

this experience in turn has helped determine what qualities to emphasize in accepting students for the program. In the middle of the second half of this unit, one student seemed more stressed than seemed healthy, and I felt that I would have to arrange a meeting. Simultaneously, however, three other students noticed the same thing and, after consultation with me, commissioned one among them to seek him out. Although I did call on the student, I found that he was managing and felt the care of his peers. The evaluations were positive regarding group process at the end of the unit.

When students finally leave this center, I feel that my time was well spent if, in addition to knowing that I care about them and want them to care for others, they take away one other truth. I hope that they have learned the importance of peer support. I also hope they have begun to see the danger in remaining "hidden," and the futility of "going it alone." I hope they have experienced the blessing of a group and will always seek groups with whom to relate, even as they carry on the work of pastoral counseling, group formation and community building.

#### CONCLUSION

In both of these experiences, the learnings gleaned from the activity of the Spirit in our personal lives has had a remarkable effect upon our supervision. In the first story we see how the pursuit of deeper personal autonomy became a liberating challenge offered to others. In the second story we see how the gracious learning that can occur in a group offers an instructional challenge to other educators.

It is our felt belief that spirited gifts received in our own lives are resources for the students we serve. The task of writing this article was a creative, insightful theological reflection on the interconnection between spirituality and ministry, supervision and ministerial formation. We encourage others to explore and find the impact that their spirituality has upon their supervision.

#### NOTES

1. 1996 ACPE Objectives of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc.
2. Quoted in Christina Baldwin, *Calling the Circle: The First and Future Culture* (Newberg, Oregon: Swan Raven and Co., 1994).

## Supervision and Spiritual Development: The Conventional/Post-Conventional Divide

Janet K. Ruffing

Although it is likely that differences in spiritual development between supervisees and those to whom they minister may emerge as a significant issue in supervision, within a practicum of spiritual direction a post-conventional stage of spiritual and psychological development in the supervisees appears to me to be a pre-requisite for participation. The supervisory experience which stimulated these reflections on the conventional/post-conventional divide in spiritual development is my fourteen years supervising nearly 170 spiritual directors. Since a supervisor cannot always be entirely certain about such determinations prior to a practicum, it is likely that some intern directors may be attempting to offer spiritual direction to clients who are spiritually more developed than they; this difference will merit detailed attention in the supervisory process. While it is less problematic for spiritual directors or pastoral ministers to be at a more advanced stage of spiritual and/or psychological development than the persons with whom they are working, nonetheless, considerable frustration in the pastoral relationship or difficulties in the mentoring role may result from these differences. These, too, are fruitful topics for exploration within the supervisory process.

#### REQUISITE PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Current developmental psychological theories variously describe and name stages of development. All of these theorists acknowledge that the adult American

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population is distributed among four or more stages. Further, many adults will settle into one or another stage for many years or for life. Erik Erikson, Robert Kegan, and Jane Loevinger have developed comprehensive theories of stage development and of stage change.<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan focused their stage theories on styles of moral reasoning;<sup>2</sup> James Fowler applied these theories to faith development explicitly including affective and symbolic dimensions in his schema.<sup>3</sup> In each of these theories, there is a stage variously named or described as conformist or conventional. These terms refer to one or two stages which are characterized by an external locus of authority, and/or an embeddedness in a group whose norms are determinative either as inflexible rules or as affective loyalty to relationships within the group. It is my contention that it is not uncommon for some seminarians, frequently younger ones, and for younger, lay, graduate students in ministry training programs to be appropriately in one of these conventional developmental stages. As a consequence, they do not yet have the personal or spiritual maturity to serve effectively as spiritual directors or pastoral counselors. They may well fulfill other ministerial roles such as preaching, sacramental ministry, administration, etc., but they will experience great difficulty in those ministries which require an achieved interpersonal capacity for respecting and supporting a developmental process different from their own stage of development. Whenever possible, these students should be screened out of a spiritual direction practicum. If, however, the decision is made to admit them, it may be possible to assign directees to these students who are at the same stage of psychological development or a stage below that of the director.

