# PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

By GEORGE CROFT

In undertaking a study of the *Spiritual Exercises* and its methods in relation to the concepts and laws which serve for the better understanding of human behaviour and experience, we need to be on our guard against mere speculation. A well-ordered interest in the Exercises must have immediate reference to practical issues.

Here we shall begin by considering certain previous studies in the psychology of the Exercises. We shall then examine certain ideas which have psychological currency in our day and in which certain facets of the Exercises appear to be reflected. Finally, we shall turn our attention to a recent study of human relations in pastoral ministry which may have a practical bearing on the relationship between the retreat-director and the exercitant: three points, followed, we hope, by a colloquy in the form of a discussion.

*Previous studies on the Psychology of the Exercises*

The first essay we wish to examine is that of the late Fr Leslie Walker.[1] At the time of writing he was evidently much impressed by the work of Charles Baudouin, the french catholic psychoanalyst. From Baudouin's *Suggestion and Autosuggestion*,[2] Fr Walker drew a series of parallels between recommended methods of psychological treatment and certain elements of the Exercises. Baudouin distinguished different sorts of suggestion: hetero-suggestion, that induced in a person by another, and autosuggestion, that either reflectively or spontaneously induced in a person who more or less actively disposes himself to it.

Autosuggestion, it was claimed, can foster mental health where heterosuggestion does not. But for autosuggestion to operate at all,

[1] Walker, L. J., S.J., 'The Psychology of the Spiritual Exercises'. *Hibbert Journal*, 1921, 19, pp 401–413.
[2] London, 1922.

certain conditions are required. These include tranquillity, the ignoring of counter-suggestions, the avoidance of all effort of the will, and the expression of confidence in continual progress towards the desired goal. (Baudouin was a follower and admirer of Coué, who first put abroad that ominous maxim: 'Day by day in every way I get better and better'.)

Fr Walker pointed out that the conditions for fruitful autosuggestion proposed by Baudouin are, on the face of it, reminiscent of the Annotations. To free oneself temporarily from worldly affairs and to retire into tranquillity[1] were procedures in agreement with current psychological recommendation. Further, the advice that the exercitant should enter the retreat with a large heart[2] would be likely to arouse in him a maximum of suggestibility. Whether or not the suggestions he then experiences are for good or for ill would be a question for discernment. It is only in the light of a rationally founded and supernatural faith that suggestions can be known to be worth following or not. Concerning Baudouin's further requirement, that fruitful autosuggestion entails an absence of effort of will, Fr Walker says that while this would seem to be at variance with everything ignatian, it might however be reconcilable with St Ignatius' well-known maxim *sic Deo fide*. But the further perusal of Fr Walker's article shows that he was using what is now considered to be the reversed form of that maxim.[3] One or two comments might serve the general purpose of this paper:

1. This article of Fr Walker's is the first of many examples that can be quoted of the working out of analogies between the Exercises and systems or elements of systems of psychology and philosophy.
2. The history of suggestion and hypnosis in abnormal psychology over the last eighty years is an interesting one. It was, for example, as a hypnotist that Freud first began his psychological investigations. He later abandoned the method of hypnosis and suggestion that he learned under Charcot in favour of his own method of

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[1] Exx 20. [2] Exx 5.

[3] Cf Fessard, G., S.J., *La Dialectique des Exercises Spirituels de S Ignace de Loyola* (Paris, 1956), pp 306 sqq. In this part of the work Fr Fessard presents evidence that the original form of the ignatian maxim in question is: *Sic Deo fide quasi rerum successus omnis a TE, nihil a DEO penderet; ita tamen iis operam admove, quasi TU nihil, DEUS omnia solus sit facturus.* Other versions and translations of later origin have, he shows, reversed the wording and, seemingly, the sense of this maxim. Fr Walker uses one of the latter which runs: *In prayer, act as if everything depended on GOD; and in conduct afterwards, as if everything depended on YOURSELF.* Since this is probably not an admissible version of the ignatian maxim, it seems better not to pursue the arguments Fr Walker based upon its use.

psychoanalysis, wherein a somewhat more rational vigilance, at least of a sort, is maintained by the patient under treatment. Clinicians in general have come to know that help rendered by suggestion can, at best, be only transient. They have, in their own way, confirmed the principle that *violenta non durant.*

3. In general, irrational and heightened suggestibility is a symptom traditionally associated by psychiatrists with hysteria.
4. Baudouin's work although it enjoyed considerable popular vogue at the time of its appearance, has left scarcely a ripple on the surface of contemporary psychology. This is scarcely to be wondered at in so far as Baudouin's work reads more like an exhortation than a statement of objectively observed fact.

