Looking Again at the “Too Wounded” Student: A Response to Margot Hover

William R. DeLong

In my supervisory practice over the years, I have appreciated articles that help make sense of applicants and the way they present themselves for a clinical pastoral education (CPE) residency. I am one of the supervisors that Margot Hover writes about who have accepted a student into a program and eventually regretted the decision. In some ways, this is, as they say in master of business administration programs, the “price of doing business.” This very helpful article, however, raises important questions: What do we mean by “too-wounded”? How does this category frame the broader discussion of the nature and intent of Clinical Pastoral Education which, in my view, is a boundary question on the meta-level: the question of teaching or treating?

Margot Hover’s descriptions of Elise, a composite of several students who are believed to be “too wounded” to benefit from CPE, provide the focus for my exploration. I have relied for a long time on the distinctions about clini-
emphasis on psychodynamics. As a question of boundaries in supervision, I wonder what it might be like to lead with an educational lens.

I do not intend to de-emphasize, or worse dismiss, the role of emotional stability in the evaluation of students and the readiness for learning. I do this to press the boundary question in our admission processes and supervision: What is the predominant lens that informs our acceptance of students? Margot Hover has contributed wisely to this discussion, as she always does. For our practice, it is about seeing the applicants clearly. As we continue to struggle as an organization to distinguish between teaching and treating, is there an assumption that certain psychological dynamics lead to particular learning styles that, in turn, lead to acceptance in a CPE program? Or is CPE devoted to a particular learning style that serves individuals who present with a particular and identifiable psychological constellation? For me, it is a question of boundaries.

NOTES