For supervisees to benefit from the experience of supervision as most field education practica operate, they must have the psychological ability to reflect on and articulate interior experience and to adjust their pastoral behavior in response to insight gained through the supervisory process. This capacity for noticing and articulating interior experience is also the fundamental developmental criterion for a client to participate either in spiritual direction or in insight-oriented therapy. Supervisees who may still exhibit some of the characteristics of the conventional or conformist stages in some respects but not exclusively can learn to work with the dynamics of the spiritual direction or pastoral counseling dynamics of their clients at a matching stage of development. Participation of these students in group supervision often provides ample opportunity to learn from the more mature group members. The group can confirm both gifts and limitations relative to the kinds of clients supervisees are capable of working with and frequently offers experiential glimpses of the next developmental stage into which the director may move as a result of the "pacing" provided by the supervision experience.<sup>4</sup>

In the case of supervisees who exhibit the stage characteristics of any of the post-conventional stages of psychological development, by virtue of this psychological maturity they will be both "supervisable" and likely to undergo considerable spiritual development as a result of the effect of their more mature directees on them. Within the supervision relationship, it is both desirable and helpful to explore how supervisees are responding both psychologically and spiritually to these clients.

#### AN EXPERIENCE OF SPIRITUALLY ROOTED ENVY

In my experience some neophyte directors in every supervision group develop some counter-transferential envy of their directees' religious (mystical) experience. From my perspective, this envy related to their directees' deepening relationship with God constitutes a graced invitation to the director to interpret their envy as indicative of a spiritual dynamic happening within them. Thus, envy could lead directors to recognize the depth and intensity of their own desires for a deeper, more personal, or more pervasive relationship with God. If the desire can be named, directors can then claim their own desires and continue to engage it directly within prayer or spiritual direction. The envy might also be a manifestation of some directors' lack of on-going response to God's initiatives. Directors may be neglecting personal prayer for any number of reasons and thus depriving themselves of the on-going nurturance of relationship with God which is available to them but which they are currently avoiding. Yet another possibility is that other directors' envy could reveal the particular form of narcissistic wounding particular to them. Its recognition and assessment as to whether it is mild or severe will play a crucial role in final recommendations for a neophyte director to continue in this ministry. If directors can learn to "fill the hole in the heart" created by this primal wound through moving toward God for sustenance and help rather than toward the self which is inadequate or toward some other relationship which could never bear the weight of this counter-transferential reaction, they may well be able to hold steady enough in the helping relationship to be there for the client. If directors' wounds are too profound, the counter-transferential response will characteristically lead them to deflect attention away from the central religious experience of their clients and not help clients respond to and integrate these experiences. They thus prove themselves incapable of fostering integrative spiritual development in their clients.



This example of the emergence of envy in the supervisory process demonstrates how the psychological and spiritual dynamics of spiritual direction or pastoral care which focus on the spiritual experience of the client are often intertwined. A supervisory model that focuses only on the psychological dynamics of these interchanges could leave the director with an awareness of envy which is not appropriately interpreted in relationship to his or her own spiritual condition. The supervisor must be able to recognize the object of the envy as well as the envy itself.

#### REQUISITE SPIRITUAL/FAITH DEVELOPMENT

As established above, there is a minimal level of psychological development for beneficial participation in a supervision process at all. The focus of the supervisory relationship varies from situation to situation. For instance, in pastoral counseling or in hospital chaplaincy, a specific spectrum of human experience presents itself that provides the focus for supervision. The supervisory relationship provides a safe place for supervisees to reflect on experiences, consolidate skills, and hopefully become more skillful in response to clients. Effective supervision will help supervisees recognize when clients require referral because they present challenges beyond the capacity of the supervisee. Some of these challenges will be so intense that they may initiate stage transition in the supervisee. Within the particular situation of spiritual direction, there is also a requisite level of spiritual development required as a starting point. In what follows, I leave the reader to make applications to other ministerial relationships for which the same might also be true.

#### GUIDANCE FROM THE SPIRITUAL TRADITION

Classically, spiritual directors are required to be "learned, experienced, and wise."<sup>5</sup> These are qualities that are difficult to operationalize although easily recognized when we experience them. I have found some of the development theorists helpful in terms of pointing to some possibilities. I find that thinking in terms of conventional and post-conventional categories of experience in prayer and in relationship with God that is truly personal and spiritual is an essential starting point. Within the literature on spiritual direction, Nemeck and Coombs describe how a conventional mode of being religious or practicing faith impedes spiritual

experience and perceptions. They draw on the biblical categories of *psychikoi* versus *pneumatikoi* from 1 Cor. 2 as the starting point for their phenomenological description. Both profess to follow Christ, but the *psychikoi* do so at a distance—several steps removed from actual religious experience or a relationship with God in which they can be truly led by the Spirit.

