

# THE LEN CEDARLEAF AWARD FOR 2013

## Jürgen Schwing

The Len Cedarleaf Award judges are pleased to announce their decision to grant this year's award to Reverend Jürgen Schwing of Lafayette, California. Ordained by the United Church of Christ, Rev. Schwing is currently Director of Spiritual Care at the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center, Diablo Service Area, Walnut Creek, California, in a satellite CPE center of Stanford University.

Each year Association for Clinical Pastoral Education Candidates' submitted theology papers who are nominated by their readers, are considered for this ACPE Pacific Region award to be granted in memory of Len Cedarleaf, an innovative CPE supervisor who served many years in the region. The current Cedarleaf judges, listed below, consider the paper to have exceeded adequate meeting of the ACPE criteria for grounding a practice of clinical pastoral supervision, and to have also met the additional rigorous Cedarleaf Award criteria attached. Of the theology papers submitted in 2013, Rev. Schwing's was assessed to be the best.

The Pacific Region congratulates Rev. Schwing, looking forward to his future exceptional contributions to the field of clinical ministry, to pastoral care and to pastoral supervision.

Sincerely,  
Gordon J Hilsman, DMin  
The Len Cedarleaf Award Co-ordinator

### **Cedarleaf Judges:**

Paul Stanke, Bellevue Hospital, New York, NY  
Lisa Hess, United Theological Seminary, New Brighton MN  
Peter Keese, Knoxville TN  
George Fitzgerald, Stanford CA  
Gordon J Hilsman, Fircrest WA



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Rev. Jürgen Schwing, MA, BCC is the Director of Spiritual Care and an ACPE Supervisory Candidate at Kaiser Permanente's Diablo Service Area, a satellite program of the Stanford Hospital's Clinical Pastoral Education Center, Walnut Creek Medical Center, 1425 S. Main St., Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (Email: j.schwing@sbcglobal.net).

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# Theology of Supervision: Awakening and Transformation in Clinical Pastoral Education

Jürgen Schwing

## INTRODUCTION

In this paper I describe my theology of awakening to Spirit within and becoming an expression of Spirit's love in the world. This theology presumes that persons have a dual center of personality—ego and Self—and that they are shaped by relationships and the larger culture. The primary theologians informing my supervision are Paul Knitter, Ann Ulanov, and Thomas Keating.<sup>1</sup>

### PRIMORDIAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

During my childhood, instead of mediating God's love, religion was used to enforce a sense of control in the midst of chaos. I experienced God more as enforcer of rules and punisher of misdeeds.

As a young teenager, I had an experience that remains very vivid in my mind and heart even today. Time stood still and I was surrounded by and infused with an energy of complete peace and joy. I felt I was being addressed by a warm and loving Presence that communicated to me, in a clear non-verbal message, that this Being loved me deeply and completely. I remember most vividly that this love was unconditional. I recognize now that this was what Ann Ulanov calls a "primordial religious experience." Such an experience "wells up from a profound depth," and fills us with "the certainty that something of basic importance for our whole life has happened."<sup>2</sup>

Today I find this same divine love, first experienced as coming to me from the outside, existing deep within me as well. During centering prayer, when my thoughts and feelings settle down and find rest in stillness, I experience at the core of my being the presence of God within.

God as unconditional love, in my experience and my theology, exists both above and around us, as well as within us. Centering prayer, according to Keating, is best understood not as a method but as a relationship.<sup>3</sup> This matches my experience: my daily practice of centering prayer feels like investing in friendship with God: an intimacy that deepens over time. When I tend to this friendship, I am more likely to embody in my supervision the power of God's love.

Theology, Paul Knitter argues, needs to start with experience, and so I have started my theological position paper with this primordial religious experience. Yet theology must proceed to theorize about Ultimate Reality.

#### ULTIMATE REALITY

I start my theology with three attributes of Ultimate Reality. I am informed here by the work of Paul Knitter.<sup>4</sup> First, I understand ultimate reality as infinite. This has existential and hermeneutical implications. Existentially, my supervision is informed by a sense of awe and respect for the dignity of each of my students as precious creations of this infinite God. Hermeneutically, I am aware that as finite beings we can never fully know or explain the Infinite, which is and remains Mystery. This theological insight, combined with the concept that all our knowing is shaped and therefore limited by our historical and social context, leads me to be a pluralistic theologian. This means that I hold my theology as one true, but not the only true theology. The fact that I see the other world religions as equally valid manifestations of Ultimate Reality leads me to engage with them with appreciation for their intrinsic value.<sup>5</sup> My supervision is, therefore, informed by a passion for interfaith work. I genuinely like to create CPE groups with spiritual diversity.

