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Beyond Bowlby: Attachment Dynamics in Family, Church, and Classroom Relations - in "On Being a Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Personality Theories"

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A Clinical Baptism

In 1989 I was the minister of a United Reformed congregation in the north of England. Being my first pastoral charge, I was eager to do well, but by my fifth year, I was experiencing symptoms of burnout. Seeking to develop a supportive network, I began traveling to seminars at the Scottish Institute of Human Relations in Edinburgh, supplemented by readings in Harry Guntrip. I applied to the Institute's program for pastoral supervision. Following an assessment interview, Brian Lake agreed to supervise my wife and me for the next eighteen months. Our meeting plan comprised bringing whatever pastoral issues with which we were currently wrestling and exploring some of the surrounding psychotherapeutic dynamics, especially where family and personal dynamics intersected with church issues. Personally, I hoped that better insight into these patterns might make the challenges of ministry more life-enhancing and less draining.

The first dilemma I presented regarded "Sarah," an able but rather shy young student who recently graduated from the university. The problem was that she began to telephone relentlessly to request pastoral support, even though she had returned to live with her family over a hundred miles away. Some weeks the calls would come nightly, often when I was just spending some needed time with my young family. My notes from the first session with Lake recalled the atmosphere: "How do you feel?" "Burdened!" "Do you look forward to hearing the phone ring?" "No!" "She seems to evoke a sense of immense responsibility." "Yes!"

In the course of the next ninety minutes, certain themes began to emerge about my style of pastoral care. As we conversed, insights began to dawn, helping me to sense that this dilemma was not simply thrust upon me, but that I had been a kind of co-

conspirator unawares. "I trust only you," she told me over the phone. "How do those words make you feel?" Lake asked. I had to acknowledge that it felt good to be needed. Lake replied that it was also "jolly dangerous," which was why I was feeling so burdened. In the course of our exploratory conversation, it emerged that part of me indeed felt good to be a key source of help for someone. However, another part of me deeply resented this careseeker. I was dreading the ring of the phone, experiencing it as a form of persecution. "You don't express any anger toward her?" "Certainly not!" Why not? Because another highly valued part of me felt obliged to go beyond the normal call of duty, to give sacrificial care as fundamental to my pastoral work. That afternoon we spent some time with each of these parts, exploring their overall impact on me. Thus I was baptized clinically into Fairbairn and Guntrip's object relations theory—with a difference.

Conceptualizing the Self and its Systems

Over the past twenty-five years, clinicians and researchers Dorothy Heard and Brian Lake have developed a significant extension of and complement to the attachment theory of John Bowlby. They have placed Bowlby's instinctive system for caregiving and careseeking within a theoretical model of the self as a series of integrated, interactive systems. Part of their agenda was to link attachment theory to other aspects of the self-maturation process. Just as in the fifteenth century, when we only knew of the respiratory system while our understanding of the other systems of the body remained largely unexamined, and the co-operation of the systems unexplored, so today the need is for an integration of attachment with other systemic aspects of the self. The written fruit of their collaboration is their 1997 publication, *The Challenge of Attachment for Caregiving*.[1] In this essay I would like to describe some of the themes "beyond Bowlby" that Lake and his wife, Dorothy Heard, have articulated and how I began to experience these as a working pastor. I will also comment on how today in my role as a college professor, certain themes continue to raise relevant questions and provide pedagogical insight into classroom dynamics. The goal in all this is to better understand multiple care systems: how they interact with one another and with the attachment system, in order that

[1] Dorothy Heard and Brian Lake, *The Challenge of Attachment for Caregiving* (London: Routledge, 1997).

therapists, pastors, and educators may bring an increasingly comprehensive understanding of the caregiving systems to counseling and teaching.