In contrast, the *pneumatikoi* "abandon themselves in faith, hope and love to the inscrutable ways of the Spirit. They seek only to let God be God and to let the Spirit blow wherever he wills, however he wishes. Spiritual persons are always at the disposal of God in mystery, always loving, open, receptive, waiting on him with expectancy."<sup>6</sup>

In guiding others, the spiritual director will thus be capable of loving directees with God's own love. [She or he] will have immense capacity to accept persons as they are, and will spontaneously respect the unique way that the Spirit is spiritualizing each individual. Consequently, both the director's presence and words to a directee will spring from the root of tested love.

While living in the Spirit and allowing themselves to be directed towards ever greater spiritualization, spiritual directors are at the same time intensely involved in life and in all the endeavors of the world. They experience deeply the joys, the sorrows, the triumphs and the defeats which are integral to being and to becoming fully human.<sup>7</sup>

This description corresponds roughly to James Fowler's Stage Four or higher, "Individuating Reflexive," or to Loevinger's or Liebert's "Conscientious" stage or higher.<sup>8</sup> John Shea characterizes such qualities as an adult self, "an identity in mutuality of relating."<sup>9</sup> The result of such an adult experience of God is mystical experience and the person characteristically experiences a "God beyond the Super-Ego God."<sup>10</sup> Shea identifies the following five aspects of this God of personal religious experience encountered by the adult: this is a God as Thou; a God of Love; a God of Mystery; a God of Freedom; and a God of Community.<sup>11</sup> While Shea is not explicitly using a multi-stage framework of development, he is essentially describing many characteristics of the divide between the super-ego god of an earlier stage of religious development and the crossing over into a God with whom a fully adult self may relate with confidence and love.

Within the supervisory relationship, concern about this particular contrast in spiritual or religious experience manifests itself in noticing and reflecting on supervisees' freedom in the face of God's surprising manifestations in forms of religious experience unfamiliar to them and in their ability to be affected by a new manifestation of the Holy to respect such experiences in their clients. Although,



as Gerald May so aptly says, "The human mind is an endless source of inventiveness when it comes to avoiding the implications of spiritual experience,"<sup>12</sup> persons whose spirituality is authentically post-conventional are ultimately more attracted to fresh manifestations of all encompassing Mystery than fearful of it.<sup>13</sup>

By contrast, the good, conformist/conventional religious person may be genuinely terrified by such experiences and may seek every way to control this in-break of God into the life of the client by hedging it around with rules and practices which take precedence over God's self-revealing activity in the life of the client. These supervisees are more at home with punishment, guilt, and control than they are with God's unconditional love, relatedness, and offer of liberation from every form of oppression including religious ones. They would have difficulty following the leadings of God's Holy Spirit who blows where it wills and characteristically join their directees in resisting the Spirit's invitations. Supervisees at this stage of spiritual development are functionally unable to honor the dictum that "the principal guide is the Holy Spirit."<sup>14</sup>

The classical literature about spiritual directors describes such people in striking images. John of the Cross calls them a blind guide, a coarse hand marring the delicate painting of the Holy Spirit, a blacksmith who knows no more than how to hammer and pound with the faculties, and barriers or obstacles at the gate of heaven. In these well-known passages in *Living Flame of Love*, John of the Cross minutely describes just how directors, who themselves either personally lack the experience of contemplative prayer or lack the experience of the various ways God leads others, seriously harm their directees. He warns them:

Thus the director's whole concern should not be to accommodate souls to his own method and condition, but he should observe the road along which God is leading them, and if he does not recognize it, he should leave them alone and not bother them. And in harmony with the path and spirit along which God leads them, the spiritual director should strive to conduct them into greater solitude, tranquillity, and freedom of spirit. He should give them latitude....<sup>15</sup>

Spiritual directors who are experientially unable to recognize and support the more mature development of directees into contemplative prayer and the accompanying personal transformation are counseled to refer their directees to others and to grant them the freedom to seek the assistance they require. Otherwise, they will be held accountable by God for their hindrance to the unfolding spiritual life in their directees.