Second, to me, God is intrinsically relational. This is the essence of the Christian teaching of the Trinity, namely that the persons in the Trinity are in loving relationship with each other. This is why Knitter calls God the Ground of InterBeing, a further development of his teacher Paul Tillich's concept of God as the Ground of Being.<sup>6</sup> This Ground of InterBeing created us as relational persons. This impacts my understanding and practice of CPE: I assess how much students are able to be in authentic relationship with one another and their patients, and I invite them into becoming more fully themselves in engaged relationships with each other.

Third, my primordial religious experience is consistent with the core Christian revelation that God is love.<sup>7</sup> God's love is unconditional. It comes to us first, before we do anything from our side. We don't need to earn God's love in any way, it is always given already.

#### PERSONS AS CREATURES OF GOD WHO EXPERIENCE SUFFERING

I understand persons as finite beings created by God. In my view, each person has a dual center of personality. There is first a conscious center of the personality, which I call the ego or self (small s). The ego integrates our awareness of body and mind. It is the center of conscious thinking, feeling, sensing, and acting. The second center of the personality is the Self (capital S), the image of God in which every human being is created. We are not usually conscious of this second center unless we awaken to it.

According to Keating, the self (ego) has certain core needs for a) safety and security, b) esteem and affection, and c) power and control. When they are awake to the image of God within them and to God's love for them, people experience themselves as whole. They feel safe, esteemed, and empowered. Their core needs are met and they express their wholeness in their actions and relationships. However, the human condition is such that we typically do not have this awareness. As a result, we create "programs for happiness" to meet these needs.<sup>8</sup> However, programs for happiness are compensatory programs that do not lead to real fulfillment of these needs. Instead of feeling and expressing our wholeness rooted in the image of God within, we grasp at things or people in desperate and unfulfilling ways. We suffer because these compensatory programs do not accomplish what they promise. And we create suffering for others by attempting to manipulate them.

I have found Keating's analysis helpful for understanding the dynamics I observe in CPE students. They do indeed enact compensatory programs: Some seek power or control over their peers or the patients they work with. Some try to earn esteem and affection from others by acting in ways they believe will be pleasing to them. Others are so paralyzed by their need for safety and security that they avoid taking needed risks when providing spiritual care or engaging in learning.

Suffering also exists on a social level. Here I find Keating's explanation for social oppression, as a problem of the individual's attachment to one's own group over others, not sufficient. I return to Knitter for critical purchase and a better analysis how oppression in the form of racism, classism, sexism,

homophobia, etc., exists on the level of culture and social systems beyond the individual:

While individual hearts and actions are the ultimate cause of social structures that produce suffering, we may often not be able really to understand and transform our hearts unless we also, at the same time, understand and transform social structures.<sup>9</sup>

Our thinking, feeling, and acting are influenced (not fully determined) by the cultures in which we live. Supervision, in my view, involves making conscious this influence of culture in our spiritual care giving and in our learning with each other. Furthermore, we live within a culture that fosters prejudice and oppression of some of its members, and we can't help but be shaped in our individual consciousness by these social forces. The experience of objective oppression, as well as the subjective experience of internalized oppression, such as internalized sexism, racism, homophobia, etc., create suffering. This cultural awareness informs not only my theology, but also my personality and education theories.

#### SALVATION AS AWAKENING

In Jesus Christ, God became incarnate as human and, therefore, visible and accessible to us. He proclaimed and embodied in his being and way of life the wisdom of God which he named the *Basileia tou Theou* (Greek), which I translate as the 'Kingdom' of God.<sup>10</sup> Christ embodied the relational love of God that included everyone in mutual and interdependent relationship, including the marginalized of his time. He practiced "extravagant welcome." He told stories of seeking the lost sheep and loving the prodigal son and his jealous brother. He shared table fellowship with sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes—the outcast of his time—celebrating a way of life rooted in the universal compassion and mutual relational love of God.