Their framework begins by acknowledging the attachment group of systems as foundational, providing the infrastructure for regulating and maintaining physical and psychological homeostasis and for consolidating the newly acquired information from which growth and development proceed. In addition to the foundational system, a potentiating group of systems is responsible for furthering personal growth and development. This includes the interest-sharing system, the self-ideal system (and its defenses), and the sexual partnership system as they develop through the emergence of a *supportive companionable* (SC) system.[2] When the primary, instinctive (attachment) system fails to maintain the necessary biologically set level of emotional support, the potentiating and developmental group of systems is impeded. For example, Harlow's surrogate terry towel monkeys never experienced effective caregiving. As a result their developmental and sexual systems were gravely impaired.[3] The point is that these two groups of systems function alongside one another, with the homeostatic attachment system as foundational. However, to some degree, one may exercise conscious control over the relations between the two systems. This occurs through the influence of the potentiating systems as they mature through the experience of caregiving/careseeking partnerships. In other words, the supportive companionable systems can exert a top-down influence to free or alter some of the stimulus-bound, bottom-up responses from the attachment foundation.[4]

From Object Relations to Internal Models

Perhaps the place to elaborate further a theoretical integration is the relationship between attachment and object relations theories. Heard and Lake were particularly well-suited to conceptualize in this area. Heard was for many years supervised by John Bowlby and regularly attended his seminars while working as a Consultant in his department at the Tavistock Clinic. Lake, after serving for seven years with his brother, Frank, in the pioneering work of the Clinical Theology Association, had a

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[2] Ibid., p. 69.
[3] Ibid., p. 71.
[4] Ibid., p. 74.

further training analysis with Harry Guntrip that began in the final stages of Guntrip's own analysis with Winnicott.[5] He went on to work in the National Health Service as a Consultant in Psychotherapy at St. James's University Hospital, Leeds. Briefly stated, Heard and Lake translated "object relations" as "working models" that hold the history of the relations individuals have with any entity or event in their environment. The history of content and quality of interactions exchanged between the participants is represented by "internal models of experience in relationships" (or IMERs).[6] The primary inner system of IMERs is the one individuals have with their parents, or primary attachment figures, and it is a closed system because individuals inherit it unconsciously from interactions with parents from birth. IMERs transmit this inherited attachment system to our present life-situations. The maturational task that counseling seeks to support consists in accompanying the clients as they create a new and open system, rather than simply repeating the closed parental system. For example, in the early years of a marriage within a closed system, a partner may hear the other express a felt need and think, "Here's another bloody demand!" In fact it is heard through the "early warning" defense system which is informed (or deformed) by IMERs, which, being a closed system, is often counter-productive to the present task of building a companionable relationship. From this brief illustration, one can see how such an approach, based as it is in attachment caregiving and careseeking, helps to clarify and interpret the maturing partnership.

Christian Ministry: Between Ideals and Defensive Idealizations

Heard and Lake proceeded to explore the connections not only between IMERs and one's parental attachment system but also with other systems of the self, including what has been called the self-ideal or ego-ideal, which individuals carry within and

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[5] For an introduction to the history of the Clinical Theology Association, see John Peters, *Frank Lake, the Man and his Work* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1989). Guntrip's reflections on his own experiences in therapy are vividly described in his posthumously published essay (1975), "Analysis with Fairbairn and Winnicott (How Complete a Result Does Psycho-Analytic Therapy Achieve?)." See Jeremy Hazel, editor, *Personal Relations Therapy: The Collected Papers of H. J. S. Guntrip* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aaronson, Inc. 1994), pp. 351-270.

[6] Heard and Lake, pp. 85-86.

which has a definitive role in regulating behavior. A self-ideal does not merely consist of defensive, pathological idealizations, especially maligned by Freudians who see it working as the punitive superego by which people "beat themselves up" when they don't live up to its standards. Adler, Jung, and Kohut all granted the ego-ideal a more benign connotation as an internal guide to challenge one to be one's best. At a meeting celebrating Bowlby's eightieth birthday, Lake presented a paper in which he argued for a more empirically grounded discussion of how such ideals actually function in a maturative, as well as in a misguided, defensive manner.[7] For instance, Fairbairn once described how, when functioning in a healthy way, the ideal self incorporates the child's experiences of accepting and supportive parents who serve for the child as an ego ideal. Such ideals channel one's desires to set a course and to reach it. They focus one's resources and energies to accomplish one's vocation.[8]