Teresa of Avila, a Carmelite nun and reformer, who personally suffered from spiritual directors who misguided and misunderstood her, advised her nuns to look for directors who were both experienced in spiritual matters and learned. While John of the Cross preferred experience above learning, Teresa came to rely on learning instead. Together they offer helpful clues for the supervisory process when neophyte directors or pastoral ministers discover their limitations both spiritually and educationally.

Teresa discovered that the "learned" at least knew about mystical experiences they themselves had never experienced. Their breadth of cognitive knowledge enabled them to appreciate and respect something they had only read about and could reassure her that she was not the first to experience such things. John, who was well educated theologically, apparently met many with book knowledge which they were unable to apply appropriately because their character defects blocked their freedom. Without personal post-conventional religious experience and the integration of the self around the core mystical experience, these arrogant and controlling directors imposed themselves between their directees and God's invitations to them. Without openness and docility to the Spirit, they became obstacles to their directees. Wise pastoral ministers or spiritual directors become so through their ability to learn from new personal and vicarious experiences. They have an ability to integrate personal life experience, spiritual experience, and their theoretical knowledge.

#### THE SUPERVISORY EXPERIENCE

From my perspective, potential spiritual directors need to have sufficient personal spiritual experience to be at home in the world of Spirit. They need to have experienced a spiritual awakening and made a real, on-going commitment to developing their spirituality. Their prayer life, having developed beyond the performance of purely formal prayer or ritual prayer, needs to have entered the beginning stages of contemplative prayer. If they even have moments of crossing over into silent contemplation or into an imagery prayer that they do not entirely control, they will be able to benefit from the supervision process in a spiritual direction practicum. And they need to have some sense of psychological development up to and including mid-life. Finally, they need some background in their own spiritual tradition and be able to resonate with it.

In pastoral care interchanges or spiritual direction verbatims brought to the supervisory process, supervisors need to explore both the knowledge resources of



their supervisees as well as explore the intrapersonal dynamics in their supervisees which appear to impair their capacity to respect the client's experience and to foster growth in freedom, trust, and surrender to God's activity. This exploration will, of necessity, examine supervisees' responses to spiritual experience.<sup>16</sup> In the pastoral interchange, do supervisees characteristically deflect the conversation away from the concrete religious experience of their clients? Do supervisees need to be in control at all times? Do they demonstrate any functional ability to recognize spiritual dynamics, movements, attractions without interference? Do they feel excitement about or show an ability to be drawn into religious experience? Do supervisees ever experience uncanny or subtle spiritual experience during the pastoral interview? If so, how do they respond? What cognitive knowledge do they have about such reality? Is it limited to Scripture? Are supervisees drawn only to moral injunctions and teachings? Do they experience the beginning of affective engagement with the person of Jesus? Are there any hints of the "spiritual sense" of Scripture illuminating experience? Do supervisees have any knowledge of classical or contemporary literature in spirituality which might help interpret this pastoral situation? Are they only familiar with one or two schools of spirituality which they confuse with the whole Christian "tradition"?

If supervisees have the psychological maturity of at least the transition into a post-conventional stage of development, the experience with their clients and with supervision may encourage stage-transition in supervisees spiritually and psychologically. If their psychological development is insufficient, the supervisor may have a difficult time because the rigidity of outlook in some supervisees will make it difficult either to recognize inadequacy or to remain relatively non-defensive in the supervisory relationship. In these cases, sometimes another "voice" from the tradition might enable these supervisees to get enough cognitive understanding to recognize that there is something more going on in the pastoral relationship than they are able to grasp. Secondly, supervisors without contesting their supervisees' worldview too much may be able to encourage them to employ the beginning skills in the helping relationship. These Phase I helping skills draw out the client without contradiction or defense.<sup>17</sup> Their use allows the client to be self-directing in the interchange rather than having to cope with the judgment or confusion of the supervisee. If supervisors help their supervisees carefully observe the client's response to these basically Rogerian reflective listening skills, supervisees might begin to learn experientially how to enter empathetically into an experience of difference. For this to happen, supervisors will also have to employ these same skills in the supervisory relationship despite the inevitable frustration this is likely to involve. Supervisors, however, must be prepared for such

supervisees to not "get it" and need to insist on the supervisees' use of skills which will facilitate the client without the supervisees necessarily learning from the experience.