His prophetic words and actions were a threat to the hierarchies of power of his time, who therefore crucified him. Through his resurrection his spirit is now present in me and as me.<sup>11</sup> In the words of St. Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."<sup>12</sup> With Knitter I believe this means "that Christ lives in me, that my life is...giving Christ the opportunity to continue his Spirit and his way of life in me and as me."<sup>13</sup> Salvation then is awakening to Christ's presence in me and becoming an expression of Christ's love through me in the world. Instead of acting out compensatory programs for happiness, we then feel whole within ourselves and live

in mutual and authentic relationship with others. We can be agents of divine love, co-creating with God a society that embodies the Kingdom of God.

#### THEOLOGICALLY INFORMED SUPERVISION

Ultimately this awakening to Divine presence is grace and comes not through anything I do, but through God's initiative. This Spirit-initiated awakening can be mediated in two ways: a) through symbols or b) through the transformative process of contemplative prayer. These two ways of mediation are an opening for supervisory interventions.

I am informed by Ulanov's integration of Paul Tillich's and Carl Jung's theories on symbols. From Tillich, I take the idea that symbols are the natural language of religions, because symbols can mediate the Infinite to the finite. Religious symbols participate in the power of the Infinite to which they point. According to Jung, they also are the natural language of our psyches and have the power to effect a response within ourselves that transforms us. With Ulanov I combine these teachings of Jung and Tillich in this way: "the symbol is invested with the innate power of that which it represents and is a live and effective symbol insofar as it bears this power to people."<sup>14</sup> When a symbol carries this power for a CPE student, it can transform her programs for happiness. Any thing or person can potentially act as a symbol. The role of minister, for example, can carry this power for the people we serve when this role mediates the Infinite to them. While for Christians God is mediated primarily through Christ, in other religions Ultimate Reality may be mediated as Allah, Yahweh, one's Buddha nature, or Atman, etc. In my supervision, I work with whatever symbol most powerfully mediates Ultimate Reality for my students.

I assess a student's behavior and dynamic (the specific program for happiness), help her understand the distortion and suffering it creates, and engage with the student to open to a unique symbol that mediates for her God's transforming love. Ulanov teaches me that Ultimate Reality can be mediated by two types of symbols: objective symbols from our Scriptures and traditions that are shared in a community, as well as subjective symbols that arise spontaneously from within the student, from Christ living within or from the Self.<sup>15</sup> Typically, objective symbols will come from the student's own tradition, though it is possible to have an experience of Ultimate Reality from an objective symbol of a tradition other than one's own. An example of a subjective symbol is my primordial religious experience above.

John was a Lutheran seminarian in his first unit of CPE<sup>16</sup>. He tried hard to earn the acceptance of his peers and patients. I assessed that he was pursuing a program of happiness seeking esteem and affection. I explored with John the meaning of biblical symbols for him. With obvious emotion John shared that God's words first spoken to Jesus mediated God's grace for him: "You are my Beloved in whom I am well pleased." I invited him to let these symbolic words inform his being and behavior more deeply. They became alive for him when he facilitated a mutual anointing exercise with his peers. Over time he let the power of this symbol of God's fatherly love fill his need for esteem and inform his ministry, which became more powerful and effective.

Besides symbols, I use contemplation as transformative intervention for those open to it. Thomas Keating's centering prayer facilitates resting in God beyond thoughts, feelings, and images, consenting to the transforming presence and action of Spirit. I have found centering prayer a powerful practice that is helping me awaken to the Divine within, an awareness that transforms my programs for happiness and allows me to live, at least more than before, as an expression of Christ's love and compassion. I have invited CPE students who are open to this path into contemplative practice.

The aim of my pastoral supervision is to help students become better chaplains, practicing spiritual care not based on compensatory and ineffective programs for happiness, but based on experiential knowledge of their Divine core and the ability to be an expression of God's grace and love. In this way I embody the mission of ACPE, which is "experience-based theological education...for persons of diverse cultures, ethnic groups, and faith traditions."<sup>17</sup>

Nancy, for example, was a female Jewish student ordained as an interfaith minister who was interested in mystical spirituality. In order to feel good about herself, she enacted a program for happiness seeking esteem and affection. Her tendency to please others against her own needs became obvious in many ways: she was not able to end visits with patients that went on too long and she did not speak up for her needs when we created schedules. On the psychological level she gained insight into her pattern and agreed to change her behavior. Working on the theological level, I invited Nancy into an exploration of the power of religious symbols to mediate the Divine. She discovered and claimed the potency for her of the symbols of *tikkun olam* and *tikkun nefesh* (Hebrew for 'healing the world' and 'healing the soul,' respectively). She also felt drawn to contemplative practice. I

invited her to practice centering prayer, encouraging her to choose her own sacred word that would express her intention to open to the presence and action of God. This helped her to feel loved and complete within, so that she did not need to enact compensatory programs to artificially earn this love and wholeness. As a result she was able to express her inner experience of God's presence in outward actions, set appropriate boundaries in her personal and pastoral relationships, and provide spiritual care more effectively.