We pass on now to consider a second article: the contribution made by the late Fr Ryland-Whitaker to *Letters & Notices* in 1960.[1] In this, the author asks whether we have lost something of the art of giving the Exercises. There has been a tendency in our times to stress intellect at the expense of the bodily and the affective. Nowadays the Exercises do not seem to have the effect we read they had of old, nor the striking affective accompaniments of change of heart on the part of those who undergo them. Moreover, a recent work by Sargant[2] gives terrifying details of one of the techniques of communist brainwashing, and testimonials of its effectiveness. According to Sargant, the stages of brain-washing technique show an intriguing resemblance to the Weeks of the Exercises. It is not possible to mention all the details, but here is an example of what is meant: At the beginning of brain-washing, the young candidates are taken away from home and put in groups in houses apart. There they are made to undertake arduous physical work. At the same time they are urged to confess their ideological transgressions by exhortation and threat. The threats are lent plausible substance by the mysterious disappearance of some members from the course. Fear and guilt feelings are deliberately provoked, leading to hysterical outbursts by individuals who give way under the pressure. At this stage, when the whole group shares a state of heightened suggestibility, indoctrination proper begins. Salvation is presented as living in complete abandonment to the régime.

In the correspondence provoked by Fr Ryland-Whitaker's article,[3] it was pointed out at once that far from being charged with

[1] Ryland-Whitaker, J., S.J., 'The Spiritual Exercises.' *Letters & Notices* (1960), 65, pp 28–32. [2] Sargant, W., *Battle for the Mind* (London, 1957).
[3] *Letters & Notices* (1960), 65, pp 96–100.

the manipulation of the behaviour of exercitants, the retreat-director's instructions are that he should remain in the background. It is not the retreat-giver's task to make the retreat for the exercitants. Communist techniques are based on pavlovian conditioning theory; they are fundamentally materialistic in character. The great difference between brain-washing and a retreat is that the faith is true, and any party line at best its caricature. Others again felt that the latin temperament is more expressive than the anglo-saxon and surely this would account for the traditional association of affective expression with change of heart. We may add:

1. Perhaps the biggest contrast between any sort of brain-washing technique and a retreat must surely lie in this: the motive of the former is fear or, at best, a love (e.g. party allegiance) that cannot exclude fear because it comes from human coercion; the motive in a retreat is love or, at least, fear that does not exclude love because it comes from divine invitation. There is this further important difference: St Ignatius is never absolute about any recommendation he gives concerning details of procedure. Posture, times, methods are to be changed and adapted in so far as they help, and left alone in so far as they do not. He would, one may guess, have agreed with the mother foundress who recommended her religious not to undertake mortifications which the heart did not accept.
2. The evidence indicates and the encounter with forcefully indoctrinated persons confirms that the 'conversion' of brain-washing is essentially social and, in some fundamental way, depersonalised and alien to the individual concerned. Grace, says Ruysbroek, works from within outwards. Display, commotion, and violence work from without inwards, and, as the ultimate precipitators of conversion, remain forever suspect.[1] Grace enters unseen into the world of appearances. It comes all so stille, as the carol puts it, like dewdrops on grass, unknown before their beginning.[2] It comes to the subject from the side of the subject, and not from the side of the subject's object. Maybe, at any rate, we can suggest that the giving of the Exercises in groups where the group is not a silent one and can communicate within itself is impossible.[3]
3. Regarding the affective aspects of the exercises of the First Week,

