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What can the Pastor Learn from Freud?

A Historical Perspective on Psychological and Theological Dimensions of Soul-Care¹

Hans Martin Dober

Abstract

How do we have to shape the practice of **pastoral care**? Martin Luther grounded it in a mutual dialogue of brethren. Friedrich Schleiermacher transformed this Protestant understanding according to the modern ideals of freedom and responsibility for oneself. In response to the other basic question of pastoral care: What is **the human soul**?, Sigmund Freud overcame the Platonic model undergirding Schleiermacher's account. Whoever seeks to care for his own soul and the soul of the other should learn from Freud. One of the most fruitful consequences of such study lies in the formation of a mature religiosity. Another such consequence concerns the pastor's aspiring to an attitude of **self-control** in counselling. Building one's own competence on the experience and the knowledge of Freud can help one to counteract the temptation to transfer one's (unconscious) wishes onto the conversation partner, and conversely to ward off transference from the other onto oneself. On the level of ideals and **ultimate principles** however, Christian pastors, unlike Freud, will not see fate, and the experience of the anonymous forces of Eros and Thanatos, as ultimate last horizon of **human self-understanding**. Instead, the good news of sinful man's justification by God transcends even the limits of human existence imposed by fate.

key words: pastoral care, human soul, self-control, human self-understanding, ultimate principles

As Traugott Koch emphasised, even in church based pastoral care one often encounters people who realise that they act in ways they do not want to, even though their spirit be willing:

„Some people, whose plight might not even be immediately obvious to outsiders, are burdened by internal conflicts which derive from wounds that were inflicted on them, perhaps in early childhood. Such wounds may cause them to unconsciously do what they themselves do not even want to do. Whatever drives them, whatever takes place within them and what, as a consequence, they inflict on others, remains almost or even entirely withdrawn from their consciousness [...] Caught up in such 'unconsciously' denied conflicts of impulses (*Trieb-Konflikte*), people may – in an unfree and inauthentic manner – deprive themselves and others of a real life, of chances for development and fulfilment. What they themselves basically really want is nothing but to love and to be loved. And yet they destroy love, without being aware of it, and remain totally entangled within themselves“ (Koch, 1989, p. 300).

A similar insight is endorsed by Eilert Herms: psychoanalytic theory and practice

„... have at the very least conclusively demonstrated that there are set rules which govern humans' internal lives, that health and illness of the heart make a difference, that one can determine causes for the one as well as for the other, and that a prudent and responsible care for the soul differs indeed from stupid and irresponsible negligence“ (Herms, 1992, p. 122).

In the light of these two theologians' recognition of the importance of psychoanalytic theory, pastors engaged in counselling are confronted, first of all, with a practical imperative: Following Herms, they must seek to adequately take in the psychological situation of their communication partners and to prudently deal with what they learn about that situation. Secondly, pastors will have to keep in mind that any approach to the human soul must reckon with the possibility of inner differences, tensions, or conflicts. Such problems must be interpreted in terms of the hermeneutical instruments which are available today. Already Paul, in his letter to the Romans, described experiences of the kind invoked by Koch. He describes himself as sometimes unfortunately not following the insights guiding his good will, but instead, for whatever reasons (and here the Apostle refers to the power of sin) doing what he does not want (Romans 7, 16a; 18f [„... I act against my own will“]). It was only Sigmund Freud who projected this ambivalence within humans' self experience (which had for a long time been acknowledged) onto the duality of two levels within the human soul: the sphere of the conscious (and of the will, as oriented to action and chosen goals) and the unconscious (representing a hidden 'iceberg' of drives, fears, and motives underneath). We cannot here discuss his theory of the unconscious, as disclosed most persuasively through the analysis of dreams. Readers will either be familiar with that theory or else can consult available surveys (e.g. Ricoeur, 1993; Dober, 2008, pp. 113-178). But the question we must ask in this essay is what it is that pastors can learn from Freud, in order to be able to adequately address the challenge presented by such unrecognised conflicts and tensions.

In what follows we shall presuppose a concept of Protestant pastoral care which was authoritatively developed by Luther and Schleiermacher. All further specifications of this concept can be derived from their original understandings, even if during the Reformation Calvin, Zwingli, and Bucer placed their accents in slightly different ways than Luther, and even if after Schleiermacher further definitions of pastoral care were elaborated, as for example by E. Thurneysen (Dober, 2008, pp. 216-228). I shall proceed under the assumption that an integration of psychological (and in particular psycho-analytical) knowledge into the theory of practiced pastoral care is imperative in order to promote the goals proper to that care. I want to render this assumption plausible by focussing on the pastor's attitude in the process of counselling. To be sure, what it is that renders soul-care 'Christian' in a Protestant sense of the term can not be deduced from what Freud wrote. But in what concerns the manner in which a pastor relates to those seeking help, how he regards them and how he enters into their mindset, that is, in what concerns the practice of care itself, a pastor can learn much from Freud. Quite a number of important insights (concerning e.g. introspection, the recognition of the other's responsibility for himself, and the challenging implications of progress in self-awareness) which were already available to the earlier theoreticians of pastoral care can be further deepened by a study of Freud's work

I shall first offer a historical survey of how the pastor's proper attitude in conversations with his parishioners had been described by theoreticians before Freud. In a second step the particular possibilities will be sketched which, as Freud's correspondence with O. Pfister suggests, distinguish church based pastoral care from therapy. In a third and final step what thus results from re-framing the historical account in terms of its Freudian interpretation will be found corroborated in view of the way in which Jesus deals with the adulteress in the Gospel of John (8).

