat for a while on the therapist's lap, then moved to the floor and into the first stage of play, being alone in the presence of someone. "The child is now playing on the basis of the assumption that the person who loves and who is therefore reliable is available and continues to be available when remembered after being forgotten" (p.47-8). The next stage allows the overlap of two play areas, where the new input from the other, if it stays within the realm of play, frees the child/client to continue exploration and development of self.

Winnicott issues a warning that I repeat here, and hope to remember myself. "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" (p.57). This client has deeply humbled my sense of knowing

The first play-artifact—a piece of her art—that came into a session was dramatic. It appeared during the period of pseudo-seizures and the emergence of traumatic memories, and consisted of a newsprint-sized piece of art paper, mounted on a centrifuge-like device for spinning the paper. The paper carried a wild, Guernica-like, chilling collection of abstractly-represented body parts in starkly contrasting vivid black and white, with occasional splashes of brilliant blood red. She presented it, spun it, saying "I'm coming apart." Making the picture, spinning it, seeing me react to it, enabled her to put words on it – and move us in a modestly unified fashion towards my more verbal world. The parts would all fit on the paper, and in the experience of self-cohesion being challenged, self was beginning to be noticed and thus to cohere.

Van der Hart and colleagues (Van der Hart, et. al., 2006) have observed that play, like other human action systems, is often limited to one part of the personality, not readily available across dissociative splits. With this client, deeply important interpersonal experiences are much less accessible to her verbal parts than to those aspects of self that are representable as pictures. If one insists on words, she can't bring those memories and affects on-line. Once they are playfully, artistically, represented— and often once I've responded to them with my very primitive artistic efforts—they can be kept in consciousness and processed verbally. Some of that verbal exchange has progressed to story, with occasional pencil and paper narratives arising to recount a dream or relay a fantasy – always having to do with accretions to self.

Attachment theorists such as David Wallin (Wallin, 2007) have linked the phenomenon of the secure base with the growing self's ability to modulate affect and prevent disabling affect storms. (The pseudo-seizures were precisely affect storms, leaving her dazed and physically unsteady.) This joint achievement, the secure base, of care-giver and receiver "makes it possible for the child (or patient) to explore: to look into the face, the mind, and the heart of the caregiver (or therapist) and to find there a reflection of himself as an 'intentional being,'" (p.144) in turn enabling sharing of feelings, exploration, and play.

Bromberg (2006) makes a similar observation: "New words about the self can be tasted pleasurably only in the safety of a relational context that provides a sense of security and continuity" (p.53). Words are crucial, but at this depth they come late. Early words establish overt contracts, test whether earlier achievements of secure attachment can be grafted into this relationship, and inform preliminary aspects of play. Once a client believes in the hope that this relationship may become a secure base, play can begin – first largely solitarily in the therapist's presence, then increasingly overlapping. Playfulness can always be lost, and is never automatically resumed at the beginning of a session; but it is usually recoverable when it has once been established. Once present, it is the primary vehicle for self-formation.

Self forms in the context of a relationship that visibly honors a claim. The content of the claim, never fully guaranteed, is that the claimant has the right to the presence, the emotional availability, the mobile attention, and the influenceability of the other. The honoring must include the willingness of parent or therapist to "not know where this is going" in any given moment, though we may/must have loosely held ideas about where a

good place to go would be. Clients' discovery of our commitment to let go of knowing allows them to awaken to what they are coming to know—playfully, experimentally, half-consciously. As they notice these products of playful learning, elements of self— what van der Hart calls action systems—that had been mutually ignorant discover safe points of overlap, mediated by the secure base of the honored claim, and inform one another; and new action systems come into being and develop fuller, more complex and widely applicable ways to integrate internal processes and influence external ones. Mental level elevates and mental efficiency, in van der Hart's (2006) language, expands.

My client's life is much different. She has co-authored scientific papers, informed senior scientists by means of what her dyslexia allows her to see that they cannot, traveled the world and led others into new explorations, become a voice for justice and change in her extended family, and embraced the care-giver role with a difficult and increasingly disabled spouse.

Hers, of course, is not the only life this process has changed. This therapist has become far more willing to go where the client leads, to trust that "not-knowing" can be a valuable, perhaps even the only reliable, starting-point, to express himself in media that are more comfortable for the client than for him, and to know that the client's certainty that a relationship is valuable is more reliable than his own certainty. The process has informed my students, my readers, and extends beyond what I can know. I am very grateful.

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How Childhood Sexual Abuse Affects Adult Survivors' Images of God: A Resource for Pastoral Helpers

Carol J. Cook, Ph.D and Cindy L. Guertin, MAMFT[1]

Introduction

Pastoral helpers – clergy, lay ministers, and pastoral counselors – are in a unique position to explore how the experience of childhood sexual abuse impacts adult survivors' understandings of and relationship to the Divine. Therapy and other community resources are useful in addressing many consequences of abuse. However, these services may or may not recognize the importance of a survivor's spirituality.

This article strives to better inform pastoral caregivers about how survivors view God. It seeks to enable caregivers to be more attentive to the ways that images of God can either trigger memories of abuse or facilitate healing in worship and pastoral care conversations. It seeks to help caregivers avoid the potential and unintended misuse of certain God images and/or to find ways for hurtful images to be transformed as a means of spiritual healing.

Prevalence

Thirty-nine million is the conservative estimated number of adults in the United States who are survivors of childhood sexual abuse (CMRPI, 2007). "But child abuse doesn't happen in *my* congregation," many will contend. While we want to believe that this is true, research reveals that sexual abuse is prevalent in every community regardless of culture, socioeconomic status, race, religion, and geographic region. Someone well known to the victim, most often a family friend or relative perpetrates the majority of sexual abuse. In fact, data from the Abel and

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Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study and the 1999 U.S. Census Statistical Abstract shows that the most common profile of a child molester is a married, educated, employed, religiously-identified white male.[2] While it is impossible to get an accurate report of the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse due to the nature of secrecy and shame surrounding this issue, by age 18 it is conservatively estimated that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys is sexually abused, with numbers perhaps reaching closer to *half the population* (Flynn, 1995; NRCCSA, 1994).

What do these figures mean for the church? The numbers are not just statistics; they are the people we serve. Imagine: in the average Presbyterian congregation of 212 members[3], perhaps 40 or so people come to worship God with part of their identity being survivors of childhood sexual abuse. These are people sitting in the pews worshiping a God whose image they mediate and filter through the lens of personal experiences of abuse. Although survivors may not be able to reveal their pain, they are very much in need of sensitive pastoral care.

Developmental considerations: results of empirical research

Childhood is a critical time for the development of the God image, influenced largely by one's experiences with caretakers in relation to forming a sense of self (Fowler, 2001; Rizzuto, 1979; Stone, 2004). If trusted adults violate the emerging self through something as egregious as sexual abuse, the survivor's image of God will likely be influenced by the experience. Studies show that childhood sexual abuse affects survivors' lives and development in a multiplicity of areas throughout the lifespan. Since people's perceptions of God are intertwined with self-

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[2] These traits don't make a person more likely to abuse children; rather they reflect the most common traits of men in the U.S. Census. Significant differences may only be found in gender and sexual orientation, where males are found to have a higher incidence of committing sexual abuse than females, and where, contrary to stereotypical images, child molesters are rarely, if ever, homosexual (Flynn, 1995).

[3] http://www.pcusa.org/research/statistics_faq.htm

images, the God-image becomes an important resource in pastoral counseling for those who seek healing from childhood sexual abuse.

Multiple studies document the immediate and long-term effects of childhood sexual abuse, particularly as it impacts psychosocial functioning (Crisp, 2004; Flynn, 1995; Robinson 2000). Some of these suggest that sexual abuse has an adverse impact on identity development and the essential questions of 'Who am I?' and 'Who am I in relationship to others?' However, few studies focus on the way that childhood sexual abuse impacts one's spiritual identity which involves the question of 'Who is God in relation to me?' This is the case despite the sometimes substantial consequences sexual abuse has on a survivor's perception of and relationship with God. One such study by Dorothy Hurley (2004) found that sexual abuse has a negative impact on spiritual functioning in three main areas: the sense of being loved and accepted by God, the sense of community with others, and trust in God's plan and purpose for the future. In addition, Beth Crisp (2004) contends that survivors of sexual abuse often experience low self-esteem and low-self confidence, which may manifest in one's relationship with self, with others, and with God. This may be the very reason a survivor seeks professional help. Crisp concludes that survivors tend to become open to discuss, perhaps tentatively, the effects of abuse on their spirituality when they find or are able to create a space where they can feel safe and understood.

Only a few quantitative research studies on the effects of childhood sexual abuse on survivor's perceptions of God exist. Johnson and Eastburg (1992) found in their study that there were no differences between abused children's and non-abused children's concept of God. Kane et al. (1993) published an exploratory study comparing non-abused women to women sexually abused by a father-figure in childhood. While the study did not reach statistical significance in its sampling method, it found that among the women they interviewed, survivors were more

likely to feel that God was distant from them at some point in their lives, and were more likely to feel anger toward God. Survivors were also more likely than non-abused women to describe God using negative attributes and, in turn, to believe that God felt negatively about them. Reporting similar results, other studies found that abuse survivors were more likely to view God as wrathful or distant, less likely to perceive God as loving or kind, more likely to report problems relating to God, and more like to experience difficulty in accepting God's love and grace (Crisp, 2004). While not specifically studying sexual abuse, Bierman (2005) found somewhat conflicting evidence suggesting that overall, childhood maltreatment has a positive effect on spirituality. The one significant exception to this general trend was that abuse perpetrated by fathers negative affected the survivor's religiosity.