#### SPIRITUAL CARE IN A MULTIFAITH/MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

I remember how lonely and disconnected I felt when I first came to the San Francisco Bay Area. I felt like a fish out of water when those around me did not speak my language or share my small-town German cultural values and habits. These experiences inform my supervision in that they give me empathy for patients or students from different cultures or faiths. At the same time I am grateful for how my life has been greatly enriched by moving beyond my roots in a small German village, learning new languages, traveling, and finally settling in the San Francisco Bay Area. In my experience, the result of multicultural encounter is that it makes life richer.

To me, the same is true for interfaith encounter. I appreciate that the United Church of Christ actively seeks encounter with other Christian denominations and with other faiths.<sup>18</sup> Inspired by the richness I find in interfaith encounter, I have attended retreats and engaged in spiritual practices from other traditions. Through Sri Aurobindo's *Integral Yoga*, for example, I have explored rich ways of understanding the Divine as Feminine as well as the Divine as impersonal formless energy.<sup>19</sup>

As a supervisor, I apply the basic principles of cultural competence developed by Sue and Sue<sup>20</sup> to different faiths and spiritual paths: I have awareness of my own religious values, assumptions, and biases; I continuously seek to enhance my understanding of the world views of religiously diverse CPE students; and I use interventions appropriate to diverse religions. This includes being aware what symbols, both objective or subjective, hold power for CPE students, or what practices help them connect with Ultimate Reality as they understand it.

Laura, for example, was a female Buddhist CPE student who felt anxiety because she experienced "chemo brain," the decreased cognitive functioning that can be a side effect of cancer treatment. I challenged her to use her own Buddhist teaching to help her with her anxiety. Together we re-



viewed the Four Noble Truths. She remembered that suffering in her tradition was seen as the result of grasping. She then realized that her grasping and clinging to her old, healthy state of mind created more suffering than the actual chemo brain. I encouraged her to practice the Eightfold Path, especially mindfulness meditation. By being non-judgmentally present to anxious thoughts arising in her mind and by letting them go, she learned not to attach to her anxiety and rest instead in her Buddha nature, which filled her with peace. As a result, Laura improved her ability to empathize with and provide effective care especially for other cancer patients.

In summary, I experience Ultimate Reality as the infinite, relational, and loving God. For me, in Christ, God became visible and now lives as Christ in me. Salvation is awakening to Christ in me and as me and expressing Christ's love, co-creating with God the Kingdom of God. This awakening to and expressing of Spirit through the Self, happens in an individuated and unique way for each student. In my personality theory, I reflect on the connection between salvation as awakening and individuation as the process of truly becoming one's unique self. In my view they happen together. I help diverse students become more uniquely themselves as they also become more able to express God's love as ministers.

#### NOTES

1. Paul Knitter is Paul Tillich Professor of Theology and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York; Ann Ulanov is Professor of Psychiatry and Religion, also at Union, and a practicing Jungian analyst; Thomas Keating is the co-founder and leader of the centering prayer movement and of Contemplative Outreach.
2. Ann Belford Ulanov, *Picturing God* (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon Verlag, 2002), 99-100.
3. Thomas Keating, *Manifesting God* (New York: Lantern Books, 2005), 1-11. Also see: Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 20th Anniversary ed. (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Company, 2006); Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation* (New York: Continuum, 2010); Thomas Keating, *The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999).
4. Especially Paul F. Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996); and Paul F. Knitter, *Without Buddha I could Not Be a Christian* (Oxford, UK: One World, 2009).
5. Being a pluralist is not the same as being a relativist. I do not hold that all theologies are valid. The gospel of Hitler as Messiah, preached by the Nazi movement of "German Christians," for example, is not compatible with my understanding of Ultimate Reality. Like Knitter and other pluralistic theologians of religion I do, however, see the major world religions as authentic expressions of Ultimate Reality.