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[1] Exx 315, 317, 335. [2] Exx 330, 335.
[3] Eg the *Cursillos:* cf the discussion, *infra* p 52.

there should be no forcing of feelings by the director, but rather an invitation to attend to the ordering of the points made by St Ignatius. Now it is true that in the petitions at the beginning of each meditation there are progressive requests to be made by the exercitant for 'shame and confusion',[1] 'great and intense grief',[2] 'an interior knowledge of my sins and detestation of them',[3] and, finally, 'an interior sense of the pains the lost suffer'.[4] But the spirit of these petitions is not that these fruits of prayer be forced on the exercitant from without by the director nor upon the exercitant himself from out of his own strength, by some feat of interior force. Is it not rather that the thought of my own sinfulness is, unlike many another thought, one which I can and should entertain, give way to, and take sorrow in. And it is orderly that such an idea find not merely speculative and reasoned expression but, *secundum mensuram devotionis*, some embodied accompaniment.

Amongst the contributions in recent years which have furthered the study of the psychological aspects of the Exercises, mention should be made of the article of Fr Dirks, at the time of writing instructor of tertians in the South Belgian Province.[5]

Unlike the two previous authors considered so far, Fr Dirks does not interpret the Exercises in terms of systems and concepts outside them, but is intent on showing the intrinsic connexion between the various exercises. On some points where the inquirer might like help, however, he may not get it from this article. There is no comment, for example, on the puzzling wording of the composition of place of the First Week[6]: My soul is imprisoned in this corruptible body.[7]

It would be otiose to dwell longer on this article because the task of unravelling the inner connexions among the exercises, the annotations, additions, and the very characteristic rules for each Week,

[1] Exx 48. [2] Exx 55. [3] Exx 63. [4] Exx 65.

[5] Dirks, Georges, S.J., *The Psychology of the Exercises*, transl. McGovern, T., S.J., *Woodstock Letters* (1949), 78, 297–319. [6] Exx 47.

[7] On this problem cf Rickaby, J., S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola*. 2nd ed. (London, 1936) pp 26–27. Fr Rickaby here shows that St Ignatius' meaning is theological rather than philosophical, pauline rather than platonic. The sinner has, in St Paul's words, a 'body of sin' (Rom 6, 6) whose powers are to be made over to God, to be instruments in right-doing (Rom 6, 12–13). The opposition between the remains of the 'body of sin' ('slavery of guilt', as Mgr Knox translates it) and the 'service of grace' is taken up in the Exercises again in the meditation of the Two Standards which can therefore be said to be somehow foreshadowed by the otherwise puzzling wording of Exx 47.

has been far more thoroughly undertaken by Fr Fessard.[1] Although this work is not primarily a psychological discussion, it contains much that is psychological. It would, of course, be out of place to attempt here any exposition or evaluation of Fr Fessard's work, or, for example, of his method of studying the connexion between the various exercises and their movements with the help of geometrical diagrams. These may be summarised in a shape which is, intriguingly enough, the same as the titled swastika or *mandala*. Jung claimed that this shape occurs as a symbol, independently in many cultures, and has been widely used in meditative efforts after personal integration. Fr Fessard also finds in the writing of St Ignatius forceful echoes, of ideas as yet unuttered: of Hegel, Kierkegaard, and other modern philosophers.

This rather rapid survey at least indicates that many reflections of the Exercises are to be found in the more or less systematic thoughts of different authors at many different times. Though it would be profoundly stupid to suppose that St Ignatius meant the same as Baudouin, Sargant, Hegel, Jung, Kierkegaard, or any subsequent thinker, and even more misguided to suppose that the Exercises can be explained away in the terms of any one of these authors, the multiplicity of these reflections does show that the Exercises have a universality and a modernity which we, the unworthy inheritors of them, may have failed fully to grasp. And it may be that by critically attending to the sort of comparisons that are already made for us, and even adding to them, we can be led to rediscover the value of every detail of the Exercises.

*The Exercises and the development of the christian conscience*

It would be generally accepted, I think, that one important psychological aspect of the Exercises has to do with the formation, in grace, of a more mature christian conscience. To examine the psychological implications of this requires reference to relevant psychological theories, notably to certain concepts of psychoanalysis.