Carrie Doehring (1993) conducted a research study on the effects of traumatization on representations of God that yielded statistically significant results. Dividing the study sample into 4 groups based on the severity of childhood abuse suffered (no trauma, trauma, high trauma, and severe trauma), she compared the groups' representations of God, noting significant results in three categories: God as loving, absent, and wrathful. Her research found that among women who experienced no trauma, some trauma, and high trauma in childhood, results for God representations were very similar, receiving high scores in describing God as loving and low scores in describing God as absent and wrathful. It was only when women had experienced severe trauma that God representations changed significantly; for this group God was described as low on a loving scale and high on the absent and wrathful scale. From her data, Doehring suggests that even though traumatization can lead to seeing God as distant, angry, and unloving, women who suffered abuse that caused moderate or high trauma are able to repress upsetting images of God as a self-protective mechanism. She theorizes that perhaps it is only when

trauma is severe and post-traumatic stress becomes complex that "the condemning, punitive, angry God may be associated with self representations of guilt, shame and fear and representations of the perpetrator as wrathful" (p. 136). Contrary to common assumptions in the pastoral literature, Doehring's research suggests that sexual abuse does not affect a survivor's ability to image God as loving, and present, and kind, except in the most traumatic cases when the abuse has been severe in nature and sustained over time.

These studies are helpful tools for understanding childhood sexual abuse and for providing information on how it affects survivors. However, empirical research has its constraints. For example, studies such as these can rely on preconceived categories and descriptions of a particular phenomenon, therefore limiting information to the researcher's starting assumptions about the topic. Another way to approach and understand the phenomenon of childhood sexual abuse is to listen closely to the brave voices who dare speak of the horrors they survived to a society that largely regards their experiences as 'unspeakable.' Sadly, too often these survivor voices have been silenced again and again. First perpetrators silence them through power and control, then family and community members silence through disbelief or shame, and later people in helping roles silence them because they cannot bear to hold another's pain or want to find answers without first listening. Sometimes the voices of survivors are silenced by clergy who refuse to believe that it can happen within the bounds of the church community. Ultimately, they can be silenced by theologies that marginalize the voices of victims in favor of institutional preservation, traditional doctrines, and metaphors for God that may inadvertently perpetuate abuse (Pattison, 1998).

Listening to survivors

Adult survivors of sexual abuse offer their gifts at great cost; the memories are painful and it takes courage to share this pain with others. The diversity of survivors' voices has much to teach about the image of God. Church member and incest survivor Louise Garrison (1984) writes:

> God the Father. Can I really love God the Father? If my own father was my molester, can anyone including God expect that I could love Him with all my heart and soul? Is it possible to love someone, something, or some other if the image is a reminder of my own father? My God is the creator, sustainer, and redeemer of all life. Some say God is the Father. Others say God is Mother or Spirit. The important message is that God will speak to us in our own imagery. (p.24)

Ordained minister and survivor of sexual abuse Beverly Dale (1994) writes of her teen survivor years:

> The same God who helped me to survive was also in me, giving me the inner strength to rebel. Instead of a rescuer God intervening on my own behalf, there was an inner God empowering me, teaching me to say, "No!" (p.26)

Dale writes of her God image in the present as well:

> …God has taught me to fly. God has lifted me like an eagle in the warm summer sunlight. I soar high above the scars of my childhood and sing with Isaiah: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not grow faint' (40:31)." (p.27)

Theologian and abuse survivor Stephen Pattison (1998), as a child, found that Christianity reinforced his sense of badness and powerlessness before God:

God, the great parent who must be obeyed, appeared to be the guarantor of the [abusive] regime, ordaining the powers and institutions that be. . . Whenever one felt personally miserable, that was selfish and what one was supposed to do was think of the immeasurably greater suffering of Christ on the cross – that was *real* suffering and one should see one's own unhappiness as a privileged but pale shadow of the suffering of the savior who died for the sins of people like me. (pp.41-42)

Later in life, Pattison discovered the power of resurrection:

Coming to life, feelings one's real feelings, is a dangerous, difficult and unpredictable process … Encountering life, even in oneself, is truly frightening. There is a sense in which one is brought to life over one's own dead body! (pp.43-44)

In her recovery process as a survivor of incest, pastoral theologian Nancy Ramsay (1998) writes:

I have come to imagine God's love as *fierce tenderness*. Fierce tenderness is an image that highlights the relation of God's love and justice. It is an image that locates God's power in the service of God's love. Fierce Tenderness defines God's love as compassion. This is an image deeply rooted in scripture where God is described as our Creator who not only gives us life but whose life giving Spirit continues to be highly involved in our lives empowering us for love. . . (p.219)

Dorothy Allison (1998), survivor and novelist, writes about a character named Cissy, also a survivor:

The dark was female and God was dark. God was dangerous, big, frightening, mysterious and female. And blasphemous. Sometimes Cissy wished she could explain to Amanda how she thought about the divine. Not biblical but familial. Not Jehovah, but

Delia with her head thrown back and that raw soaring song pouring out of her open mouth. (p.276)

Incest survivor Joan Bryce Crompton (1999) writes:

Unable to bear my brokenness, I went along the path to the ancient oak tree the nuns had named Grandmother Oak, and curled beneath her branches. In times like this I had never been able to find God in church. Why should I? The institutionalized church, which could deal with everything from polishing brass to AIDS, could not bring itself to deal with survivors of abuse and violence….I prayed the best I could, but mostly felt the age-old wisdom of the oak, just as I had absorbed the grace so freely offered by my horses. (pp.36-37)

Anne Sexton (1975), in her poem *The Sickness unto Death*, writes:

God went out of me

as if the sea dried up like sandpaper,

…Someone brought me oranges in my despair

but I could not eat a one

for God was in that orange.

I could not touch what did not belong to me.

The priest came,

he said God was even in Hitler.

I did not believe him

for if God were in Hitler

then God would be in me….

In *The Color Purple* (1982), Alice Walker's character Celie, an incest survivor, transforms her image of God during the process of her healing. Celie describes God as: "asleep," "deaf," and "a man [who] act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgitful and lowdown" (p.175). But later, after a pastoral conversation with her friend, Celie is able to reclaim God because she is given permission to see the Divine through a new lens. Her prayers to God were silenced, but she is able once again to pray: "Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear Everything. Dear God" (p.249).

Learning from survivors: theological challenges for communities of faith and implications for pastoral care

As can be heard here, survivors invite communities of faith to expand their God-language. Survivors' words, images, and stories give caregivers the opportunity to enhance their theological scope and understanding of who God is and how God functions. By listening to how certain God-images invoke pain while others promote healing, pastoral professionals can learn how to use (and avoid misuse of) God-images as a resource for healing for survivors of sexual abuse.

The voices of survivors begin to paint a picture of how sexual abuse in childhood affects their image of God. As they show, there is no singular response to abuse and no "right" way to image God for the survivor. For many survivors, God is not just absent or present, close or distant, loving or unkind, but beyond traditional categories of description. Louise Garrison (1984) writes, "… I have found a new freedom that comes from experiencing God – a God who comes to all of us in whatever form we need and in whatever place we happen to be" (p. 24). Surviving abuse experiences provides an intimate and privileged knowledge of God that not all, but many persons have.

For example, listening to survivors helps others appreciate that the image of God within the survivor is vulnerable to abuse, suffers with and in the abused child, and is transformed by that traumatic and oppressive experience. Those who experience sexual abuse know profoundly the vulnerability and rape-ability of the human body. The notion of *imago Dei* suggests that God embodies vulnerability and that God, too, contains an element of abuse-ability. Images of God and self intertwine. For some this results in a conviction that

> the fundamental difference between God and humans is that 'he' is good and they are bad. This plays in well with abused people's sense that they are justly abused; they must be, or have done something terribly bad and so deserve contempt and punishment. (Pattison, 1998, p.47)

In the midst of such deep relational betrayal, other survivors are able to reclaim a belief in the trustworthy and empowering compassion of God, a theme found in Psalm 23 (Ramsay, 1998).

It appears that the God of childhood dies as the *imago Dei* within the survivor is violated. The image of the Divine sometimes awakens in new forms beyond the anthropomorphized, patriarchal God of traditional theologies. There is a sense from many survivors' stories that God has somehow participated in the survivor's experience of the abuse and has been changed by it. This may mean that God takes on other forms—feminine and nature imagery emerge. God may be imaged in explicitly Christian terms or with more ambiguous Divine metaphors. Either way, many survivors seem to be able both to question their knowledge of God and to claim what they know of God assuredly and intimately. Their belief in God co-exists alongside the unanswered questions.