6. I am informed in my understanding of Tillich's concept of God as the Ground of Being by my review of Langdon Gilke's analysis of Tillich's theology in: Jürgen Schwing, "Studie: Gilkey on Tillich," in *Tillich-Journal: Interpretieren, Vergleichen, Kritisieren, Weiterentwickeln* (Weimar, Germany: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 1997), 37-41.
7. 1 John 4:8.
8. Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009), 192. In Keating's thought, these core needs are not simply psychological, but ontological. Humans by nature have these core needs, and by nature they act out compensatory programs for happiness when they are not aware of Spirit's presence. Keating does stress that painful and traumatic experiences, especially in childhood, lead to even more distorted programs for happiness. However, since they are ontological, we need more than psychological healing. Only through spiritual transformation, namely becoming aware of God's love for us or becoming aware of Spirit within, and the sense of safety, love, and empowerment that comes from this awareness, can we find wholeness and express it in our relationships.
9. Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian*, 201.
10. *Ibid.*, 168. The more literal translation "Kingdom" is a metaphor expressing patriarchal hierarchy. Kindom, I agree with Knitter, is a better "symbol for Jesus' vision of a world so organized as to urge and enable human beings to respect and care for each other and so to promote the wellbeing of everyone (and today he would add the wellbeing of the planet)."
11. *Ibid.* Knitter examines several different ways early Christians attempted to interpret Christ's life, death, and resurrection. One interpretation was the satisfaction theory, arguing that Christ's life and death satisfied the debt created by humanity's rebellion against God. This was the theory I held when growing up, and it was the only one I knew. However, some early Christians held a Wisdom Christology or Spirit Christology. With Knitter I now understand Christ's life, death, and resurrection in this way. Jesus lived out of an awareness of spirit within him, expressing this spirit of universal love as a spirit person, wisdom teacher, and social prophet. He was crucified by the powers of his time, who experienced him as a threat to their way of life. He rose again and now lives in us, allowing us to live our lives as an expression of this universal love as well. Christ's life, death and resurrection, to me, are not the cause of God's love, but an expression of it.  
  
Also see Paul F. Knitter, Chapter 9: "How is Jesus Unique?," in *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 171-204; and Chapter 5: "Uniqueness Reaffirmed," in *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 84-101.
12. Galatians 2:20.
13. Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian*, 118.
14. Ann Belford Ulanov, *The Feminine Jungian Psychology and Christian Theology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 97.
15. Ann Belford Ulanov and Alvin Dueck, *The Living God and Our Living Psyche: What Christians Can Learn from Carl Jung* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub-

lishing Company, 2008), 69–89. There is a slight difference between Keating on the one hand and Ulanov on the other regarding the exact relationship between Self and Christ within. For Keating the Self is indeed Christ within. Ann Ulanov would be more careful in identifying the personality's center, the Self, with God or Christ within. As a student of Jung, she holds that all we can say is that we experience God images and symbols arising from within, from the core of our personality. We can not say for sure whether the Self mediates God/Christ images coming from outside the Self or whether the Self is actually one with Christ within. For me it does not make a big difference in my practice of supervision. What counts is that through these symbols that arise from within the Self, God or Christ is mediated for the student.

16. All names of CPE students in this paper are pseudonyms to protect students' identities.
17. Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc., ACPE Standards and Manuals, 2010, 1, accessed March 20, 2014, <http://www.acpe.edu/NewPDF/2010%20Manuals/2010%20Accreditation%20Manual.pdf>.
18. We call ourselves a united and uniting church, and we like to quote John Robinson's statement that "there is more light and truth to break forth from God's word." Randi Jones Walker, *The Evolution of a UCC Style: Essays in the History, Ecclesiology, and Culture of the United Church of Christ* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 2005), 117.
19. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Light Publications, 1996); Sri Aurobindo, *The Integral Yoga: Sri Aurobindo's Teaching and Method of Practice* (Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 1993). For Aurobindo, Ultimate Reality experienced as Personal God and as Impersonal Being are two sides of the same coin. They are complementary but not contradictory. Based on this insight, I find working with Buddhists or Yogis enriching for my own understanding of Ultimate Reality.
20. Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, *Counseling the Culturally Diverse*, Fifth ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, 2008).