On the other hand, Fairbairn also theorized that there can be a split off, defensive ego-ideal system that incorporates bad relational experiences with exciting/deserting and rejecting/neglecting parental experiences. These defensive, non-maturative self-ideals arise from a dysfunction of the careseeking system brought on by a failure of appropriate caregiving.[9] Instead of providing internal support that creates standards of cooperative partnerships, exploration, resilience, empathy, and patience, defensive idealizations are reflected either in exaggerated self-responsibility and inappropriate autonomy (doing it one's own way with an assumed superiority over others) or in passive, dependent overvaluing of a group or environment functioning as a protector or potential protector. This dependent overvaluing may involve a part-object or thing (e.g. breast, penis, drugs, money, food, personal possessions) that individuals compulsively seek to obtain and experience, often as a defensive reaction to shame and criticism. The defensive idealization may co-exist with the self-ideal, functioning as compensation, or a closed, shadow system in a strongly defensive system. The oscillation between these two, one conscious and the other unconscious, may explain why overtly sacrificial caregivers are not infrequently reported in the media for their various vulnerabilities to seduction and scandal. All such defensive idealizations involve major forms of exaggeration and

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[7] Ibid., p. 103.
[8] Ibid., p. 111.
[9] Ibid., pp. 116-117.

distortion of what can realistically be expected of a child or an adult. They are associated with a variety of addictive behaviors.[10] Gerald May has noted the implications for the spiritual life, viewing addictions as misdirecting and depleting desire. "It is like a psychic malignancy, sucking our life energy into specific obsessions and compulsions, leaving less and less energy available for other people and other pursuits . . . These are what we worship, what we attend to, where we give our time and energy, *instead of love.*"[11]

Let us recall that defensive idealizations are recorded and passed along to the present in IMERs, more or less segregated from our conscious awareness. Let us also remember that these IMERs, inherited as they are from the early caregiving/careseeking partnerships, are not the whole story. Alongside the most defensive idealizations, there lies a discontented and deep-seated longing to reach new levels of skill and competence in one's work and more maturing experiences of intimacy in one's relationships. Our dilemma is that we are torn between aspiring for further stages of development and defensively maintaining the present homeostatic infrastructure. Sadly, we may simply continue our defensive reactions perpetually.[12]

Family Systems, Church Systems and Trinitarian Theology

During my supervision, I began to consider the extent to which an "exaggerated self-responsibility and autonomy ideal" was part of the psychological reality hidden behind my consciously theological ideal of "death to self," the necessary prelude to a deeper union with Christ and a deeper pastoral connection with my congregation. This confusion between two kinds of ideals made it extraordinarily difficult to discern between whether one was being selfish or appropriately taking care of one's self. During this initial time of opening my closed system, Lake raised the possibility that "death to self" might connect more appropriately to "dying to one's internal negative critics," that is, the part of one's IMERs one has inherited from the parental attachment system. Until then, when I translated my theological ideal into pastoral

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[10] Ibid., p. 120.
[11] Gerald G. May, *Addiction and Grace* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988), p. 13.
[12] Heard and Lake, p. 93.

work, I had included some fairly strong resistances concerning expression of needs and feelings, grounded in the attachment caregiving/careseeking system of my family of origin. In seeking to connect the systems, Lake sought to open and explore the relationship between my pastoral ideal and my ideal for self-care: "If you care for your people the way you're caring for yourself, you're not giving much help." Despite the apparent severity, Lake was challenging me to reframe my goal of giving exemplary, even sacrificial, care to others, because from a systems perspective, it was embedded within a highly conflicted system of self-neglect. How long would such a divided house stand? When might the shadow system become activated and vulnerable to any number of seductions? The challenge was to loosen and renegotiate a closed system of the self-ideal in order to discover a form of pastoral care that felt less burdensome: to wear the authentic gospel yoke that was genuinely light, to offer a kind of caregiving which was something freely given, not squeezed out of me by persecuting parishioners.

Essentially Lake gave me permission to explore the psychodynamics of my self-ideal and pastoral ideal by providing *companionable support*. Only then was I free to construct a pastoral self-ideal which acknowledged that clergy commonly give care out of a perfectionistic model, despite ist regularly creating distress in the minister's family system. Formal and informal training combine to engender an imbalanced style in which one overly invests in one's church or service system while neglecting one's family or home system. When this professional model is dominant, God does not miraculously rescue us from its unhealthy consequences.