We may note first that psychological systems are, after all, creatures in the ignatian sense; so that our use of them should be a detached one. Psychologists of a more empirical turn of mind ensure their detachment from theory of any kind by a submission to the rigours of experimental checks. It is clearly a purifying experience

[1] Fessard, G., S.J. *op. cit.*

to have attempted to establish the rightness or wrongness of any psychological hypothesis by experiment; even a few hours in a laboratory can be a salutary lesson. It is also fair to say that psychoanalytical theory is not now regarded by anyone either as a philosophy of life or as a set of universally established laws of human development and behaviour; but unlike the theories of, say, Baudouin, it is still regarded as a coherent and useful body of hypotheses, still much drawn upon by clinical psychologists and psychiatrists: by those psychologists especially who are in search of verification of freudian notions, and by the psychiatrists rather looking for hypotheses that may help them in their concrete dealings with behaviour disorders of various kinds. Freudian theory for a time enjoyed what we may call verification by acclaim; but some recent and more hard-headed attempts to verify it by experimental means have offered, at best, equivocal, if not negative, results. Professor Eysenck,[1] for example, has argued forcibly that psychoanalysis is based on unreliable data and is in general unscientific. Since, however, the present discussion is primarily concerned neither with fine points of psychological research method nor with exact empirical observation, some moderate use of freudian hypotheses does not seem entirely out of place in the present reflection.

Secondly, one at least of the notions underlying psychoanalysis is peculiarly applicable in the context of the Exercises. I do not refer to its stress on sexuality or sensuality; the latter has only a minor explicit emphasis in the Exercises.[2] But one of the recurring themes of psychoanalytical thinking has been that the child is born with unlimited desires. These desires come into collision with external demands and have to be moderated. Impulse control has to take the place of unlimited impulsive living, or any tendency thereto. This control is supposed, in psychoanalytical theory, to be mediated by an often uneasy coalition between the familiar freudian trio of *id*, *ego* and *super-ego*, and notably by the *super-ego*. The latter is thought to be the origin of a person's conscience. It is the introjection, or unwitting impersonation, of some controlling person or persons in the child's early experience. The role of forbidding father is assumed by the child towards his own desires, in so far as these tend without limit to clash with familial or other external demands.

It would take us too far afield to attempt a full scale psychological

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[1] Cf for example Eysenck, J., *Uses and Abuses of Psychology* (Penguin, 1964). Ch 12.
[2] Exx 97.

critique of this notion of the freudian *super-ego*. But it is none the less helpful to see what the fruits of its use might be in our present reflection, and to bear in mind the characteristics of what is called the pseudo-morality of the *super-ego*. While no christian can admit that the development of the mature christian conscience, right reason in grace, can be accounted for in terms of the *super-ego* alone, the notion that the *super-ego* or some such immature controlling device is perhaps a forerunner of mature conscience is one that has found favour even among theological commentators.[1] Clinically speaking, the characteristics which have been ascribed to immature or *super-ego* morality include aggressive severity, display of righteousness, a tendency to tit-for-tat attitudes and, in general, a task-mastering quality. There is something pharisaic about the *super-ego;* and in the face of it a person would, in traditional parlance, manifest *timor serviliter servilis*. It is further sometimes suggested that the *super-ego* is unduly developed in persons who are depressed, obsessive, or timorous. The suggestion has been made that a plausible account of religious scrupulosity can also be made in terms of it.[2]

Reflecting on the Exercises in general, and in particular on those of the First Week, a question immediately presents itself. Might not the difficulty exercitants sometimes experience in these meditations spring from the fact that their immature rather than their mature consciences are being activated by their efforts? Or to put the same question another way, might it not be that the resistance directors sometimes encounter in presenting the First Week meditations springs precisely from the fact that they are reinforcing immature conscience elements in their hearers rather than making way for grace to free their hearers from these very things?