Most research on abuse and pastoral writing about abuse begins with the assumption that a survivor's imaging of God is inevitably disordered and therefore untrue. Survivors'

knowledge of God may indeed be painful, and perhaps even cause psychological stress to the survivor or to those who bear witness to their pain through ministries of listening. But one should not conclude that because they have been sexually abused, survivors cannot comprehend the nature of God. Perhaps survivors are able to claim a special knowledge of God. Listening to the voices of the marginalized to learn something new about God is not about perverting the 'true image.' Theology generated from survivors' perspectives is not distorted by abuse any more than the Reformed perspective is distorted by privilege, maleness, and heterosexism. Rather, these voices reveal a theology that comes from deep within a human experience that is intrinsic to an abuse survivor's story and personhood.

At the same time, like any experience, sexual abuse can sometimes distort healthy God images. There is room for some survivors to move from damaged images of God to reclaimed and renewed traditional God imagery. The effects of sexual abuse on the survivor's image of God can indeed have negative consequences on a person's self-perception, religiosity, and spirituality. Ramsay reminds readers that "a particularly insidious consequence of sexual abuse is the distortion it creates in a child's ability to imagine God's love as including him or her" (p. 225).

On the one hand, the biblical and Christian heritage affirms that God speaks and the community learns something new about who God is and how God moves in the world from experiences of oppression and abuse. Grovijahn (1998) suggests that survivors' bodies provide a new location from which to do theology "which not only invents new God-language and imagery, but transforms survivor voice into theological discourse" (p. 33). On the other hand, the experiences of survivors invite all to re-vision components of classic Christian theology so that it ceases to be complicit with the forces of domination and abuse (Pattison). These

components include depicting God primarily as a perfect, all-knowing, all-powerful super-father. This image can leave God's "children" feeling powerless and with a sense of violated personal boundaries. An eschatology that emphasizes secrecy and encourages escape into an alternative fantasy world can encourage hopeless passivity and a sense that nothing can improve the current situation. Atonement theology that focuses on salvation through Christ' suffering and victimhood can be heard by some to legitimize abuse, exalt passive acceptance, and undermine the importance of personal agency.

As Pattison suggests, what is needed is a theology that encourages abused people to look upon their frailty and sense of shame with compassion. Many persons, not just survivors of sexual abuse, need a theology that gives them permission to protest their pain, to assert themselves, and to be angry when their boundaries are violated. An authentic theology of hope can empower believers to act on their own and other's behalf rather than hoping for an outside rescue that may never come.

Working with survivors of childhood sexual abuse

In addition to the theological reflections above, pastoral and secular counseling resources can provide pastoral caregivers with some specific guidance for working with survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Cynthia Crosson-Tower (2006) devotes a chapter to attending to adult survivors in her *A clergy guide to child abuse and neglect*, a summary of her earlier *Secret scars: A guide for survivors of child sexual abuse* (1988). She describes the ways these scars affect how survivors experience their place in the world and offers suggestions for facilitating potential healing. A summary of Crosson-Tower's supportive responses includes

- Believe survivors' stories, value their feelings, and offer a calm and supportive presence.

- o Regardless of your feelings about the survivor, the perpetrator, the nature of the incident; you must monitor your own immediate reactions.

- o Regardless of the amount of time that has elapsed; there are many reasons why someone who was abused did not disclose this violation as a child and why he or she may want or need to discuss it years later.

- o You must earn the survivor's trust through care, consistency, and understanding.

- Do not criticize the survivor for the way they have handled their lives.

- o Do not criticize the perpetrator either; survivors may have warm as well as angry feelings toward those who have abused them.

- o Allow survivors to set their own pace in their telling of their story and their healing.

- Know your limits. You should not counsel beyond your level of expertise.

- Even if you have expertise, know your role and your boundaries.

- o Refer out to a trained therapist and/or a support group of other survivors.

- o You may agree to collaborate with the counselor with the survivor's written permission; if you continue to meet with the survivor, these meetings should focus on faith issues.

- Empower survivors to take charge of their own decisions and their lives, but do not push them beyond their ability to do so.

- o The call for justice against the offender must come from the survivor.

- o This process requires a great deal of support, often legal counsel, and definitely a trained therapist.

- It may be necessary to discuss boundaries for appropriate sharing of this intimate information in congregational or social settings.

- Get support for yourself!

  - Listening to survivor's stories of abuse can trigger various difficult feelings for the pastoral care-giver, seasoned as well as those new to helping professions.

  - These responses range from a sense of survivor's guilt, re-surfacing of one's own possible childhood wounds, shock, denial, anger, powerlessness, and confusion about sexual boundaries.

  - If any of these typical feelings become overwhelming, it is important to seek out your own therapy, supervision, or spiritual direction to maintain or replenish your own spiritual energy. (adapted from 2006, pp. 184-197)

Marie Fortune is a pioneer in bringing various manifestations of sexual violence to the attention of church leaders. The Faith Trust Institute (formerly the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence), which she founded, provides multiple resources for religious persons involved in caring for survivors of sexual abuse. These include workshops, consultations, books, and videos. Her 2005 revision of the groundbreaking *Sexual violence: the unmentionable sin* (1980) contains valuable information for persons seeking to better understand, theologically grapple with, and extend care to all involved in sexual abuse situations.

Several other books provide substantive theological reflection and practical interventions for pastoral caregivers as they minister to the survivors, perpetrators, and the larger family and congregational systems affected. These include *The cry of Tamar: Violence against women and the church's response* by Pamela Cooper-White (1995), *Violence against*

women and children: A Christian theological sourcebook edited by Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (1995), and *Sexual assault and abuse: A handbook for clergy and religious professionals* edited by Pellauer, Chester, and Boyajian (1987), an updated *Striking terror no more: The church responds to domestic violence*, 2nd ed. edited by Basham and Lisherness (2006), and Monica Coleman's (2004) *The Dinah project: A handbook for congregational response to sexual violence.*

Conclusion

The experience of surviving sexual abuse creates a rich context for God imagery, one that can expand our collective language and images of an expansive God. This challenges the church to loosen its grip on a narrow set of images of who or what God must be, and lets the survivors' sacred truths broaden theological discourse, revise accepted doctrines, and inform worship practices. These truths can allow God the room to express God's self uniquely through the experiences of different people.

Honoring survivors' indigenous knowledge, taking a not-knowing stance, and relinquishing our own "expert" comprehension of God are necessary steps for pastoral caregivers. Caregivers must confront their own idols in order to be trusted helpers committed to stopping the cycle of abuse by refusing to silence voices from the margins. As Ramsay (1998) reminds us, "when we embody God's fierce tenderness in the practice of ministry, we engage in compassionate resistance" against all forms of abuse and oppression (p. 219). The words of pastoral helper, Jamie Howison (1995), describe what may be the most helpful posture to take when engaging survivors of sexual abuse:

I'm learning to shut up when you invite me to sit with you on your dung heap. I'm not

about to pretend that I will ever entirely give up trying to speak a meaningful word to

you, but when I do speak it will be out of the depths of the silence that I offer as my first

gift. It will be a word humbly offered, born of a deep respect for your experience and

your theology. It will be a word of companionship. You see, I can't not speak. But first

I'll be still and listen. (p.36)

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Listening to and Exploring Political Subjectivity in Pastoral Counseling

Ryan LaMothe, Ph.D[1]

Abstract In this article, I argue that a person's political subjectivity, which first forms in one's family of origin, is often silently in the background of the counseling relationship. I begin with a depiction of political subjectivity, identifying its sources and explaining what is meant by the political unconscious and political enactments. Using case examples, I discuss some of the stratagems and pitfalls in listening to and exploring political subjectivity in counseling.

Keywords Political, subjectivity, dissociation, rationalization

Introduction

> The analyst and patient are subject to the same repressive forces. There is no personal outside the political; the political is itself a precondition for subjectivity. (Samuels, 1993, p.50).

Years ago, Eva came for counseling because of struggles in her marriage. We addressed these, even as our conversations covered other life experiences. After a number of months, Eva expressed reluctance in sharing her thoughts and feelings about being an American citizen. Her family emigrated from her war-torn country in Central America during the 1980s. While she appreciated being a U.S. citizen, Eva also knew about the long history of U.S. overt and covert operations in Central American nations and how these interventions destabilized countries, leading to violence, unrest, and deep poverty. Her own family had experienced losses as a result of U.S. sponsored and trained death squads. Eva's anxiety about saying anything to me was based, in part, in her belief that I

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would angrily dismiss her as ungrateful or un-American. Later, Eva realized that her reluctance was formed in relation to her very patriotic husband, as well as the current U.S. political atmosphere of patriotic exceptionalism and, correspondingly, the prevalence of equating criticism with disloyalty. In addition, we learned that her anxiety was also rooted in her childhood experiences of state-sanctioned violence toward those who opposed the government.

In general, pastoral counselors are trained to consider how a client's subjectivity is formed in and by family relationships, social structures, culture, religious faith, and internal fantasies and drives. This training includes developing a critical-constructive stance or a hermeneutics of suspicion toward those structures that shape subjectivity. For instance, most pastoral counselors are sensitized to how patriarchal narratives and institutions negatively shape the subjectivity of girls and women. This critical stance is all well and good, yet little attention has been directed to the relation between the political realm and subjectivity or what I call political subjectivity. That is, we frequently overlook how the polis impacts and shapes subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Eva's struggle with me and my work with other clients brings to the foreground the importance of developing a critical, analytical perspective vis-à-vis the political and how it silently shapes subjectivity.