This perfectionistic model is also linked to a theologically anemic account of God's own pattern of caregiving. One primary piece of evidence of a theological imbalance is an exclusive focus on the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as our model, isolated from its triune context. For example, the well-known polarity depicted in Nygren's *Agape and Eros* portrays God's love exclusively in terms of sacrificial giving and having nothing to do with receiving. For Nygren, agape *is* self-giving.[13] This could hardly depict God's love more one-sidedly, neglecting the depth context of the *vinicula caritas* where the cross reflects the generous reciprocity of divine life within the holy trinity. This triune giving out of abundant life

[13] Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (London: SPCK, 1982), p. 201.

militates against giving out of emptiness in order to find a reward, win approval, or manipulate others to feel obliged to the caregiver. To identify love only with giving collapses the concrete reality of love within God's triune communion into an abstract principle of sacrifice.[14]

When a perfectionistic ego-ideal leaves one feeling that one must go on and on, and hence increasingly depleted, one becomes easily seduced by the next person who makes a demand or subtly disapproves. Faced with too many anxious careseekers, those who are uncooperative, or those whose "getting well rate" is too slow for one's pastoral timetable, an overwhelmed pastor may feel incompetent and powerless. "To regain a sense of control and competence, there is a marked tendency for them to fall back on coercive controlling or avoidant patterns of relating."[15] However, through support and conscious reflection, an alternative self-ideal may emerge, in which one learns to stay connected to careseekers without the need for control or the need for untarnished approval ratings. One may discover the freedom to construct a hardworking but reasonable schedule.

Internalizing a supportive supervisory experience empowers one to migrate from a defensive idealization to a positive self-ideal. Internalizing the *SC* relationship energizes one's nurturing and exploratory capacities. One gradually learns to lower volume on the punitive, guilt-producing internal critic that too harshly condemns one's imperfections and limitations. All parents inadvertently pass on ideals somewhere between healthy and distorted, realistic and maladaptive, impressing them on the highly malleable child. The work of maturity separates one's own ideals from those of our parents (or parental IMERS), transforming defensive ideals into realistic, supportive guides that competently bring forth one's own vocational gifts.

Everyday Encounters with Defenses

When one first affiliates with a group, one sets in place the kinds of relationships that mirror the caregiving/careseeking partnerships one has experienced within one's family of origin.[16]

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[14] For a further discussion of the implications for family and church systems, see Roger Newell, *Passion's Progress: The Meanings of Love* (London: SPCK, 1994), pp. 26-82.

[15] Heard and Lake, p. 92.

[16] Ibid., p. 80.

One does the same with one's peer relationships and romantic attachments. Heard and Lake designate all of these as secondary attachments. All are approached "primed by the history of the primary attachment and other well established defensive habits formed by the activation of their system for interpersonal defense. People therefore tend to behave in secondary and reversed attachment in accordance with what has been learnt from primary attachments."[17] However, the same process of opening closed systems through the supportive, companionable redesigning of IMERs from defensive ideals to mature self-ideals forms a realistic and hopeful path. A crucial moment in maturing towards healthy intimacy involves coming to terms with one another's defenses. What are the patterns of behavior that lead to mistrust? Having identified these, is it possible to accept, or in serious situations to forgive, them? How does one learn to work through the stressors that seduce one to revisit closed-off defensive strategies, including "coercive controlling or avoidant patterns of relating?" Understanding the attachment IMERs from which one's defenses originate can offer a deep understanding of one another's pressure points. Our defenses *are* the pressure points. Can husband and wife, pastor and flock, or teacher and student learn to support and respect each other where one lacks supportive IMERs, especially when there is a chronic area of deprivation?

Two Alternative Patterns of Relating

In our first session together, as a most reliable clue of what would follow, Lake refused the role of an expert telling me which course to follow. Though such a *dominance/submission* (D/S) relationship obviously would have seemed benign, taking the form of a protective and even "indulgent dictator," the bottom line would have been a pattern of forcing me to follow the decisions of a controlling leader. To not obey would be to face coercion in various forms, "including being shamed and humiliated."[18] Relying on P. D. MacLean's findings on brain studies, Heard and Lake thought it likely that D/S patterns of relating were sited in the reptilian brain. While varying with previous experience, age, and temperament, evidence suggested that children and adults became dominating to those whom they assessed as likely to become submissive. Bowlby's attachment model pictured the

[17] Ibid., p. 84.
[18] Ibid., p. 35.

parent/child relationship as a goal-corrected partnership, with the child's careseeking as half of the process and maternal caregiving as the other half. During the course of the day the mother may have attempted through an attunement process to change the set goals of the child's behavior. The child, in response, may have sought to change the mother's behavior and proximity. In doing so, the child would invariably have adopted some of the methods the mother herself employed. "Therein lies both hope and warning."[19]