1. Existing accounts of the pastor's proper approach to counselling

a. The „*mutuum colloquium fratrum*“

When reframing as well as theologically explicating his guiding principle in religion, Luther did not altogether oppose penances as standard forms of church based pastoral care. He did however disapprove of and criticise certain late Medieval practices of imposing penances („indulgences”), as well as the theological teachings under girding these practices. His own re-orientation, which essentially involved a rediscovery of the practical, life restoring impact of the Gospel, led to a transformation of theological foundations which profoundly re-structured what hitherto had been accepted about pastoral care. As Jürgen Ziemer has shown, Luther first and foremost (and foundationally) recognises pastoral care as an activity which proceeds from God, rather than reducing to a purely human achievement. In addition, Luther's account of pastoral care is „... to a large extent focussed on the realities of the pastoral situation” (Ziemer, 2004, p. 60). That is to say, that Luther takes seriously the concrete circumstances in which parishioners need and seek pastoral care (Ebeling, 1997). Finally, Luther „de-clericalised“ pastoral care, and thus by implication separated both its forms and the duties connected with it from the institution of the church.

“For Luther, pastoral care is predominantly an area in which spiritual brotherhood can prove its worth. This understanding has found its adequate expression in the classical formula according to which pastoral care constitutes a way in which the Gospel realises itself 'per mutuum colloquium et consolationem fratrum'” (Ziemer, 2004, p. 61f).

Once pastoral care is no longer almost exclusively reserved for and understood in terms of the faithful's confession to a priest, such care has become a function of the parish community. With this revision, pastoral care is located within an open communicative field which links pious subjects with one another. Even within those subjects, after all, their „inner man“ is not perceived as self-sufficient, not even when relating to himself. Anyone who wishes to maintain their linguistic competence remains ever dependent on others who approach him from outside. In Luther's terminology, he remains dependent on „the word“ that comes from outside, on communication, and also on an open ear that will listen when he opens his heart. One may think of the pastoral conversations which Luther himself, as a young man, conducted with his mentor Staupitz, or of the pastoral care he was willing to extend to others.

As the history of Protestant Christianity shows however, this newly discovered and newly appreciated open-ness turned out to be difficult to preserve. One must agree with the judgment by Werner Schütz:

„The magnificent freedom from human statutes and ecclesial reglementation slowly gave way, once again, to a new kind of confinement, legalistic proscriptions and spiritual paternalism.“ (Schütz, 1977, p. 16).

b. *Every one's freedom and responsibility*

Schleiermacher's theory of pastoral care was developed by re-connecting with Luther's account, and by further elaborating the latter's reform impulses. Societal conditions had changed to such an extent, that the new theory which in Protestant Christianity became authoritative for modernity exhibited clearly modified contours. Nevertheless, Luther's demand for a „*mutuum colloquium fratrum*“ re-appears in Schleiermacher and once again indicates an understanding of pastoral care which presupposes the reformed principle of the *priesthood of all the faithful*. Clearly, both theology and the conduct of life within the church

were never independent of what contemporary societies took for granted and endorsed without questioning. This holds during Paul's time for the difference between masters and slaves, in Luther's time for the late Medieval corporate society, just as it applies during the time of Schleiermacher to the newly empowered bourgeoisie, with its new forms of thought and life.

Schleiermacher locates not only theology but also the theory of pastoral care within the framework of a more general scholarly and encyclopedic foundation. In its basic outline that theory is closely linked both with his psychology and his ethics. Given these parameters, Schleiermacher poses the question as to *what we understand by the soul of man and by the care for that soul*. His answer was inspired by his intensive study of ancient philosophy, especially by Plato and Aristotle. Thus he comes to understand the soul as a relationship between the spiritual and the organic bodily principle, through which man consciously frames his relation to his surroundings and in addition derives an "immediate self-consciousness", which in turn orients all his attempts at grasping facts and framing his actions. This orienting function of self-consciousness even extends to man's religious engagements. In the present context I can only hint at these intricacies (Dober, 2008, p. 71ff). Basically, Schleiermacher represents the old, tradition hallowed understanding of the human soul, an understanding against which Freud, in a manner that altogether destroyed what had previously been taken for granted, sought to derive the life of the human soul from and illuminate it in terms of the unconscious.