In this article, I argue that a person's political subjectivity, which begins to form first in one's family of origin, is, more often than not, in the background of the counseling relationship. On occasion, the counselor's and client's political subjectivities become important aspects of clinical work. In my view, when appropriate, a client's (and counselor's) political subjectivity is worth exploring because s/he may 1) gain a deeper

understanding of and appreciation for the importance of the sources of his/her political values and beliefs and how they shape behavior; 2) achieve greater accountability and agency vis-à-vis the political realm; 3) heighten awareness of the shared illusions and contradictions that accompany dominant political stories and beliefs; 4) expand his/her capacity to handle ambiguity and complexity when it comes to the political realm; 5) deepen awareness of shared defenses vis-à-vis political beliefs and identity; 6) increase awareness of political enactments and, thus, further differentiation. I begin with a depiction of political subjectivity, identifying its sources and explaining what is meant by the political unconscious and political enactments. Using case examples, I discuss some of the stratagems and pitfalls in listening to and exploring political subjectivity in counseling.

Political Subjectivity

The terms "political" and "subjectivity" have a long history in philosophical discourses and are notoriously slippery when it comes to providing definitions that are free of contention and controversy. My modest and provisional aim is to depict how I understand these concepts and how they are related. This serves as a foundation for discussing a) the sources that give rise to and shape political subjectivity and b) notions of the political unconscious and political enactments.

Before addressing the political vis-à-vis subjectivity, it is important to address briefly how I am using the concept of subjectivity. Modern philosophical and psychological perspectives on subjectivity generally tend to define it in terms of the capacities for self-reflection and consciousness. A sense of me-ness or I-ness is, from this perspective,

contingent upon language. Frie (1997), disputing Lacan's and Habermas' views on the relation between language and subjectivity, argued that "linguistic articulation is a necessary, but not sufficient condition of human subjectivity" (p.14). Put another way, for Frie, subjectivity is not equated either with consciousness or language, yet both are crucial features of it. Indeed, subjectivity is contingent upon the full array of signifying functions, which are largely outside one's consciousness. Muller (1996) argued that the very basis "for the experience of human subjectivity is an effect of semiosis" (p.45; see also, Colapietro, 1989). A person's subjectivity, in other words, is not solely equated with conscious me-ness or I-ness that is derived from the capacity for self-reflection and language, but rather composed of a much more complex and diverse conscious and unconscious semiotic organizations of experience. Nevertheless, we are subjects of and subject to language as we consciously and unconsciously organize experience. This, however, is not quite the whole picture.

The very capacity for organizing experience through language and narrative is contingent on mirroring and attuning others (Hesse & Main, 2000; Sroufe, 1995; Stern, 1985). The baby is subject to and a subject of the mirroring ministrations of his/her parents as they attempt to use language and other signifiers in responding to the infants assertions. Mirroring and attunement, which involve recognition of the Other as a subject, comprise verbal and nonverbal behaviors that shape a child's ability to organize experience and to experience him/herself as a subject at a nascent conscious and unconscious level. Thus, we become subjects and experience ourselves as subjects in relation to mirroring and attuning subjects, which gives rise to diverse forms of subjectivity and intersubjective relations that are not completely conscious (Beebe &

Lachmann, 2002; Beebe, Knoblauch, Rustin & Sorter, 2003). Thus, the actions of the parents are crucial aspects of the baby's organizations of experience, which include but are not identical to consciousness and language. Subjectivity, in short, is much deeper and broader than a conscious, linguistically dependent sense of me-ness or I-ness. It includes organizations of experience that comprise nonverbal signifiers (Peirce, 1991, 1998) and an unconscious sense of me-ness-in-relation to a attuning Other. Thus, subjectivity is embedded in the web of human interactions and concomitant signifiers.

Another important feature of subjectivity is addressed by postmodern perspectives, which challenge the modern philosophic assumption of a unified subject. Benjamin (1995) remarked that subjectivity "refers to such a locus of experience, one that need not be centrally organized, coherent, or unified. Yet it can still allow continuity and awareness of different states of mind" (pp.12-13). Here subjectivity is diverse and shifting conscious and unconscious cognitive-emotional organizations of experience that emerge in relation to an individual's identifications (and renunciations) with other subjects (Aron, 1996). These organizations of experience are joined to an individual's sense of and belief in his/her continuity. The experience and belief of a unified subject, however, is a necessary fiction, Bromberg (1996) noted. This perspective on subjectivity helps explain the various and shifting transference and countertransference features in counseling relationships.

With this view of subjectivity, I shift to the relation between subjectivity and the polis or the political realm, which has long been an interest to philosophers, beginning with Plato and Aristotle. A foundational premise in Aristotle's work, for instance, is that individual human beings are "by nature adapted to life in a polis or city state" (Bambrough, 1963, p.379). He

argued that the polis is prior to the individual and family and these associations, which make up the state, are necessary for human beings to survive and thrive (pp.384-386). The polis, in other words, "comes into existence," Aristotle wrote, "for the sake of the living, but remains in existence for the sake of living well" (in Arendt, 1958, p.183). Aristotle's view that individuals are rooted in the polis and dependent on it for virtue or leading a good life is an idea that permeates political philosophy in the West, though with very diverse formulations (e.g., Buber, 1958; Macmurray, 1957, 1961; Mounier, 1952).

If we accept the notion that an individual is embedded in the socio-political rituals and structures of one's society, then how are we to understand the various aspects and dynamics of this relationship vis-à-vis subjectivity? To answer this question, it is important first to depict the components of the polis and how they shape political subjectivity. Prominent political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958) stated that the "polis, properly speaking, is not a city-state in its physical location; it is an organization of people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be" (p.198). For Arendt, stories and storytelling found the polis where courage is "present in a willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one's self into the world" (p.186). Indeed, for Arendt the "organization of the polis…is a kind of organized remembrance" (p.197) that is manifested in the public space of shared narratives and institutions. This communicative space encompasses a complex web of economic, political, and social rules, roles, values, beliefs, fantasies, and expectations/goals that are expressed and lived out in collective rituals, institutions, and narratives, comprising an array of iconic, indexical, and symbolic signifiers (Peirce, 1998). These rituals, structures, narratives, and disciplines inform citizens about whom to trust and where their loyalties lie; they provide a

shared identity that is crucial to making ethical decisions or assigning standards to social practices (Nealon, 1998); they signify and make licit the kinds of authority, power, privilege, and prestige that are meted out in diverse social contexts (Foucault, 1972; Ransom, 1997); they represent the good aims citizens are to pursue and the sanctions that result when one fails (Benhabib, 1992); they shape who we care for and how we care (Hammington, 2004). This intricate economic, social, and cultural web serves as the milieu that gives rise to and shapes the political subjectivities of its members (Samuels, 2004). That is, a person is subject to and of the myriad political beliefs, expectations, and values embedded in public institutions, narratives, and other communicative interactions (e.g., public rituals). Being a subject of and to these communicative spaces means that an individual's conscious and unconscious me-ness or I-ness is inextricably yoked to the larger public space. Put another way, a conscious or unconscious expression of me-ness is joined to the larger we-ness.

The claim that the subject is inextricably yoked to the polis leaves open the question about the process through which a person becomes a subject vis-à-vis the political space. Foucault used the term "subjectification" to point to the procedures "by which one obtains the constitution of a subject" (in Ransom, 1997, p.156). We might think of subjectification, in part, as a process wherein the emergence of subjectivity occurs through shifting multiple identifications, as well as disidentifications, beginning in the crucible of one's family relationships (Benjamin, 1998, p.47). It is the family, Coontz (1991) noted, that reproduces the culture, which includes the political milieu and its notions and depictions of loyalty, identity, power, and authority that are embodied and embedded in a cultures narratives, rituals, and institutions (cf. Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). Consider briefly the political subjectivity of Malcolm X (Haley, 1964). His construction of a personal narrative as an adult begins not

simply with the birth of the hero, but the birth of a child against the background of political violence and the concomitant marginalization of African-Americans from the white-dominated polis. That is, his birth narrative indicates that, even as an infant, he was already unwittingly subject to and of the political forces of racism, which denied and excluded, through various forms of public and political violence, the agency and freedom of African-Americans. The breakup of his family, after his father was killed, was largely due to political policies and programs that marginalized poor black people by way of inadequate forms of social care, all of which shaped Malcolm's subjectivity. Also, Malcolm's early identification with whiteness as "good" and blackness as "inferior" was linked to his experiences within his family, which in turn was related to the polis and how being white was associated with power, privilege, and loyalty. Malcolm carried his white self-identification into school until his encounter with his eighth grade teacher. When asked what he wanted to do when he grew up Malcolm said he wanted to be a lawyer—a symbol of white academic and public success. Mr. Ostrowski, his teacher, replied, "Malcolm, one of life's first needs is for us to be realistic. Don't misunderstand me now. We all here like you, you know that. But you've got to be realistic about being a nigger. You ought to think about something you can be" (p. 36). After this disruptive encounter, Malcolm's identification with a white ethos shifted. Whereas prior to this, his subjectivity was largely comprised of positive white identifications and negative black ones, months after his encounter with his teacher his subjectivity was shaped by his positive, yet conflicted, identifications with black people.