In attempting to comment on these questions I would suggest that the First Week meditations can sometimes be harder than usual for those persons mentioned above: those that is with tendencies to scrupulosity, obsessiveness or timorousness. These exercises will be the more difficult for these classes of persons in proportion as the feeling is forced on them from without. Again, these exercises will be difficult in proportion as due emphasis is not put on what appears to be the key phrase of the exercise on hell:[3] to give thanks that we

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[1] Cf Plé, Albert, O.P., *Moral Acts and the pseudo-morality of the Unconscious*, in Birmingham, W., & Cunneen, J., *Cross-Currents of Psychiatry and Catholic Morality* (New York, 1964), pp 152–187.

[2] Cf Hagmaier, G. & Gleason, R., *Moral Problems Now* (London, 1959), pp 152–154.

[3] Exx 71.

are not there. The director can help to prevent the reinforcement of *super-ego* remnants in the conscience by emphasising the need for complete veracity in making First Week meditations on sin. The exercitant, unlike the victim of brain-washing, is not being asked to confess non-existent transgressions. But at the same time there can be a rational and theological reminder that if a person is not aware of grave personal sin in the past, this is through divine grace and should be the subject of explicit prayer of thanksgiving. Further still, I would submit that since true contrition is the main fruit of the exercises of the First Week, any description of it should emphasise the fact that it does not entail rejection of myself as a person here and now. It does entail hatred of past disorder and of my having been partly or wholly the origin of it. But if God preserves me in existence at this present moment, he judges me as worth preserving; and I must accept this. It is not for a creatrue to know better than his maker. Again, the tendency of the human heart, so hard to uproot, to want to see God as an inexorably punishing and arbitrary despot is an indication of the remains of *super-ego* pseudo-morality. The relevance of meditations on the fatherhood of God has already been often stressed in our own time as it is stressed in the Triple Colloquy of the First Week.[1]

Following on in the same line of reflection, there is an important point of sequence in the exercises at the end of the First Week. There is a direct connexion between the Colloquy of Mercy[2] and the meditation on the Kingdom.[3] Far from being our accuser or rejecting us because of past sins, almighty God is not only sparing our lives (keeping us from hell and from what our sins have merited); he is inviting us to join in the work of bringing all mankind to him. The sight of Christ crucified also becomes the sight of Christ the King, whose leadership and companionship now become manifest. There is a direct link here, not lightly to be broken by extraneous meditations.

We have suggested that for certain classes of persons the exercises of the First Week present especial difficulty. Could we not introduce a parallel theme into the First Week meditations from the beginning: the theme of thanksgiving? For those doing the Exercises for the first time, thanksgiving enters, as has been said, at the brink of hell[4] and finds its completion in the contemplation for obtaining love.[5] This theme could perhaps be introduced sooner. Since most

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[1] Exx 63. [2] Exx 71. [3] Exx 91. [4] Exx 71. [5] Exx 233.

retreatants are not making the exercises for the first time, the first point of the contemplation might be proposed as an accompaniment of the First Week meditations. It is even possible that the second point of the contemplation be proposed likewise in conjunction with and as a moderator of the Second Week meditations. The four points of the contemplation[1] do, after all, correspond to and recapitulate in the present each of the four weeks of the Exercises.[2]

Does all this reflection suggest that the meditations of the First Week are overdrawn and somehow psychologically unhealthy? May they, should they, be omitted? Could a retreat possibly start with the meditation on the Kingdom, as has sometimes been suggested? The answer to these questions is, I think, negative on all counts. To omit the First Week would be, to my mind, to court the possibility of something akin to religious hysteria. Psychological hypotheses concerning hysteria suggest that one of its fundamental features, dissociation, is to be understood in terms of cutting-off of all experience and remembrance of events in which the uglier side of instinctual life became most manifest to him. This cutting-off can assume also a bodily form (in paralyses), or a form of flight from current engagement with living (fugues) or certain aspects of it (panic attacks). Its basic dynamic is, in religious terms, certainly lacking in true contrition. To start a retreat with the Second Week meditations would run the risk of cultivating a sort of religious *belle indifference;* a rootless sort of well-being, with a religious over-lay. We should rather remind ourselves that the depth of christian confession, contrition and satisfaction is somehow also the depth of christian receptivity to divine grace and to faith, hope and charity. You cannot, as the saying goes, settle for one without the other. In fact it is tempting, though this should be left perhaps for a professional theologian to comment on, to regard confession, contrition and satisfaction as at least the spring boards of faith, hope and charity; or even, to go further, as in some way the same life of grace, experienced at one moment in the twilight of filial fear, at another in the plain sunlight of divine love.