To enumerate the difference between both accounts would involve a study of its own. In the present essay, I wish to bracket those differences and instead focus on the similarities. The pastor's attitude when engaging in a pastoral conversation, after all, had been described by Schleiermacher in a way that closely resembles what Freud recommended for psychotherapists. The conditions for this similarity lie in what has become a matter of general agreement within bourgeoisⁱⁱ forms of thought and life. Thus, sociologically speaking, this similarity rests on the plausibility structures which dominate the late 19th and the early 20th centuries (Kondylis, 1991). These structures result from (1.) an emancipation of the faithful from the control of the church, which subsequently gave rise to a more encompassing scepticism against the church-institutional form of Christianity. In response to this scepticism, Schleiermacher composed an apology of religion (i.e. his "Reden über die Religion an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern", Schleiermacher, 1799). Among the best aspects of this bourgeois self-understanding, one finds (2.) a quest for freedom, which is also endorsed by Schleiermacher. The individual is free to take his life in his own hands. He is free to ethically structure his coexistence with others, including his own behaviour, in such a way that the other's freedom will always be respected. Schleiermacher's concept of pastoral care is deeply influenced by this latter aspect of freedom. He demands that even the church as an institution should be acknowledged as free from state intervention (Gräb, 2000, pp. 67ff). In a further step, Schleiermacher takes up the Romantic spirit of his time by (3.) transcending Kant's merely formal understanding of freedom. He takes highlights the challenge each individual confronts when confronted with the imperative to develop his respectively different talents. Such self-development requires formation and education, and must be nurtured by institutions. Not only schools but also churches thus contribute to the individual's development. Accordingly, such educational processes must in addition (4.) be promoted by creating opportunities for social interaction (Schleiermacher's fourth "Rede" even thematises the „social element of religion“) in which each participant's specific character is recognized and valued. That character must be nurtured as well through the life of the church in general, as well as through a specifically pastoral care in particular. Such nurturing in turn requires a

style of communication, which accepts the other as a conversation partner with fundamentally equal rights.

Schleiermacher's understanding of pastoral care integrates all these concerns. While they were already pre-figured in Luther's idea of a *mutuum colloquium fratrum*, now the demand for equal status in mutuality is explicitly recognised. This equality is understood as constitutive of persons' education towards religious awareness, and thus also of their growth in certainty with regard to their own Christian commitments. Very much in opposition to the asymmetry which hampered the encounters between parishioners and their priests or pastors while all turned around confession and penance, a pastoral conversation is endorsed which encompasses world view issues, Bible hermeneutics, and difficulties in understanding religious dogma along with the quest for consolation. In such pastoral conversations, where the parishioner's responsible freedom and autonomy in view of his respectively own self development is respected, the Reformed endorsement of *the priesthood of all the faithful* is taken seriously.

Whether, and at what time a person may ask for a specifically pastoral care during a conversation depends on his situation in life and on the degree of his Christian faith. Schleiermacher could still assume that some „Christian ethos“ defines the ethically normative framework of society as a whole, and that participation in Sunday church services would provide most of the faithful with sufficient opportunity for reassuring themselves about their faith and for orientation in life. But what for Schleiermacher could still be a matter of course is no longer a matter of course today. Already when Freud made his great discoveries concerning the life of the human soul, these general rules no longer held.

c. The Self-Control of the Pastoral Counsellor

As already indicated, with Freud the understanding of the human soul has changed extensively and fundamentally (Dober, 2008, 113-178). The church was late in taking notice of, let alone accepting this fact. An early exception is the Swiss pastor Oskar Pfister, whose thirty year friendship with Freud survived even their dispute about deeply incompatible world views. The most authoritative source for this friendship, and at the same time the most trail blasting contribution to the new manner in which pastoral care and therapy can be fruitfully related to one another is their correspondence (Freud and Pfister, 1980).

Still more influential was Joachim Scharfenberg's pastoral theological reception of Freud. Here the inspiration provided by psychoanalysis is critically integrated into the theory of the pastoral conversation, thus disclosing the necessary consequences for the practice of conducting such conversations. When addressing the question as to how one should understand 'care for the soul of another', Freud's ethos for counselling skills starts out from the general framework provided by Schleiermacher: For both thinkers, the conversation partner's individuality and freedom must be respected. But Freud establishes additional desiderata. In particular his demand that therapists must 'hold back' offers important guidance also for pastors. They as well are encouraged not to "subject the other to one's own superior competence, not to endeavour to take over shaping his fate, not to impose his own ideals on the other" (Scharfenberg, 1968, pp. 163f; Freud, 1952ff, p. 191).

Probably the most significant insights Scharfenberg derived from Freud arise from the latter's sympathetic account of the „interpersonal dynamic between conversation partners“ (Scharfenberg, 1972, § 3). The phenomena of transference which were discovered by Freud, along with their explication in terms of projections, offer a conceptual resource for criticising

the practice of confession (op. cit., p. 24). These insights also provide an explanatory interpretation for the Old Testament's opposition to idols. These new discoveries also disclose the dangers which any pastor confronts when engaging in conversation with his parishioners. Admittedly, the critique of religious projections and reifications which underlies Freud's misgivings about religion as a whole (even if Freud sometimes appropriates themes suggested by the Old Testament prophets), has engrafted itself onto today's approach to religion in general. This critique must be addressed by all who wish to render religion plausible. Yet in this essay, I wish to focus on Freud's other important contribution, the exposition of the dangers ingredient in pastoral conversations.