Another example of the political subjectivity is taken from a pastoral counseling venue. Clara, a middle-aged woman, saw a picture of a soldier on the cover of a book on my desk as she moved across the room to sit on the sofa. She remarked that she deeply admired soldiers

who sacrificed to "protect our freedoms and way of life." On Veterans Day, she had soldiers come to class to talk to the children about what they did and how soldiers are trained to defend the U.S. Clara's father, she later proudly revealed, was an Army veteran who fought the Germans during WWII. While her father never really discussed his experiences, Clara grew up identifying with and idealizing her father. We cannot fully understand Clara's idealization without pointing to the public, political narratives, rituals, and institutions that contributed to her idealizations vis-à-vis her father and other veterans. These positive identifications were linked to loyalty to her father, as well as to servicemen and women who "protected" the nation and its values. All of this was joined to the public space wherein political leaders frequently extolled the sacrifice and heroism of American servicemen and women. Also, numerous history books depict the toil and sacrifice of soldiers in WWI and WWII. Veterans Day rituals are played out throughout the country. Car decals that say "Support the Troops" are ubiquitous. So powerful are these public, political discourses and images that to question or critique the military would result in public scorn, dismissal or accusations of disloyalty. What I wish to stress here is that Clara's political subjectivity was shaped in her family relationships and her positive identifications with her father. These relationships and identifications were inextricably joined to the wider public-political narratives and rituals that supported her idealized identifications.

Another illustration of the formation of political subjectivity is seen in David's ambivalence about his family and his wife's family. David grew up on "the wrong side of the tracks." When he was a child, his father worked in the steel mills and was an ardent supporter of the unions and the Democratic Party. David would often accompany him to the meetings, which furthered his identifications with the working class and his disdain for the wealthy.

Both of his parents worked hard to insure David would go to college and have opportunities to succeed them (narratives of the American dream). After college, David worked for two years before earning a law degree from a prestigious university. It was at this university where David met Rachel, who came from an upper middle class family. For the most part, David continued to identify with his working class values, though he often felt uncomfortable and out of place when at home with his parents and extended family. At the same time, he never quite felt at ease with his wealthy in-laws. It could be said that David's college and graduate school experiences resulted in changes vis-à-vis his political subjectivity. During these years, he began to internalize and identify with the values and beliefs of the educated class, which, at times, conflicted with his identifications with the working class of his youth. His political subjectivity, in other words, comprised a complex and distinct array of economic and class experiences, beliefs, and identifications, which gave rise to his ambivalence and his sense of alienation.

Political Subjectivity and the Political Unconscious

A person's political subjectivity is, for the most part, formed outside of awareness, though many people are able to identify some aspect of their political subjectivity (e.g., party identification or disidentification) and its relation to their family roots. Nevertheless, aspects of political subjectivity remain outside awareness in the form of unconscious wishes, illusions, affects, and memories. This political unconscious is analogous to Carl Jung's term "collective unconscious," which refers to shared unconscious archetypes that shape persons' constructions of experience and behavior. In a similar and heuristic vein, I suggest that each of us possesses a political unconscious

that comprises shared wishes, fantasies, illusions, and images, which shapes individual and collective identifications, perceptions, constructions of experience, and behavior.

An excellent illustration of the pervasiveness of the political unconscious is depicted in Bruce Franklin's book, War Stars. Franklin (1988) documents the fascination of the American public and inventors with the development of super-weapons, dating back to the early 19th century. Robert Fulton, he argued, was one of the first to provide the logic for developing super-weapons, namely, peace, security, and prosperity (p. 10). With ever increasing technological know-how in the 19th and 20th centuries, inventors have developed super-weapons with greater catastrophic effects, offering the illusions of peace and prosperity to garner public support for the development and use of the weapons. In brief, the super-weapon is designed to annihilate the enemy or to create so much fear and anxiety in our enemies that they will either submit or decide not to attack. In this logic of madness is an unconscious wish for invulnerability, which naturally screens annihilation anxiety and vulnerability. Collective annihilation anxiety and insecurity are evacuated onto or into the enemy. All of this is accompanied by and supported by political narratives that assure and reassure citizens of the reasonableness and appropriateness of developing and mass producing these weapons. For instance, consider the powerful political narratives that portrayed Germany as being on the brink of developing an atom bomb, which functioned as the inevitable impetus to develop our own super-weapon first. Later, public political narratives portrayed the growing Soviet threat, which, in turn, provided reasons for developing thousands of hydrogen bombs that could target any place in the world. Laing (1959) noted the madness of these narratives, writing:

A little girl of seventeen in a mental hospital told me she was terrified because the Atom Bomb was inside her. That is delusion. The statesmen of the world who boast and threaten that they have Doomsday weapons are far more dangerous, and far more estranged from 'reality' than many of the people on whom the label 'psychotic' is affixed. (p.12)

Estrangement from "reality" suggests a shared political unconscious wherein annihilation anxiety and the fantasy of invulnerability are rampant.

A clinical example of the political unconscious is seen in Clara's story and her idealization of veterans. Clara's political subjectivity included the unconscious cultural illusion of innocence and the concomitant denial of guilt. The cultural illusion of innocence is linked to U.S. political narratives regarding violent expansionism on this and other continents for the past two centuries (Zinn, 1998). These culturally held narratives, which have largely provided "good patriotic" (e.g., national security) reasons for intervening in other countries and engaging in wars, have shaped the public's perception and experience (Chomsky, 2005; Fish, 1978). For instance, the political narratives that justified U.S. violence against other peoples, from the ethnic cleansing of Native Americans to our most recent attack on Iraq, place blame on the Others and affix innocence to Americans. This split is most clearly seen in the construction of a so-called "good" war and influences how many Americans understand the "enemy" (Japanese or Germans) to hold total responsibility for aggression and to absolve ourselves of any blame and guilt. Consider, for instance, that the public myths about the fire bombings and the atomic bombings during WWII impute guilt solely to the enemy and innocence to the U.S. and its allies. Niebuhr (1942; 1943) sought to challenge this collective innocence

only to uncover a great deal of rage and hostility. These cultural narratives that split off innocence and blame continue to be operative in the U.S. psyche. For example, ten years ago, the Smithsonian sought to exhibit the Enola Gay juxtaposed with the stories of Americans and Japanese who were involved. The Air Force Association (1995) vociferously objected to portraying the Japanese as victims. They wanted them portrayed as "ruthless" aggressors (apparently, then, deserving of fire and atomic bombings). They also objected to using stories from those who had survived the atomic bombings. The Air Force Association, the American Legion, and many members of Congress asked that the exhibit be cancelled. Like Niebuhr, the Smithsonian provided a perspective that challenged the collective illusion of innocence, as well as heightened anxiety regarding guilt. To acknowledge some guilt would have required letting go of the wish for innocence.

Another illustration of the political unconscious is seen in David's struggle. Growing up, David heard stories about how upper-class people exploit the working class and the poor. Stories of people like Mother Jones, Eugene Debs, Emma Goldman, Dorothy Day and other saints of the poor and working-class were told at various times as David grew up. The plot of these narratives paralleled the idealized patriotic narratives regarding U.S. interventions. In other words, upper-class people were constructed as victimizers, while the working class people were both victims and heroes, fighting against formidable odds. One feature of the political unconscious was insecurity. That is, David grew up feeling secretly inferior to those of the upper-class, even though this was never consciously communicated to him by his parents. This illusion of inferiority was buttressed by upper-class narratives and behaviors toward the poor and the working-class. When David began

affiliating with the upper classes, his unconscious sense of inferiority came to the fore. At the same time, he began to internalize the ethos of the upper classes, which, in part, contained both an unconscious wish for invulnerability and unconscious guilt associated with demeaning and depriving others to obtain privileged security (Marris, 1996). Put another way, most upper-class folk would deny feeling insecure, yet their sense of security and identity are linked to social and political power, privilege, and prestige, all of which depend on having the lower classes serve as containers of their projected these negative feelings of insecurity. This unconscious conflict between insecurity and guilt was manifested in David's struggle between identifying with two distinct narratives and classes.

The political unconscious is supported by shared defenses, namely, weak dissociation, rationalization, and denial. Stern (1997), relying principally on the philosopher Herbert Fingarette (1969), coined the term "weak dissociation" to identify individual and intersubjective ways of organizing experience such that one's actions and consequences are narrowly spelled-out or narrated. Inflexible narration, in other words, means that persons omnipotently spell-out or narrate their experience, such that any ideas, meanings, values, and affects that are unconsciously perceived to challenge the dominant story remain unformulated. In weak dissociation, we spell out only what "we believe we can tolerate, or that furthers our purpose, or that promises a feeling of safety, satisfaction, and the good things in life; we dissociate the meanings that we believe we will not be able to tolerate, that frighten us and seem to threaten the fulfillment of our deepest intentions" (Stern, 1997, p.128). As a result "of so insistently turning our attention elsewhere…we never even notice alternative understandings. Focal attention

under these conditions is controlled by the intention to enforce narrative rigidity" (p.132). This selective attention and corresponding narrative rigidity are "not necessarily the need to avoid anxiety about specific content that motivates a story, but the desire to tell a story a particular way, the intention to maintain predictability and not to slip the traces" (p.132).