It is hardly possible to mention the psychological aspects of the Exercises without at least touching on discernment. Dynamic psychology can understand something of temptation and express this understanding in its own language. This understanding parti-

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[1] Exx 234–7.

[2] Fessard, G., S.J., *op. cit.* pp 147–164.

cularly concerns the contents of temptations and the ways in which they form patterns within a person's life: i.e. the essence rather than the existence of temptation. The temptations of a scrupulous person may, for example, sometimes be fruitfully understood in terms of obsessive-compulsive disorder: the temptations of the gluttonous in terms of orality, maybe, childhood experiences and so on. To this extent, the realm of satanic activity is subject in psychiatry to occasional, if not causal, scrutiny after the event. Psychiatrists can also diagnose and help patients to come to distinguish between reasons and rationalisations. The phenomenological overlap between these activities and the application of the Rules for Discernment is clear. But because certain phenomena are expressible in two universes of discourse, the psychological and the theological, we are not at liberty to say that the one set of expressions does away with or supplants the other. The reason is that the total contexts of the two disciplines are entirely different. Theology has to do with salvation history and with man's coming to be part of this. Psychology and psychiatry, on the other hand, have to do with the orders and disorders of observable human behaviour as known, as far as may be, by controlled observation and experiment. At present, for the most part, their ultimate norms are socially derived: as, for example, when a criterion is required as to what is normal and what is abnormal behaviour. Life beyond the womb of time and space cannot be envisaged by them; it is not observable, and therefore cannot be taken account of. Hence the total frame of reference of psychology and psychiatry is palpably different from that of theology; and this difference should never be lost sight of. Moreover, for all its progress, psychology does not yet possess the refinement of expression, let alone the theological dimension, that we have inherited in the Rules for Discernment. To say more concretely what I mean: for the most part, psychology and psychiatry categorise in terms of well/ill, and any notion of more/less is quantitative along a well/ill continuum. A category is, to a greater or lesser extent, fulfilled according to an operationally defined norm. There is in this style of thinking none of the exquisiteness of expression as there is, say, in St Ignatius's use of the word *magis*. Here is not just a well/ill distinction, but a better/worse distinction, which is quite another thing. It is as different from the former as $d^2y/dx^2$ is different from $dy/dx$ in mathematics. It is, on this analogy, like a second order differential of good/bad. All this may seem to be typical scholastic hair-splitting; but there is an important difference,

even psychologically, between what a person is here and now describably like, and the way he is developing through the course of the present moment, of which any description is like a still from a motion picture. As far as I am aware, psychology with the methods it has at its disposal has scarcely begun to cope with such a notion.

One last observation before ending this part of the paper is to mention a remark in a recent work by the Catholic psychoanalyst Albert Görres.[1] He is reflecting on the saying of St Ignatius: it is not to know much, but to understand and savour the matter interiorly, that fills and satisfies the soul.[2] Görres makes the general comment that the neurotic is one who has, in the most general sense, a poor appetite. He receives, often enough, intellectual information rather than life-giving contact; his knowledge is not animated by the breath of contemplation. This constriction can be loosened when what is understood as a meaningful pattern, as natural, as a gift, is not merely intellectually recognised as such, but accepted with positive gratitude. Psychoanalysis, he hastens to add, cannot induce this kind of attitude, but it can on occasion clear away some of the obstructions to its development. When we in turn reflect on the place that thanksgiving has in the *Spiritual Exercises*, from the exercise on hell to the essential part it plays in the contemplation for obtaining love, it is fair to conclude that the Exercises well made can also have deeper psychological and integrating fruits. It also suggests that prayers of thanksgiving made from the heart for the commandments of God, for what the Church teaches us and requires of us, for the existence of the religious state and religious rules, will be the very acceptance of all these things. Intellectual knowledge is one thing; but if progress stops there and does not move on in grace to positive expression of gratitude, then that progress will not be real.