The dangers Freud warns against derive from the "multiplicity of emotional qualities" which form a secret undercurrent that colours and shapes any verbal communication, and which also colour any pastoral counselling before it even gets started (op. cit., p. 67). These feelings derive from the partners' „history of life and experience“, and they intrude „in more or less unnoticed ways into the present situation“ (op. cit., p. 65). Thus transference is inaugurated when those feelings evoke inner images which are then projected onto the conversation partner: such partners are then experienced as impersonating a father, with whom one had to settle numerous conflicts (or with whom such conflicts could not be acted out, such that the problems got suppressed). Or such partners are experienced like some person one had always held as a model to oneself, but whom one found failing the test of real life encounters. Or else memories of former sexual partners or friends are evoked, and with them all the ambivalences which characterise such reminiscences. The series could be continued. In each case there arises an impulse toward repetition, and this is what leads to the projections.

As a reaction to such transference, there may also be a counter-transference: The object of transference senses what is happening and seeks to counteract it. Sometimes, of course, one may merely suppose oneself to be the object of another's transference, without being justified in this assumption. Whatever the constellation may be, the game of projections, as these are triggered by "unintended and unconscious affects" (op.cit., p. 68), "disfigures" and "perverts" the dialogue situation. As a result, the other is not only not adequately recognised as who he is. It may also happen that a counselee becomes focussed on a physician or a pastor, thus compromising the freedom of both partners and hindering the success of their conversation. Moreover, it may happen that the physician, the analyst, or the pastor react in ways that have more to do with the structure imposed by their institutional settings, or with their personal character, and thus consciously or unconsciously affect their partner as well. In such situations, the one guiding the conversation must be able to diagnose and overcome such counter-transference within himself.

It is quite normal that feelings accompany and influence human encounters. But since transference impedes a person's ability to adequately take in the reality at hand, such impediments must be controlled. This demand holds especially for those who bear a professional responsibility for the course of the conversation, and that holds also for pastoral care. The pastor must not only control his own transference, he must also sense the one coming from his partner and must critically respond to both: "The more effectively one's own counter transference is controlled, the more capable will one be to spot the transference guiding typical ways of a partner's behaviour, and thus to be able to break through this vicious circle " (op. cit., p. 65).

On the whole one may summarise:

"Our good heart and our willingness to help are never sufficient. Often our warm-heartedness and what we call love tempt us to engage in projects which are beyond us.

It would be better to realise our own limits, instead of falling for a willingness to help which overtaxes our abilities " (op.cit., p. 75).

First and foremost, a pastor must strive for a heightened awareness. This awareness must also extend to ways of avoiding to present the partner with occasions for transference (op. cit., p. 77). It implies being reticent about sharing events from one's personal life, and about presenting these as models for the counselee (op. cit., p. 79). It is much more important to really enter into the other's own life situation. The pastor should also observe a certain reserve in view of sharing his own convictions. To be sure, a complete abstinence in this regard is impossible. A person cannot be separated from his convictions. But while engaged in taking in what the situation requires it is helpful to bracket one's convictions, at least to the extent of maintaining one's focus on the counselee. In general it is also important that the pastor remain cautious in extending his sympathy (op. cit., p. 78). This implies in particular that the encounters take place in a limited time frame. The requirement of a certain distance results from the pastor's double role. He is not only a „partner for the one seeking advice“ but also the “representative of reality” (op. cit., p. 77). As partner he gets close to the other, as representative of reality however he needs to be wary of the other's wishes, thus maintaining distance. To offer an „unlimited care“ is impossible, but a „partnership over time“ is possible.ⁱⁱⁱ

The insights Scharfenberg applies to the relationship between professional pastors and their parishioners also provide orientation for the *mutuum colloquium fratrum*. Wherever people encounter each other or enter into conversation, they confront the human, all-too-human desire to project their wishes onto the other and thus to overtax the other's abilities or to cloud the other's real personality, even if it comes to one's own brothers and sisters.

2. The possibilities Freud's psychoanalysis opens up for church based soul-care

Freud understood psychoanalysis as a new form of soul-care.^{iv} One does not have to discount that as an arrogant claim. Instead one can interpret this testimony offered to Pfister as deriving from his fundamentally changed understanding of the human soul. Freud saw the soul as a complex and ambivalent network of forces in which the Ego is often not “master in its own house“, or, if we take up Plato's image, where the chariot driver not infrequently risks losing command of his galloping horses. What people want often radically differs from what they achieve, as already Paul noted in Romans (7). The pastor, if only he has sufficient life experience and knowledge of himself, knows this about himself; he also recognises it in others. In recapturing with Freud the old insight that „the mind of man is altogether set upon evil from his youth“ (Gen. 8:21) the pastor can gain great opportunities for his own self-understanding and for the assessing his task. After all, as Jacob Taubes has pointed out, Freud is indeed the most important theoretician of original sin, - whether he was aware of it or not (Taubes, 1996, p. 374). But it is not those details which are at stake here. Rather I want to get more specific concerning the practical possibilities pastors can derive from Freud's works.

