

Pamela Cooper-White. *Shared Wisdom: Use of the Self in Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Revised and expanded 20th anniversary edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2024. 274 pages.

Pamela Cooper-White's *Shared Wisdom* is an indispensable book for spiritual caregivers and religious professionals of all stripes working in any pastoral care and counseling context and at any career stage. In her masterful exploration of countertransference (meaning, for simplicity's sake here, the caregiver's feelings in relation to the care receiver) and the use of self in the theory and practice of pastoral care and counseling, Cooper-White has given us a profoundly edifying and helpful resource. She begins with a survey of the concept of countertransference and its history, from its origins in classical psychoanalysis to the postmodern relational paradigm that informs her own understanding and approach. The bulk of the book is a series of case studies that illustrate how these ideas work in the experiential core of professional practice—how spiritual care providers may encounter countertransference in a range of professional contexts, from congregational pastoral care to hospital- and university-based chaplaincy to pastoral counseling and psychotherapy and how we may provide higher-quality care through a deeper understanding of our countertransference. This higher potential for spiritual care comes to life through a systematic method of reflective praxis that Cooper-White presents along the way, weaving together introspection on multiple levels of countertransference present in each clinical example with specific processes of self-care and modes of pastoral assessment and theological/spiritual reflection. The final two chapters include an empirical research-based exploration of professional ethics pitfalls associated with lack of attention to countertransference among pastoral psychotherapists and then Cooper-White's own concluding relational theological reflection.

Her thesis, that "countertransference is no longer just a hindrance to be worked through or analyzed away . . . [but] also a valuable instrument for listening to the other," prompts us to ask the almost mystical question, "What might my own feelings and reactions be telling me about my helpee's feelings?" (Kindle loc. 591–96). The claim here is nothing short of radical; our subjective experience and feelings (i.e., our countertransference) may not only show us what in our own lives needs attention for us to attend to others but also potentially shed light on what the care receiver is feeling through "intersubjectivity"—a phenomenon that lives in the space between us, in the direct experience of spiritual care (Kindle loc. 213). A particular strength in Cooper-White's presentation of this expanded sense of countertransference is that it includes the classical dimension while also transcending it (Kindle loc. 1912). The softening of boundaries between conceptions of self and other comes with a deepening in ethical imperatives to ensure healthy boundaries in spiritual care and to distinguish between "shared wisdom" and the simple projection of one's own feelings onto the care recipient

(Kindle loc. 1304). Cooper-White offers a rich theoretical integration of the intersubjective with the intrapsychic, as well as the external and contextual, on both conscious and unconscious levels, while her case studies capture a curriculum's worth of practical material, from clinical matters of grief, addiction, trauma, and abuse to clinicians' tendencies toward therapeutic ambition, perfectionism, narcissistic vulnerability, and implicit bias—all revealing how countertransference can be a pastoral asset when we engage it with openness, tentativeness, and commitment to appropriate care.

This edition of the book, revised and expanded for the twentieth anniversary of its publication, commits more fully to the language of intersubjectivity (in place of the original version's term "totalist" for the broader view of countertransference), while also reflecting the increasing usage of "spiritual care" in place of "pastoral care" in many chaplaincy environments. It also incorporates more explicit treatment of LGBTQ+ and interfaith issues, both through an additional case study involving a trans caregiver and a Muslim care recipient and more religiously varied and gender nonbinary language for the divine. These updates round out the sense that one is reading a landmark contribution to the field—a generational signature chapter in the history it begins by recounting. The book thus also challenges and paves ways for future theorists and practitioners of psychodynamically informed spiritual care to continue learning and building on what Cooper-White has brought to light—to follow in her footsteps by opening up new layers of countertransference consciousness. *Shared Wisdom* demonstrates that this work of integrating new awareness and healing toward higher reaches of spiritual and psychological development is a path with a developmental arc itself—and it inspires me as an early-career chaplain to be part of this integrating work. Most of the thoughts and feelings that this book has stirred in me (in the intersubjective field between writer and reader—ha!) lie beyond the scope of this review, but for now I am grateful for how *Shared Wisdom* has shown up in my own development—at first, blessedly, in the midst of an early exposure to countertransference during my first unit of clinical pastoral education—and for all the ways in which it continues to bear fruit for my own reflective clinical practice.

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