With this warning and hope in mind, Lake helped me construct a pastoral caregiving pattern that was not simply set within the pre-existing D/S mold. Lake connected with my own curiosity about problem-solving, to explore alternatives, and to weigh the different parts of myself that were conflicted over how to proceed with Sarah's seeking of care while encouraging my own decision-making. In other words, Lake modeled a *supportive companionable* (SC) way of caregiving that was integrated with interest-sharing and exploration. This style of caregiving is a "protective, explanatory, exploratory form of relating that owes as much to nonverbal signals and tone of voice as to communicating through verbal signals."[20] It is a pattern to which people of all ages seem innately prepared to respond and adopt. When conflict arises, SC caregiving responds by recognizing others' points of view and resolving conflicts through negotiation and compromise. In a supportive, companionable way, parents, teachers, and colleagues treat other adults and children as worthy of respect. From such experiences, children, students, and peers build up new internal models (IMERs) based on the SC pattern.

In this light, one can anticipate self-care and self-management that evolves in one of two ways, depending on the quality of IMERs. One is interdependent, the other is defensive (either overly dependent or independent). Parental caregiving mediated through supportive companionable (SC) patterns enables offspring to feel capable of self-management and to seek help from those whom they trust in situations when they find themselves beyond their competence. When parental figures use dominance/submissive (D/S) patterns of relating, they reduce the child's systemic capacities for careseeking and caregiving, intrapersonal exploration, cooperative interest-sharing, and eventually their capacity for mutually affectionate sexual

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[19] Ibid., p. 39.
[20] Ibid., p. 34.

relationships and overall self-management.

In the church system, how shall a pastor encourage a shared approach to caregiving/careseeking that reflects a community of mutual respect and a shared partnership in the gospel? That is, how can the church be a priesthood of all believers, not a group dominated by a benign "dictator" or endlessly engaged in territorial conflicts over "who is boss"? How shall one respond to someone, perhaps an elder, who has activated one's defenses? Instead of avoiding and distancing, or seeking to firmly assert control over the situation, can we not negotiate on the basis of a sense of being *companions* (literally, ones who "share bread together")? May we not ground this mutuality in the shared gratitude we acknowledge before a common table of grace? Out of the mystery that God in Christ has embraced our humanity in its imperfections and distortions, we are able to journey together in a supportive, companionable way. Out of the reality of the unique theological attachment revealed in the gospel—grace growing through love—we grow in confidence to journey together as fellow disciples, not masters and servants.

The Relevance of Companionable Interest Sharing in the Classroom

For the past five years, my primary SC role has moved from the sanctuary to the classroom, so I will comment on the relevance of the SC model for teaching and for creating classroom community. Heard and Lake helpfully distinguish the goals of an interest-sharing system (which has priority in teaching) from the attachment system goals of either caregiving or careseeking. With the latter, the main sensation is satisfaction or relief. The careseeker's goal is to feel that the caregiving partner understands one's predicament and is prepared to protect, until the environment or internal state no longer evokes careseeking and the careseeker acquires the skills necessary to cope with the predicament. The caregiver's goal is to seek satisfaction in knowing that the careseeker is now able to cope. However, the goals of interest-sharing go beyond felt relief to create a "heightened sense of vitality and intimacy."[21] This bears closer scrutiny.

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[21] Ibid., p. 54.

We know that attachment realities can and do interrupt the exploratory mode. Ainsworth has identified how missing a loved one arouses a sense of insecurity.[22] Heard likens this "attachment dynamic" to Winnicott's description of a child's play that becomes overridden by anxiety, but which is then re-established when a mother "holds the situation."[23] Heard and Lake consider the pursuit of interests by peers, that is, people of broadly similar intelligence, stamina, and competence in the pursuit of interests, to be the equivalent of mutual play. In fact they report that this observation led to their notion of complementary instinctive behavioral systems—the exploratory interest-sharing systems. "This system is activated initially by the supportive interest of parents, then of peers, and consists of skills that further the understanding and enjoyment of a joint interest extended and new competencies discovered."[24]