With Luther one can say that the particular opportunities of a church based pastoral care consist in their consoling impact. This holds true, even if pastoral counselling always also fulfilled other functions, such as offering advice about the conduct of life, or orientation concerning its meaning. But what is consolation, psychoanalytically speaking? Does it not require some form of regression, thus promising grownups, with their mature attitude and their proven piety, a stage of sheltered-ness which belongs rather to infancy (and which we

hope every child has in fact experienced)? It can hardly be denied that religious consolation often has regressive tendencies. But in what follows, and in pursuing the traces left by some of Freud's remarks, I wish to highlight the specific character of religious sheltered-ness, along with the ways in which it is appropriate even for a mature religious piety.

In his correspondence with Pfister, Freud conceded that in pastoral care transference, as it regularly occurs between patients and therapists, can be redirected. When this succeeds, the "libidinous relatedness" will no longer vicariously focus on the therapist but onto the "Lord of the church", Christ himself.^v This link toward "faith" can be liberating for the conversation itself. Here both the pastor and his parishioner find themselves on the same level, insofar as both seek consolation in their hard, guilt ridden and finite life (Gräb, 1998, pp. 223f. 229). Because, and insofar as the pastor himself is nourished from the consolation offered by religion, he can lead his counselees to that same consolation. Consolation here consists in re-focussing the human soul's quest for peace from all inner conflicts, especially in the areas of sexuality, fears, aggression, and envy, as well as for certainty in view of one's respectively own understanding of the meaning of life. All of this will be directed onto some symbol which is trusted to integrate within itself such unresolved issues. What is experienced as consoling thus is the act of leaving oneself behind and turning toward another, who is absolutely reliable: „cast all your cares on him“ (1 Petrus 5, 7).

Pastoral care thus offers the opportunity to focus transference not just onto the conversation partner who administer the symbols, but onto the symbols themselves.

„You are in the fortunate position to redirect transference to God and to restore that stage of former ages, which was happy in the one respect that it allowed religious faith to suffocate neuroses “,

writes Freud to Pfister (Freud and Pfister, 1980, p. 12). As pastor, so Freud adds, Pfister has it easier than the physician, „... because you can sublimate transference onto religion and ethics“ (op. cit., p. 38). „Therapeutically speaking, I can only envy you for your ability to encourage sublimation through religion “ (op. cit., p. 64).

There is no reason to not take Freud here quite seriously. But the implications of his concession to Pfister must be further explored than Freud did in this letter. Basing oneself on a recent study by Jörg Disse, one can even say that Freud here touches upon the limits of psychoanalysis. This limit derives from the fact that a desire for a highest good, the *summum bonum*, even a striving for God, is quite compatible with the strivings of the human soul Freud so brilliantly analysed. It is just that, given his worldview, the founder of psychoanalysis was unable to recognise that man's striving encompasses such a dimension. Freud himself was mainly interested in de-masking processes of idealisation, and in analysing the contorted paths which such processes impose on the life of the psyche. He was aware of the fact that idealisation ultimately aspires to something substantial, to real ideals. But he was no longer able to take on the task of investigating the reality of such ideals. What he did emphasise was only his encompassing scepticism in view of the soul's projections and reifications (Disse, 2007).

How can a pastor accomplish the task of enabling a counselee to transfer his projections to the symbol in such a way that he, the pastor himself, is no longer their object? The biblical tradition offers a whole gallery of linguistic images which can be engaged for such a purpose. The „good shepherd“ is such an image: It provides a symbol that offers shelter to any one suffering in his soul and seeking to be freed from fears and worries. It supports man's quest for what he needs: “a green pasture and fresh water“ (Ps. 23). A soul amidst serious temptations can place her pain and sorrow into this image, finding her own shelter within it.

She will be able to do so to the extent that she trusts its reliability, and gains confidence that she will not be seduced or abused. For in the shelter which a good shepherd offers everything is provided for which the soul may need. To say: „The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want“ may surely express a mature piety, whether in Christian or in Jewish prayers.

But a right use of the image of the good shepherd presupposes that one maintains the Schleiermacher's distinction within piety between relationships of relative and absolute dependence. On the image-side of the metaphor the relationship is always one of merely relative dependence, even and especially when the image is referred to the social sphere: parents can be 'shepherds' for their children, teachers for their students, and pastors for their parishes (as already indicated by their professional name). On the reality-side of the metaphor, as clearly defined by the prayer of the 23rd Psalm (just as by John's Gospel in the chapters 10, 11, and 14 f) an absolute dependence holds only in view of God. Only if God is identified with the symbol of the shepherd can that symbol serve its consoling function without running the risk of engaging problematic projections or reifications.