It is also possible for supervisees to have considerable commitment to the spiritual life and experience in mystical or contemplative prayer without having the psychological maturity (stage development) or the psychological stability (personality disorders or the untreated effects of addiction or dysfunctional families) to be able to sustain interpersonal pastoral work. Frequently, these deficiencies manifest clearly only over time in the supervisory relationship. Supervisees may candidly admit they themselves are still working on identity issues and are easily threatened by the more solid identity of their clients. Or narcissistic supervisees will be quite unable to cope with clients who mirror their own difficulties. One of the greatest problems for the supervisor is the inability of many to accept the recommendation that supervisees should not continue in a ministry requiring reliable stability in the helper. It is not uncommon for spiritual and psychological development not to proceed at an equal pace. The supervisory process works best in ministries which deal with spiritual concerns when supervisees have achieved a post-conventional stage of development both psychologically and spiritually. With this modicum of psychological and spiritual freedom, they are able to foster a similar development in their clients.

A second typical supervisory experience which occurs in all forms of pastoral ministry as well as in spiritual direction is that in which the director or pastoral minister is more mature both spiritually and psychologically than the client. When the gap between the two becomes more than one stage apart, it is often very challenging for supervisees to cope with the constant frustration occasioned by a markedly different worldview and construction of religion and spirituality. Further, pastoral ministers who are most likely in a post-conventional posture of religious and psychological development may feel threatened by the client's negative projections and judgments about their more individualized behavior and originality of views and feelings. These supervisees may be unwilling to let themselves be congruently seen by their clients. These supervisees will need to be encouraged in the supervisory process to locate the reasons for their frustrations and their fears and not allow themselves to be controlled by them. Once they can recognize the developmental grounds for the differing perceptions, behaviors, judgments and feelings of their clients, they can be encouraged to move toward a more empathic stance toward them. If they can remember how they felt and construed their lives from this earlier stage and remember how they eventually grew beyond it, they can more readily join their clients in confirming them where they are while inviting the

12. Gerald May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit: A Psychiatrist Explores Spiritual Direction* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 85.

13. Elsewhere I have dealt with the split between a post-conventional experience of God in prayer and a conventional or super-ego ridden sense of God in the realm of moral decision-making. See "Unacknowledged Conflicts: Prayer and Morality," *The Way Supplement*, spring, (1997).

14. John of the Cross, "Living Flame of Love" in *The Complete Works of John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1973.) See LF 3:62; 3:42; 3:43.

15. Ibid., LF 3:46

16. See the growing literature on spiritual assessment within pastoral care. I find it helpful for potential supervisees to do their own spiritual self-assessment using a modified version of George Fitchett's 7 x 7 model, *Assessing Spiritual Needs: A Guide for Caregivers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993) as part of their pre-practicum learning.

17. See Gerard Egan, *The Skilled Helper: A Systematic Approach to Effective Helping*, 3rd edition, (Monterey: Brooks/Cole, 1985) and others using similar theories.

## A Wider Context of Supervision in Spiritual Direction

Miriam Cleary, O.S.U.

The purpose of this article is to share the experience of attempting to widen the context of supervision in the training of spiritual directors. In the area of spirituality there has been a long history and wealth of experience in focusing on an individual's personal and interpersonal relationships and how these influence and are influenced by the individual's religious experience. Relatively recently spiritual directors have begun to pay more attention to the societal dimensions of human experience, to realize God's activity in this arena, and to help the persons they direct to notice this activity as well.<sup>1</sup>

At the Center for Spirituality and Justice<sup>2</sup> the question of how to train spiritual directors with this societal awareness has been a major challenge for over fifteen years. Early in its efforts, the Center staff generated a tool, called the Experience Cycle (see Appendix), to foster this awareness among the participants in its training programs.<sup>3</sup> The staff based its tool on the "Pastoral Cycle"<sup>4</sup> developed by the Center of Concern in Washington, adapting the latter to serve more directly the training of spiritual directors. The hope was, and is, that directors who become aware of the impact on their relationship with God of the societal dimensions of their lives will be in a better position to hear directees' stories with the same level of sensitivity to the societal as they do to the personal and interpersonal.

In order to clarify what follows, let me indicate how I understand the words "director" and "societal." Spiritual direction is seen as an exchange between two  
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