Educators might be curious about what activates the interest-sharing system. Heard and Lake call attention to the following triad: a new level of understanding regarding an interest, a new achievement in a related skill area, and an opportunity to see others doing the same. Mutual interest-sharing between peers may begin at the point of communication of one's "eureka" experiences, which evoke in interested companions a wish to discover more. The mere sharing of interests leads to a common delight in the achievement of new insights and skills. A state of comfort is created "akin to feeling in rapport (or not) with someone."[25] Clearly, arranging time and creating space for this quality of interaction is an important pedagogical ingredient in moving beyond a D/S format into an SC learning community. Though the traditional lecture format apparently resembles a D/S structure, lectures do not necessarily embody this quality any more than group discussions are magically free of D/S elements. A lecture may meaningfully share interests when the instructor's approach to the material shapes an environment that invites mutual exploration and encourages dialogue.

The task of a therapist, says Bowlby, "is to help [the client] review the representational models of attachment figures that without his realizing it are governing his perceptions, predictions

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[22] Ibid., p. 52.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., p. 53.
[25] Ibid.

and actions."[26] When a teacher engages students in a manner informed by attachment theory, part of one's effort will include helping them explore the working models they bring to class and how these are currently functioning to create both a class atmosphere and an internal learning environment, for better and for worse. In other words, what Lake provided for me in the counseling context has a classroom analogue. In comparing the D/S model to pedagogy, one immediately sees parallels with Paulo Freire's "banking model," with the teacher performing the role of "sage on stage."[27] Students are the empty vessels, their knowledge purses empty and in need of pure receptivity in order to be filled. From the teacher's perspective, should learning and testing evaluations reveal meager increments of knowledge gained, the fault lies in the lack of receptivity of the student. "Sit still so I can pour the knowledge in." The student's revenge on the D/S paradigm turns the tables and blames the faulty knowledge dispenser. Of course, if one compliantly accepts the dominance, an unsuccessful student dutifully absorbs the blame of being a poor receptor. One who consciously self-blames may simultaneously and unconsciously resent one's learning partner. By contrast, the SC approach would anticipate that there are potentially as many ways to master a subject and as many learning styles as there are personal uniquenesses and combinations of one's own set of "multiple intelligences."[28]

To summarize, a classroom experience congruent with the exploratory system will express empathic support integrated with exploratory interest-sharing. Such a learning atmosphere will indwell an inner motivation and an external structure to which both student and teacher are committed. Without this shared commitment, one cannot encourage shared responsibility. The more one prepares for learning—having read the assignment, having invested one's own mental and emotional resources—the more satisfying results the learning community achieves. Unless students are persuaded that their own preparation for class is vital, there is no shared belief and only a coerced connection.

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[26] Ibid., p. 46, quoting Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss: Volume 2. Separation: Anxiety and Anger* (London: Hogarth, 1973), p. 148.

[27] Paulo Freire, *Pedegogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 39, 60.

[28] Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

Further, an SC approach will acknowledge the personal coefficient in all knowledge, seeing the knower and the known connection not as a scandal to eradicate but as a reality in which we may participate to the limits of our curiosity, imagination, and energy. Polanyi has written, "I have tried to demonstrate that into every act of knowing there enters a tacit and passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known, and that this coefficient is no mere imperfection, but a necessary component of all knowledge."[29] An example of this cooperation in my area of teaching is the increased sensitivity in biblical hermeneutics to the act of reading itself and to "reader response" criticism in biblical studies.[30] Since readers bring a diversity of gifts and insights to the text, one hopes to encourage students to creatively and actively perform the reading role in such a way that their lives are both informed and transformed by an encounter with the reality of God.

Paramount in this SC style is that the instructor maintains an exploratory collaborative stance in relation to the inquirer of any age. In this way one may respectfully acknowledge students' starting place and seek to connect sensitively to their preparedness to extend their knowledge. At the same time, one seeks to create a real meeting with the material in all its angularity and distinctness, particularly when it does not simply conform to our preconceptions. Thus, for example, when instructors introduce new material, they may choose not to dominate or overwhelm their students by rushing through their lectures, especially if the state of students' interest and attention signals disconnection. SC teaching entails the art of tuning or attunement with students' states of mind. It seeks to regulate both overarousal and underarousal.[31] Should instructors sense the waning of student interest, they may adapt accordingly, perhaps using humor to help re-engage interest.

Of course, inattention is not always a laughing matter.