So what meaning and function do the symbolic pictures have for pastoral care? On the one hand, the pastor can paint such pictures for the inner eye of the counselee. On the other hand the latter's soul, burdened by her temptations, can take up this image and re-draw it during her own contemplation. Here, just as in the aesthetic experience of art, production and reception are interdependent. All turns on the task of personally appropriating and even adjusting such images so as to become independent in framing one's own certainty concerning the meaning of one's life. A story from China told by Walter Benjamin in his „Berliner Kindheit“ may illustrate this point. This story

„... tells about an old painter who allowed his friends to behold his newest picture. It showed a park, a narrow path along a water leading through a wooded area towards a small door which entered on the back side of a little house. When the friends turned around to look at the painter, he was gone. He was in the picture. There he walked along the narrow path to the door, stood there for a moment, turned around, smiled, and disappeared in its opening “ (Benjamin, GS IV/1, pp. 262 f).^{vi}

This story from China has a message about the images the soul needs: real life pictures on which the cognising mind can get to work, in order thereby to find consolation. Just as the painter in our story, so Christ entered into the image of the good shepherd. And just as the one listening to the story, so the one contemplating the image of the good shepherd can use his inner eye in entering into the shelter which this image offers to its beholder.

It may be surmised that Freud would have rejected such a further development of his remark to Pfister in the above letter. But he too was a beholder of the great works of art, whether of Michelangelo's *Moses* or (following W. Jensen's *Gradiva*) of the Pompeian reliefs or the work of Leonardo da Vinci (Freud, StA IX). Freud applied his psychoanalytical method to cultural artefacts as well, and he even derived important inspiration from such works for his theory. In general however he always insisted on the world view neutrality of analytic psychology:

„In itself, psychoanalysis is neither religious nor unreligious, but an impartial instrument which can be used by pastors and by laymen, because its object is to liberate those who suffer. I am really amazed that it had not occurred to me what extraordinary support the psychoanalytic method can provide for pastoral care. But this was probably because religious concerns are very alien to me, naughty heretic that I am “ (Freud and Pfister, 1980, p. 13).

Pastoral care rests on certain convictions endorsing certain norms. Such care also presupposes the conversation partners' willingness to trust the capacity of symbols for providing orientation in view of the human need for certainty about the meaning of life. Such confidence, incidentally, is also shared by Freud, who gave modern meanings to the myths of antiquity, - as for example to the legendary hero Oedipus. The forces of Eros, of Thanatos, and of Ananke had a symbolic meaning for him which, in spite of the proclaimed neutrality of psychoanalysis, endorsed a specific world view.

At this point one must admit that psychoanalysis entails substantial commitments which clearly differ from those endorsed by pastoral care, - that difference should not be downplayed (Dober, 2008, pp. 244-247). This is why this essay started out with a concept of pastoral care. The pastor must assume his own clearly defined standpoint before turning to psychoanalysis. Still, when assuming his role as a counsellor, he should preserve some openness for alternative views, as suggested already by the demands that were placed on his attitude during pastoral conversations.

In spite of the obvious similarities, Freud's answer to the question about *what we should understand by the human soul* adds important analytical distinctions to Schleiermacher's psychology. It is because of this analytic as well as hermeneutic progress in knowledge, that Freud's theory must necessarily be integrated into Schleiermacher's framework for pastoral care. The latter's concept of a soul whose life turns around receptivity and spontaneity can thus be amplified by the extensive empirical material provided by Freud's work. Nevertheless and against Freud, we must hold on to Schleiermacher's insistence on the unity of the soul, as based on the individual's feeling in immediate self consciousness (op. cit., pp. 75-86). The Freudian challenge that one should also attend to unconscious dimensions underlying that sense of a self, in that it amounts to an effort in balancing Schleiermacher's with Freud's theoretical accounts, presents a core task for the self-development of any one who is committed to maintaining the Ego as the master in the house of its soul (op. cit., pp. 228-244).

There are, as already mentioned, unsurmountable worldview differences between Schleiermacher and Freud, which extend especially to the evaluation of religion. Such differences surface, for example, in Freud's classification of the „oceanic feeling“ of eternity as something that transcends borders (Freud, StA IX, pp. 204.197 [Das Unbehagen in der Kultur]). This differs considerably from Schleiermacher's „intuition and feeling“ (*Anschauung und Gefühl*) of the universe which lies at the basis of his theory concerning the essence of religion.^{vii} Freud was indeed willing to recognise that others might know such a feeling which he himself had never encountered in his self-experience. But his theory reduces this feeling to a derivative phenomenon, which depends on persons' needs and desires, while for Schleiermacher that „oceanic feeling“ is as genuine part of lived experience. While the latter envisaged the feeling of an „absolute dependence“ as a feeling of „childlike passivity“, accessible in the contemplation of the infinite universe, Freud derived the in his view problematic essence of religion in an eternal repetition of the longing for the father. “[According to Freud,] religion is a medley ... of authority and the illusion of shelteredness.“, and therefore „regressive and infantile“ (Koch, 1989, 303).