Stern argued that weak dissociation is also a social phenomenon. In other words, weak dissociation is an intersubjective process whereby persons overlook or leave unformulated and, therefore, unconscious alternative experiences or perspectives that would challenge the dominant shared story and concomitantly shared identity. The political unconscious, I argue, is largely buoyed by and dependent on weak dissociation. In other words, there is rigidity in many cultural narratives, which simplify complex reality. Narratives lauding U.S. exceptionalism, for instance, leave unformulated alternative narratives that might challenge the idealized tales of U.S. involvement in the world and at home. In our educational system and the media (see Loewen, 1996), we tell and retell stories of America's exceptionalism, freedom, power, and largesse, omitting contra-stories of ethnic cleansing of Native Americans, the deliberate wars to gain territory from Spain and Mexico, the torture and killing of at least 200,000 Philippine citizens (1900-1905), the deliberate and illegal targeting of civilians in WWII, government involvement in killing its own citizens, as well as assassinating and torturing people in other countries, etc. Accountability and guilt remain unformulated.

It may be argued that contra-stories are indeed told, yet they are clearly not part of the common narrative or narration in public discourse. When contra-stories are included, they are marginalized by way of rationalization—"those were immoral actions of the

past," "we were required to commit atrocities in order to overcome evil" (e.g., Japanese attacks—Carroll, 2006), or "these actions were necessary to save American lives." That is, when alternative stories confront the rigid narration of weak dissociation, rigidity is buttressed by denial, minimization, and rationalization. The result is that the dominant narrative is unchanged even when these marginalized stories make their appearance.

The cultural examples of defenses that maintain the political unconscious are, at times, encountered in counseling situations. Clara's remarks about how her father and other men (e.g., "they fought to preserve our freedoms," "they are heroes") were linked to cultural narratives that leave unformulated U.S. aggression and accountability for killing hundred of thousands of non-combatants. These and other statements were expressed as matters of fact, leaving no room for curiosity or questions. Indeed, Clara's usual curiosity was absent. When I made this observation, Clara looked puzzled. "What do you mean? I am not sure what curiosity has to do with all of this." I shifted, wondering aloud about her idealization of soldiers, her father, and possibly me[2]. Clara acknowledged that she viewed all of us positively, again leaving me with a sense that she did not wish to take this further. This said, Clara was, on other occasions, realistically critical of her father (and me), but this was absent. When I attempted to probe her idealization about U.S. soldiers, Clara returned to being puzzled, restating comments about people fighting for our freedoms. I later thought that Clara's puzzlement was an understandable response, especially if one considers that weak dissociation leaves unformulated alternative narratives. There was, in other words, no other way to tell the story. The idea that there may have been multiple interpretations or meanings raised her anxiety and increased her

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[2] Perhaps in an effort to evoke a positive transference, the person who referred Clara had told her that I had gone to West Point and had been an Airborne-Ranger.

sense of puzzlement. I imagined that if I had provided alternative perspectives, Clara's weak dissociation would have been challenged. I suspect this would have triggered rationalization and denial, which were readily at hand given the cultural narratives about veterans and their sacrifices. These shared defenses, I suggest, point to the presence of the political unconscious, which in this case may be understood as a wish for invulnerability and the avoidance of accountability and guilt.

Political Enactments

Jung once remarked, "That which we do not bring to consciousness appears in our lives as fate" (in Schwager, 2004, p.354). There is, in other words, a tragic trajectory that often arises when significant motivations, fantasies, memories, and emotions remain unconscious, whether we are talking about an individual, a counseling couple, or a group of people. Recently, some psychoanalysts coined the term "enactment" to capture the process whereby analyst and patient are caught in the throes of "unconscious psychic forces" (Chused, 1997, p.265). Maroda (1998) argued that an "Enactment is an affectively driven repetition of converging emotional scenarios from the patient's and analyst's lives. It is not merely an affectively driven set of behaviors, it is a necessary repetition of past events that have been buried in the unconscious due to unmanageable or unwanted emotions" (p.520). In these situations, the therapist and patient have a sense of being captured by powerful emotions.

The notion of enactment is almost exclusively linked to the consulting room, though I suggest that it can be extended to group actions that are manifestations of the political unconscious. There are, in other words, political enactments and these, on occasion, may

parallel or be connected to clinical enactments. Recognizing that there are challenges when concepts, such as enactment, are torn "from the sphere in which they have originated and evolved" (Freud, 1930, p.144), I wish to suggest that shared unconscious emotions and fantasies vis-à-vis the political realm give rise to actions that appear to us as fate, as inevitable. It is as if the group or the counseling couple is caught in the grips of powerful psychic forces that involve unconscious motivations and emotions. These political enactments involve individuals' actions that are supported and legitimized by shared narratives and group rituals, yet driven by powerful unconscious motivations, fantasies, and emotions. I wish to stress that not all political enactments, like clinical enactments, involve conflict and tension, which may be seen in violent public protests. Some may involve intense emotional agreement and cooperation found, for instance, in public support for war and the corresponding occlusion of critique or alternative perspectives. That is, in political enactments there may be a combination of collusion and conflict.

A recent example of what I would call a political enactment occurred during the months following 9/11. Within two years of 9/11, the U.S. was involved in two wars and was spending hundreds of billions of dollars on national security. The public was overwhelmingly behind both wars—nearly 80%. The public fervor for war was, in my view, a political enactment signifying shared unconscious fantasies and fears. This may be explained as follows. What was disturbing and painful about 9/11 was not simply the deaths of 3,000 people, because there have been other tragedies in U.S. history that involved more deaths. Rather, it was the disruption of two key tenets of American narratives. First, the attacks disrupted the belief that two oceans separated us from the

disorders and violence that plagued other countries (Gaddis, 2005). This belief was linked to the unconscious fantasy of U.S. invulnerability or, more accurately, a wish to be invulnerable or for absolute security. Put another way, shared narratives of the U.S. status as a superpower or the hyperpower permeated public discourse, providing citizens with an illusion of pride and near-absolute security (Bacevich, 2005). The attack on U.S. soil challenged these unconscious wishes and stirred up collective anxiety vis-à-vis vulnerability. It was as if no one was safe anywhere in America. Our physical and psychic boundaries had been violated and the wish for invulnerability or absolute security was threatened. A second and related belief to be challenged was the fantasy of American innocence. A couple of weeks after 9/11, a Newsweek headline read, "Why Do They Hate Us." There was a public sense of incredulousness. How could they hate us, given our beneficence? The very question suggests a belief in (and wish for) innocence. The narratives of innocence had deafened many Americans to the list of complaints about the long history of U.S. (and other Western imperialistic powers, e.g., France, Britain, and Germany) meddling in Middle East affairs—complaints held by many Arabs and not merely terrorist fringe groups.

The fantasies of absolute security and innocence are deeply embedded in the American political psyche. Instead of coming to terms with these illusions, many Americans continued to be captured by them and their concomitant anxiety. Instead of confronting this anxiety, the public, by and large, transformed anxiety into hatred and aggression, which served to maintain unconscious wishes for invulnerability and innocence, while externalizing blame and insecurity. The political enactment, then, was manifested in public support of two wars—support that was fueled by media and

government propaganda that used dominant narratives of U.S. exceptionalism, power, and beneficence. The public was told that we would fight over there, so that security could be restored here and, in so doing, revive and maintain the fantasy of invulnerability by evacuating insecurity onto other peoples. In addition, unconscious guilt and accountability were maintained by first avoiding serious engagement of Middle East Arabs (not just terrorists) and, second, by continuing to narrate the myth of innocence. George W. Bush's phrase, "axis of evil," which was neither the first nor will it be the last presidential simplification of reality, was a public manifestation of this fantasy of innocence, evacuating all accountability on real and imagined enemies.

I would add that the presence of political enactments is revealed in the marginalization, denial, rejection, or attack on perspectives and narratives that are deemed to threaten or call dominant narratives and actions into question. The media buried or minimized stories that contradicted the Administration's claims (Sherman, 2004). Citizens who questioned the Administration and the move toward war were often labeled as un-American, unpatriotic, or disparaged as naïve and weak. It was only after the anxiety abated and the problems in Iraq became impossible to ignore or deny that criticism became more public and alternative narratives were entertained (e.g., narratives of criminal enforcement versus narratives of war).

Political enactments are not limited to the public realm. They may make their appearance in counseling situations. Analysts think of enactments in terms of the analyst and patient caught up in the grips of powerful unconscious forces, which the analyst only later comes to realize once s/he recognizes s/he has departed from usual practice. I also believe that enactments may go completely unrecognized, precisely because both client

and counselor collude in shared fantasies. These silent enactments are unnoticed because it is business as usual. This shared unconscious may be manifested when there is an absence of curiosity regarding a particular topic that may arise. In terms of a political enactment in a counseling situation, both counselor and client unconsciously collude with dominant public narratives and fantasies. More noisy political enactments, by contrast, result when there is a clash of fantasies or the shared fantasies are so powerfully shared and enacted that counseling boundaries bend.