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[29] Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge. Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University Press, 1958.), p. 312. A contemporary educator who has read Polanyi most helpfully is Parker Palmer. See his *To Know as we are Known* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 28, 29.

[30] For a thorough introduction to contemporary hermeneutics, including reader response criticism, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

[31] Heard and Lake, p. 90.

Suppose that certain individuals appear drowsy during an afternoon class. At such moments I have been torn between ignoring this (avoidance, flight) and firmly confronting it (aggression, fight), inevitably choosing the former course but with an aftertaste of swallowed frustration. Recently I have begun to interact with drowsy or inattentive students after class, sometimes inquiring by email that I had noticed their lethargy and wondered if they were feeling unwell and if they knew the procedure to access medical attention. If it was a simple matter of sleep deprivation, I have asked if there might be a more cost-effective way to organize sleep patterns, especially given the high cost of tuition! Judging by the responses I have received, students are quite open to this feedback and appreciate my interest. It also has a positive effect on attentiveness thereafter.

It would seem more preferable to explore issues of class vitality and attention immediately and directly. The problem is how to make the attuning adjustments in a non-embarrassing way. Though ostensibly engaging in dialogue, it could easily become a form of humiliation and shaming, thus reinforcing a D/S pattern. Good questions to ask might include: "I am curious if you can identify what specific moment or event triggered your disengagement?" "What questions from your own life cause this material to be relevant to you?" "What do others find relevant or meaningful about this material?" "Are there identifiable stressors in the classroom environment which are making exploratory behavior unlikely?"

Finally, it is worth inquiring what discomforting threats to interest-sharing exist in the classroom, which upon reaching a certain level of intensity renders interest-sharing defensive. When interest-sharing becomes defensive, there follows a loss of well-being, low self-esteem, and the anxiety, depression, and despair that is associated with failing to meet the desired goals.[32] I would suggest that one crucial stressor is the imminent reality that education continually involves assessment and evaluation, which create the nagging fear that one might not reach one's goal. Since fear of failure is never far from any kind of work, how can interest-sharing maintain vitality and not suffer extinction? Here the D/S and SC styles surely affect both the way one experiences assessment and how it is administered. Crucial to a SC evaluative experience, which is not permeated with dominance/submissive

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[32] Ibid., p. 170.

overtones, is the felt experience of supportive feedback. Supportive evaluation gives one confidence to grow and improve one's skills, keeps exploration vital and honest, and energizes students to reach their goals in a realistic and truthful manner. It follows that one can experience competition in the classroom in one of two ways. In the SC classroom, competition seeks to increase ability and skill relative to a shared interest. In D/S contexts, competition seeks to maintain the status and power of the competitors.[33]

The End of Session One and a New Beginning

My initial session with Lake ended without him telling me what to do with Sarah. We did consider ways to support Sarah while encouraging her to find care closer to home, grounded more realistically in her current living situation. We explored ways of expressing this to Sarah in a manner that would not be rejecting, but supportive and encouraging, firmly leading her to create an environment of self-care and support appropriate for life in a new setting. The bottom line of Lake's mentoring of me was this: having spent time with all the different aspects of how I felt about this pastoral situation (including the previously unacknowledged part of me which felt good about being needed and valued so highly), I must do what I felt was right. I now see that Lake modeled for me a companionable, supportive style of caregiving. Had he simply told me what I should do, he would have functioned in a dominant/submissive style, in which Lake as the expert in human relations administered the prescription that I should follow. Though I may have wanted such expert advice, he did not offer it. I left his office that day sensing I had begun a journey into a new way of giving care to others—and receiving it as well. At times I would need more support (Bowlby), and at other times I would be secure enough to explore significant issues that would increase my skills and insight into the multiple systems involved in pastoral care.

Conceptualizing the self and the processes that lead to a maturing identity are exceedingly difficult tasks. Heard and Lake have illuminated this important work by broadening attachment theory to include the role of interest-sharing and companionable support in one's maturing ego-ideal. Parents, pastors, and

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[33] Ibid., p. 90.

teachers may consider, then, how to give supportive care and how to create a feeling of belonging and community to their children, parishioners, and students. As another has reminded us, "there's nothing so practical as a good theory."[34]

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[34] Ibid., p. 135 (quoting Jock Sutherland). I would like to close by thanking my wife, Sue Newell, L.C.S.W., for her careful editorial skill and supportive feedback on an earlier version of this essay.