Irrespective of such differences, Freud's critical intention should be incorporated into pastoral care. Insofar as that care claims fidelity to its Biblical sources, Freud's criticism ought to sustain one's intellectual self-control in faith. For the theoretical resources Freud offers make it possible for the believer to clearly distinguish an infantilising religious consolation from religion's function for strengthening their self-consciousness. It is this distinction, which

paves the way for a mature religiosity, the nurturing of which should be the goal of the church. It thus becomes imperative to decide at each point in a pastoral conversation, whether the parishioner's image of God is adequate for sustaining the consoling function of religion. According to Freud, „the concept of a higher being that inexorably punishes” is certainly inadequate, since it instead presents an exemplary case of obsessive religiosity (Freud, StA III, p. 321 [Das Ich und das Es]).

While surely theological reflexion engages a different theoretical paradigm, nevertheless its results confirm Freud's misgivings. As a consequence, pastoral care must orient itself in view of those passages from the New Testament which emphasise that God is love (1 John 4, 16b). The image of the good shepherd makes it possible to un-problematically integrate this fundamental ideal of Christian theology into pastoral care. At the same time that image accounts for the old insight, shared already by Plato, „that in every one of us there is a child that needs to be consoled “ (Ricoeur, 1993, zit. Platon). To take that insight seriously is not tantamount to endorsing a regressively infantile attitude. Instead, it can be understood as integral to a mature religiosity.

3. The example of John 8: 3-11

I want to conclude by citing a little story from the New Testament which illustrates that and how the pastor's attitude in counselling as demanded by Schleiermacher corresponds to the one demanded by Freud in the context of psychotherapy. This story will show how the founder of psychoanalysis can be engaged as a hermeneutic guide and mentor when it comes to the always very complex tasks confronting the pastoral counsellor. The story offers one of the most beautiful and most surprising summaries of the Gospel's message. It depicts Jesus as a highly competent pastor who cuts through the processes of transference in order to open up the way for self reflexion.

We find, first of all, a woman, *in flagranti* caught in adultery. We know nothing about her beyond that fact. What counts for the scene is only that she was caught in the act. Here she is, placed in the middle of a circle by her accusers, just like all those whom one wishes to expose to the view of others in order to show: Such things may not happen. Woe to all of you, if you do what she did. She is placed in the stocks, like many accused ones in earlier times.

And there are the pharisees and scribes, the accusers. These people know the law very well. But to inflict the death penalty for adultery didn't seem quite safe even to them. Respectfully they approach Jesus as “master”. They expect from him an answer which will guide them out of the dilemma. For while being faithful to the law, they still feel that the punishment is too severe.^{viii}

In the end all eyes are directed to Jesus. We may assume that those pharisees and scribes are not posing an entrapping question but are presenting a real problem. But Jesus does not act like a legal scholar. Instead, he turns legal questions into questions concerning human conduct. He acts rather like a counsellor to whom people come with their problems. At first he says nothing at all. He had listened, to be sure, and very attentively indeed. But he waits in order to take in the situation as extensively as possible. In the middle of the circle there stands the accused woman. What exactly did she do? She broke the promise which she gave when entering the marriage. For reasons which remain unknown to us she has started a relationship with another man. She thus has betrayed her husband, and we may surmise that she deeply hurt him. This is not what should happen, here all the onlookers agree. But does such an affair belong in court? Should the wounds which were inflicted onto the relationship to her husband

not be dealt with in a conversation with him? Does not this public exposure aggravate what happened, - just as all difficulties which someone may experience become worse once they are rendered public?

Jesus, after having cowered there for a while, bent to the ground, he straightened himself up and spoke to them: "Let the man among you who has no sin be the first to cast a stone at her." With this sentence Jesus addresses the individual court of conscience within each of those present. Knowledge of the human condition, prudence in action, and world wisdom here are perfectly combined. First, knowledge of the human condition: for we all are sexual beings who know temptation. Carried along by desires and longings it is not always easy to remain the master in the house of one's soul. The demand for such mastery was established already in the old story of Cain and Abel: „sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master." (Gen. 4:7b) But we all know that this is not always possible. And this is the case not only in the other, - as we all are ready to concede. No, even in one's own soul this mastery is not always successfully maintained. The question posed by Jesus thus aims at eliciting a deepened self-awareness in the accusers. Only through self knowledge can the mechanism of projections be interrupted which dominates the scene, namely the projection of a danger that is suppressed within one's own soul, onto the woman in the middle of the circle who succumbed to that danger. Only those who know their own dividedness and ambivalence can be charitable with others. This is why Jesus holds up a mirror to the scribes and Pharisees. This is what both pastors and therapists do.