Examples of clinical political enactments will help illustrate what I mean. Weeks after 9/11, I was having lunch with several counselors in a private dining room. The discussion naturally fell to the current war in Afghanistan and fears of another attack. At one point, John, a therapist, mentioned that some of his clients had begun talking about their fears and fantasies vis-à-vis 9/11 and people of Middle Eastern descent. He felt his role was to help them contain their anxiety, in part, by normalizing their experiences. In particular, one client, Larry, talked about his fear of another terrorist attack and his ardent agreement with the war in Afghanistan and the possibility that Saddam Hussein was involved. John was sympathetic to Larry's anxiety and anger, which mirrored his own thoughts and feelings. Indeed, John was one of many who passionately agreed about "taking the fight to the enemy." John rationalized his response to Larry as containment. I, however, would not necessarily interpret John's actions as containment. Instead, I see them as colluding with the larger public actions of transforming anxiety and fear into hatred and hostility, which was accompanied by a shared shoring up of unconscious fantasies concerning security and innocence. In my view, then, this was a silent political enactment where there was a collusion of shared fantasies. The absence of John's

curiosity, questioning, and exploration pointed to the presence of a political enactment and the eclipse of the work of counseling. John, in other words, could have been empathic and explored the client's fantasies, eventually examining the sources (public and private) of these fantasies. Naturally, much of this is contingent upon timing and the client's mental health, but one of the tasks of counseling is identifying sources of powerful emotions and fantasies, not all of which reside simply and solely in the client's past.

By being curious and exploring, I am not suggesting that the counselor necessarily offer alternative narratives or interpret the client's fantasies as rooted in dominant social-political narratives. Neither am I suggesting that John should not have contained or normalized Larry's fears and anxieties. I might have recognized that Larry was anxious about his safety and the safety of others before wondering if his anxiety was rooted in childhood experiences of feeling unprotected (and how he responded) and/or whether it was connected to publicly fueled anxiety. "Larry, I can see that you, like many Americans, are worried and wish to restore the feeling of being protected, instead of feeling vulnerable." Let's imagine that Larry felt understood here. I might then say, "If I understand you correctly, one of the ways you are seeking to deal with your anxiety and vulnerability is to remove any threats, such as Bin Laden and Saddam, by waging war." In my view, this interpretation is a move toward considering alternative methods of handling vulnerability, which does not necessarily suggest that war, in and of itself, is wrong. There are many possible interventions to a) explore Larry's (and the counselor's) anxiety and concomitant narratives and b) consider alternative renderings, which would be aimed at increasing psycho-social flexibility and freedom.

Another illustration of a non-colluding political enactment in session was Clara's comments about soldiers and my response. My initial countertransference to Clara's idealization of soldiers was some discomfort and anxiety. I remember thinking her comments were, to say the least, naïve, but I was not sure how to handle the situation. At first, I passed over her comment, deciding not to explore it, consciously believing that this was merely an aside and not part of our work. I did ask about her father, but I made no interpretations nor did I explore or challenge her idealization. As the session ended and we walked toward the exit, I said something like, "There are other ways to think about soldiers, especially when one considers our long history of foreign wars." Clara looked at me with a puzzled, anxious look on her face and we awkwardly said good-bye. I remember immediately thinking that my behaviors (not exploring and an outside passing comment that had sadistic overtones) were uncharacteristic of my approach. As I reflected on this interaction, I became more aware of my annoyance and desire to disrupt her naïveté.

There is a great deal about each of our subjectivities and, in particular, our respective family histories that would help explain Clara's idealization and my attempt to disillusion her. Nevertheless, I wish to explore and describe this situation in terms of a clash of political subjectivities. As indicated above, the sources of Clara's idealization are manifold given the numerous public narratives and slogans associated with military "service." Soldiers are deemed to be heroes as they serve by sacrificing their very lives to protect the U.S. from foreign enemies. These narratives posit the innocence of U.S. actions, while assigning blame to enemies. The myth of innocence is naturally coupled with the notion of being a victim. That is, in U.S. folklore (see Gibson, 1994), the U.S. is

never a passive, helpless victim. Once "wrongly" attacked, the U.S. gathers its forces to right the wrong. And in defeating their enemies, the U.S. is just and gracious. I found Clara's comments about soldiers and her unstated innocence annoying, in part, because, after my "service" in the Army, I became more aware of U.S. histories of military conflict. That is, I was aware of alternative renderings of U.S. narratives of exceptionalism, innocence, and benevolence. Yet, this fails to adequately account for my frustration, as well as my attempt to disillusion her at the very moment she was leaving.

One interpretation is that we were caught up in a victim-victimizer dance that is deeply rooted in U.S. political narratives. Clara constructed her experience in terms of the U.S. being a victim of aggression. This is common and manifested throughout U.S. history. Settlers were victimized by First Nations people. Mexicans attacked U.S. citizens (Mexican American War). Spain attacked the U.S. (Spanish American War). Central American countries, the Philippines, or China were seen as unjustly thwarting American commerce. Communists threatened U.S. allies. This is only a partial list in which dominant political narratives are constructed, demonstrating victim-victimizer schema. In this situation, Clara was assuming innocence. My response emerged, in part, out of alternative narratives that were constructed, for the most part, in relation to U.S. victimization of other peoples (foreigners and U.S. citizens). When narratives are constructed in opposition, they often take up the role of confronting and, at times, victimizing the dominant stories. In these narratives, there is a preconscious desire to disillusion those who hold mistaken beliefs about innocence.

I argue that this was an enactment because we were clearly caught in the grips of powerful emotions and their concomitant narratives. Moreover, I claim that this

enactment reflected a clash of political subjectivities that paralleled political enactments extant in U.S. society. These political enactments take the form of one side, often the dominant group, claiming innocence by way of dissociation, denial and rationalization, and the other side agitating to unmask, sometimes violently, these narratives. James Baldwin (1955) reflected this dynamic when he wrote, "(F)or there is a great deal of will power involved in the white man's naïveté. Most people are not naturally reflective any more than they are naturally malicious, and the white man prefers to keep the black man at a certain remove because it is easier for him thus to preserve his simplicity and avoid being called to account for crimes committed by his forefathers, or his neighbors" (p.166). Baldwin, W.E.B. Dubois and many others sought to dispel white claims of innocence that screen overt and covert malicious wishes, beliefs, and behaviors. Zinn (2004) provides a history of how small groups and individuals have attempted to confront the myths and illusions of powerful organizations, groups, and persons, discovering along the way how powerful the wish for innocence is, as well as how the dominant group works to marginalize, dismiss, or attack those who challenge cherished myths. This sets up, more often than not, a victim-victimizer dance between the two groups. In my view, my having the last word with Clara mirrored one step of this dance.

Whether collusion or conflict, political enactments signify the presence of political subjectivities and their attending unconscious fantasies and emotions. Signifiers of these enactments are often very subtle, ranging from lack of subjective and intersubjective exploration, curiosity, and empathy to bending or breaking counseling boundaries. The challenge in counseling is to identify these political enactments and to find ways to explore them vis-à-vis the goals of the client. This is especially true when counseling

covenants contain the aim to talk about and explore whatever is taking place between the counselor and client. In counseling situations where the covenant is more circumscribed, such as working with a couple who ask for help in dealing with their son, identifying and exploring political subjectivities and enactments may not be addressed or explored, because the counselor makes a decision that this is not beneficial to the client's progress. Of course, the decision may attend an unconscious fear of exploring the enactment. Nevertheless, the guiding criterion is whether exploration is for the sake of facilitating the process of counseling toward the client's needs and goals.

Conclusion

Pastoral counselors realize that to care for clients they must begin to understand the complex reality of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. For the most part, this has involved exploring subjectivity in light of faith, gender, sexuality, and culture. Little attention, however, has been directed to the political aspects of subjective and intersubjective life. Political subjectivity, I argued, is an important feature of our life in society. We internalize the polis' narratives, rituals, and institutions, which shape, consciously and unconsciously, our perceptions and how we construct experience and behave. Much of our political subjectivity is unconscious and this is largely maintained by the shared defenses of weak dissociation, rationalization, denial, and minimization. This unconscious aspect of our political subjectivities gives rise to political enactments that may be manifested in the collusion or collision between counselor and client. My hope, in this article, is to shed some light on this aspect of our shared life together and to consider attending to its presence in counseling.

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Ministry Is a Rather Ubiquitous Affair: An Enterview with Donald Capps

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RH: How did you get into the ministry?

DC: This question reminded me of Mae West's observation that she was once white as snow and then she drifted. I gave much thought to ministry when I was in college but was undecided when I went to Yale Divinity School after graduation.

When I arrived I learned that I should have announced my indecision because at that time there were special grants offered by the Rockefeller Foundation for students who were undecided. I was unaware that one might be rewarded for what I had thought I should keep a closely guarded secret. Between my junior and middler year I did a unit of CPE and explored the possibility of being ordained to chaplaincy but my denomination—Lutheran—required one to accept a call to a parish as a prequisite for ordination.

I was certain that I would not accept a call to a parish because liturgical reforms underway would have required that I sing the liturgy and this thought filled me with a mixture of fear and amusement. I wrote about this in my book on social phobia.

So I began to assume that I was destined for an academic career of some sort, but was very unclear as to what field I might study. I had taken several courses in history of religions in my senior year with the idea that I might do doctoral work in the field, but I was more interested in ancient Greek religion than in living religions like Hinduism and Buddhism, and it was difficult to find a program that would enable me to pursue this interest.