But Jesus' answer is also prudent. What, after all, could he have accomplished had he exposed to the scholars to a presentation treating the true meaning of the law? This was not the right place. What would have been the consequence, had he criticised the hardness of those whose task is to guard the law? They would have accused him of disrespecting the law. And he had to answer. This is why he spoke that famous, deeply meaningful sentence. This way the situation could be resolved. And Jesus kept the woman from being stoned.

Finally, his answer was also wise. Jesus encourages his conversation partners to face the conflicts in their own experience. Whoever recognises his own guilt has discovered a healing and liberating truth. Those, on the other hand, who cannot accept their guilt, usually have to look for it in others. Jesus sticks with the insight that no man is without sin. Nobody likes to hear that. It is not flattering. But this very insight belongs to the biblical view of man, and psychoanalysis has refreshed that knowledge. Of course, this insight is not the final word about man, but only the first one. The second one is: you may begin anew. Your past does not have to overtake you forever. Your future must no longer be burdened. This evangelical message is perhaps the deepest wisdom about human life. In the Christian view it precedes all other wisdoms and grounds, guides and orients them. In this way, pastoral care can learn from psychoanalytic therapy, while still remaining conscious of its own theological foundation.

„Then the audience drifted away one by one, beginning with the elders." Only Jesus and the woman „who continued to stand there before him" were left. Whoever thinks that Jesus condoned the woman's behaviour would misunderstand the story. No, Jesus as well insists on the commandment which protects marriage. But Jesus knows of the weakness of the human heart, and he also knows that punishment is not an especially effective means in education. Even in this last part of the conversation he focuses on self knowledge, now of the woman. She as well is referred to the source of life. And that source lies in the wonderful words: "Nor do I condemn you." Leave the past behind you. Be consoled and go your way into the future. Take hold of your life, which God gave you. And live it, as well and happy as possible.

This is Protestantism at its best. Without trusting much in lived religion and its rituals and symbols, even Freud endorsed an ethos which grants the other freedom and responsibility for himself. In a manner that has left behind traditional religion he put his stakes with man's ability to turn around and to renew himself, - otherwise he could never have invested so much energy in the project of therapeutic analysis. That such turning around and renewal presuppose man's acquiring a proper knowledge of himself, and that the subject of this knowledge can be none other than man himself, this insight, as it is found inscribed in the Christian as in the Jewish religion, is what pastors can deepen by studying Freud's psychoanalysis. Unlike Freud, of course, the pastor will not refer that insight to man's tendency and capacity to idealise, but to the highest ideal of perfection, which faith confesses in God. "for he is good" (Ps. 118, 1).^{ix}

(Translation: Corinna Delkeskamp-Hayes)

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ⁱ The German term „Seelsorge“ is usually translated as „pastoral care“. But this translation narrows what the term suggests down to the institutional church context. „Care for the soul“, however, is already present in Plato’s Apology, and it is this sense which is also endorsed by Freud. This is why this translation engages the literal “soul-care”. (Translator’s note)

ⁱⁱ The German term “bürgerlich” encompasses not only “bourgeois” but also “civil”. (Translator’s note)

ⁱⁱⁱ Scharfenberg has collected some illustrative examples for the „manipulation of the counsellor“ (86), "attempts at establishing solidarity" (87), "infantility" (90) und "passive submission" (90f). In this context Freud’s writings on the technique of treatment are an invaluable source (StA suppl. volume).

^{iv} „What we do here is soul-care in the best sense of the term“ (Freud, StA suppl. volume, p. 347 [Die Frage der Laienanalyse, Nachwort].

^v The transference of desires and illusions onto the therapist (and accordingly also onto the pastor) can be interpreted in view of the limitation of narcissism „through libidinous bonding with another person“ which Freud describes in another work (Freud, StA IX, p. 96 [Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse]). The specific opportunity offered by pastoral care then would consist in the project of transferring that attachment to a person onto the ideal. In the treatise just quoted Christ as the „head of ... the Catholic church“(op. cit., p. 88) in fact is referred to as such an “ideal”.

^{vi} *Nota bene* this story could also without difficulty be addressed in the context of Jesus, taking leave of his disciples (cf. Jn 13: 31 – 16: 33).

^{vii} Schleiermacher developed this theory in his second sermon on religion.

^{viii} The extent to which Jewish scholars already at the time of Jesus discussed the correct interpretation of the law becomes clear from two circumstances. First, in the Talmud the Old Testament prescriptions about killing are bracketed by the verdict that: a high court (Sanhedrin) which during its tenure pronounced one single death penalty is to be considered an unusually harsh one. Second, only shortly after the time of Jesus Rabbi Akiba, one of the great legal scholars, entirely renounced the death penalty in cases of adultery. He argued, otherwise one would have to stone half the people.

^{ix} „In Matthew 19:17, Jesus says „There is One [only] who is good.“, and he can here invoke Jeremia, as well as the Psalms (Ps 25: 8, Cohen, 1978, p. 243).