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So when I graduated from Yale Divinity School, I began a Ph.D. program at the University of California in Berkeley in English literature, switched in a couple of weeks to Philosophy, and then after completing a semester decided to withdraw. I worked a few months in a church, got married, and then returned to Yale Divinity School to do a Th.M.

In order to get admitted to the Th. M. program, I was asked to write a letter explaining my vocational indecision and to provide assurance that I was now committed to the ministry. I was determined to make good on my promise to pursue a ministerial career, but was quite certain I wasn't destined to become a preacher, so I took four courses in the pastoral care field and four in Christian Education with the idea that the scales might be tipped in one or the other direction as the year wore on.

A seminar from James Dittes in which we psychoanalyzed major religious figures convinced me that I wanted to become a psychologist of religion and a course on theories of human development from Randolph Crump Miller introduced me to Erik Erikson's work. So the Th.M. year helped me get clarity about what I wanted to study further at the doctoral level, but, somewhat ironically, they steered me away from a career in ministry.

To make a long story short, I did my Ph.D. at the University of Chicago and wrote my dissertation on John Henry Newman's life and career prior to his conversion to Roman Catholicism. I viewed it as sort of a counterpart to Erikson's *Young Man Luther*. I taught at Oregon State University in the Department of Religious Studies, then five years at the University of Chicago Divinity School, then a couple of years in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. During these years, I didn't think of myself as being "in ministry."

I did get ordained in the Lutheran church when I was teaching at the U. of Chicago but was viewed as a special case and did so not out of any personal motivation but because the academic dean felt the faculty should have ecclesiastical endorsement.

I think I became a minister when I decided to accept a position at the Graduate Seminary at Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma. I was intrigued that they were looking for a professor of "pastoral care and psychology of religion" (which was probably a title someone had coined years before) and I began to think that I might be able to do a creditable job with the "pastoral care" side of things while continuing to pursue my primary interest as a "psychologist of religion." Over the next several years, though, I began to write pastoral care books largely because I needed texts to assign in my classes on pastoral care and counseling and the available texts were rather sparse. So, my answer to the question, "How did you get into ministry?" is simply this: I wrote my way into ministry.

There are certainly more impressive ways of getting into ministry and, in a sense, I've made a sort of career of studying how others have done it. Moreover, I often thought of the letter I wrote in order to get admitted to the Th. M. program and wondered if it

was still on file because alot of years had elapsed before I entered what I considered ministry (as opposed to going through the formalities of ordination).

But I recalled that when I was writing my dissertation feeling quite taken by Newman's comment as he was beginning to engage in the reform movement that would subsequently be named the Oxford Movement that "one's slowness to begin a course of action is a pledge of zeal once one embarks upon it." As I did not change my external behavior much—I didn't, for example, go out and preach in local churches—I would guess that my faculty colleagues would not have used the word "zeal" to characterize my sense of being a minister.

But I felt an inward sense of commitment and have attempted over the years to maintain a sort of balance between the pastoral care and the psychology of religion sides of my professional identity. I wrote about this in an article titled "The Letting Loose of Hope: Where Psychology of Religion and Pastoral Care Converge" published in the *Journal of Pastoral Care* in 1997.

RH: In the western world of psychotherapy and mental health, attention is now given to short-term and solution-focused work. More and more people have an assortment of medications they regularly use, often without any end in sight. More parents are asking that their children be on medications and more and more children are given mental diagnosis. People often want to feel good quick and long term healing and transformation work involved in depth approaches usually take and are not paid for by insurance companies. Some people today feel they are "in therapy" by seeing their Psychiatrist monthly for a medication check up. Given this what do you see as the future for the work of pastoral psychotherapy?

DC: You raise a very good question. I don't feel, though, that I am especially well positioned, being a seminary professor, to make an especially informed guess as to the future of the work of pastoral psychotherapists. I have a sense, though, that this is a rather perennial issue that manifests itself over and over again, though with somewhat different nuances. Recently I showed a video in my course on the life cycle of Erik H. Erikson being interviewed by Richard I. Evans at the University of Houston in 1964. Erikson noted that when he reported to Anna Freud the kinds of cases he was treating in the United States, she replied that such cases would not be considered appropriate for psychoanalysis in Vienna. This led Erikson to comment that it was probably the case that there were persons in psychoanalysis whose difficulties did not warrant their being in psychoanalysis. On the other hand, we also discussed Erikson's case of the theological student in his lecture "The Nature of Clinical Evidence" in *Insight and Responsibility*, published the same year as the interview with Richard Evans, in which it was absolutely essential that the young man received the "transformation work involved in depth approaches."

In my course on mental illness, students from Pentecostal backgrounds and students from third world countries report that their faith traditions have an enormous

mistrust of psychiatry and that the ministers in these contexts actively dissuade their parishioners from taking any medications for mental or emotional problems.

These students' concern is to find ways to bridge the gap between the legitimate uses of psychotropic medicines and their faith traditions. I find this very concern to find ways to do so a hopeful sign. By the same token, as one whose thinking was formed by dynamic psychologies back in my graduate school days, I share your concern that therapy for some is merely that of taking medications and not exploring their interpersonal and intraphysic conflicts.

In my book *Jesus the Village Psychiatrist* I argue that Jesus' very effectiveness as a curative agent was due to the fact that he recognized the underlying psychodynamic causes of the illnesses from which those who came or were brought to him suffered-- whether blindness, paralysis, leprosy, epileptic seizures, etc. I suggested that he could not have cured these persons had he not recognized the personal and psychosocial, anxieties that precipitated and maintained these organic disabilities and symptoms. In this and my earlier book *Jesus: A Psychological Biography* I draw heavily on Freud's groundbreaking work on anxiety in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety.*

RH: What have been some of the hopeful and discouraging trends you have seen in the field of clinical ministry in the twenty or thirty years?

DC: By clinical ministry, I assume that you mean chaplaincy, specialized pastoral counseling and pastoral psychotherapy, and if so, I have to acknowledge that I am not as much in touch with these forms of ministry as I perhaps should be. One who teaches in a seminary environment is somewhat removed from these forms of ministry despite the fact that one strongly encourages students to consider these ministries and receives various reports from students--former and current--about their experiences.

Of these three forms of clinical ministry, I remain most in touch with hospital chaplains because our students are most likely to enter CPE programs as part of their field education requirements. No doubt, there are some discouraging trends in the field of clinical ministry, but what I see from my admittedly limited perspective are signs of hope. Students who are giving serious thought to these ministries come from varied ethnic, racial, cultural, and denominational backgrounds, and their experiences in CPE lead them to raise fundamental questions about the truisms and doctrinal verities with which they entered seminary. That this is happening to our students, who represent the future, may well be the most hopeful sign of all.

RH: Some people feel that Seminary faculty are not in touch with the real world of ministry. You have spent a lifetime teaching in Seminary. How do you respond to those people?

DC: I think they have a point. When I look over the courses that are being offered in the seminary where I teach, I wonder how many of them are relevant to the real world of ministry. But when I interact with students, and especially when I read the papers they

write for my courses and make written comments on what they have written, I feel that what is going on being us is directly and immediately related to the real world of ministry.

I even, at times, think that what is happening in these exchanges is, in fact, the real world of ministry that we are ministering to one another. This, however, undoubtedly reflects my sense that ministry is a rather ubiquitous affair that is not confined to specified locations (church buildings) and professions (ordained clergy). While others may deplore the fact that seminary resources are being expended on a significant number of students who do not enter recognized or official forms of ministry when they graduate.

I believe, on the contrary, that this means that the seminary has provided what Erik Erikson has identified as a valuable "moratorium" similar, perhaps, to his years as a struggling artist before he rather accidentally found his niche in life as a psychoanalyst. In fact, a few years ago I had the idea of establishing a prize in honor of Henry James Sr., the father of William James (the psychologist-philosopher) and Henry James (the novelist) and himself an author of religio-theological books.

He attended Princeton Theological Seminary from 1835 to 1837 but did not return for his third and final year. My idea was that the prize would go to a student who either dropped out before graduating or completed the degree but had another career path in mind. I probably thought that if such a prize had existed where and when I received my seminary education, I may well have been one of its recipients!

The prize was established but the task of identifying the most deserving recipient was felt by others to pose insurmountable logistical difficulties. So it now goes to a student whose work reflects the inquiring spirit of Henry James and the regard for psychological awareness and complexities for which his sons, William and Henry, are justly famous. I actually like this formulation as it does not exclude those students who are, in fact, planning to become clergy or enter other official forms of ministry.

I might add that my recent book *Laughter Ever After: Ministry of Good Humor* (Chaice Press 2008) suggests that the rabbi in "a minister, a priest, and a rabbi. . ." has three traits or qualities--(1) is practical and down-to-earth; (2) is simple-minded; and (3) is comfortable with the person he or she already is. I then invite persons who have these three traits or qualities to apply for ordination in the Ministry of Good Humor.

I also suggest that jokes that begin "A guy goes into a bar..." reflect a good humor ethos and that jokes about foul-mouthed parrots, heartless lawyers, and dumb blondes provide excellent Good Humor ministry role models. I regret that those responsible for the design of the book did not endorse my idea of placing an old photo of a Good Humor Ice Cream trucks on the cover as I recall the excitement of kids of all ages when they heard the familiar bell announcing that the truck was approaching their neighborhood. To me, this truck symbolizes ministry in the real world.