*The Spiritual Exercises and Counselling*

Thirdly and lastly, I would like to mention briefly a very different aspect of the Exercises, which concerns the relationship between the director and the exercitant. In recent years, within the general field of psychiatry, but outside that of more strictly psychoanalytical conceptions, a good deal of attention has been given to the methods and aims of counselling. You will doubtless be aware of the work of

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[1] Görres, A. *The Methods and Experience of Psychoanalysis* (London, 1962).

[2] Exx 2.

the american psychologist, Carl Rogers, and of the more recent work in Belgium of Fr Godin,[1] who has attempted to show how some of the fruits of research in counselling can find application in pastoral work and in a priest's dealings with the faithful. This is not the time to undertake either an exposition or evaluation of either author's work. This has been done elsewhere.[2] It is sufficient for present purposes to outline what are now considered important aspects of the personal relationships involved in pastoral ministry, and to ask to what extent these aspects may have relevance in the giving of the Exercises, either to groups or in directed retreats. Fr Godin proposes that the pastoral relationship between a priest and one who is seeking spiritual direction should have certain characteristics. These he describes as welcoming, directing, and mediating. Welcoming means the acceptance of the person applying for counsel, as he makes himself known as an individual; directing means not primarily the precipitating of externally conformable behaviour, but rather doing whatever can be done to help the person counselled to be more capable of making his own decisions; mediating means that the aim of the contact with the counselled person is that divine action may progressively take the place of any human initiative of the counsellor. This brief summary has at least one echo of something in the Exercises: 'During the time of the Exercises when the soul is seeking the Divine will . . . he who gives the Exercises must not be influenced or inclined to one side or another, but . . . allow the Creator to act immediately with the creature'.[3] Some reflection on the role of the retreat-giver in this respect would seem appropriate.

It is very possible in dealings with retreatants to lose sight of the non-directive aspects which the directing function in pastoral care must also entail. It is altogether possible, further, to take up a larger-than-life stance in the eyes of retreatants, helped on by the often unwitting expectations that various retreatants may have that retreat-givers are somehow like that. Fr Godin has worked out some of the possible ways in which such larger-than-life (transferential) relationships could build up in pastoral dealings as they do in

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[1] Godin, A., S.J., *La Relation Humaine dans le Dialogue Pastoral* (Paris-Bruges, 1963). This work and some of those it draws on are reviewed by the present writer in *Heythrop Journal* (1964) 5, pp 178–187.

[2] Two principal works by Carl Rogers on counselling are: *Client-Centered Therapy* (Boston, 1951); *On becoming a Person* (London, 1961).

[3] Exx 15.

psychotheraphy. We may ask: In what ways might the retreat-giver's own make-up affect the good ordering of the Exercises he gives? Is there, for example, such a thing as indifference in the well ordered pastoral relationship between retreat-giver and his exercitants? If so, might this differ manifestly from attitudes of withdrawal, callousness, coldness, inquisitiveness, dramatic concern, superiority, or domination, towards exercitants? The exercitant is advised[1] in the Annotations to enter on the Exercises with a large heart in order to dispose himself to receive divine favours. Should the exercitant with such a disposition find not God but the retreat-giver, the outcome could be serious.

*In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised:*

One contributor, taking up the hypothesis proposed in the paper that group Exercises are impossible, said that to his knowledge group forms of the Exercises had been conducted with profit. He mentioned the *Cursillos* as the example he had in mind. Two other contributors then said that from credible accounts they had heard of both the *Cursillos* and the *Better World Movement*, psychological difficulties had been encountered in both these settings.

Concerning the relationship between retreat-giver and exercitants, it was felt that this consideration was only of practical importance in directed retreats and that the Annotations themselves already embody the main principles of action that are required. Others again felt that a certain interpersonal indifference (in the ignatian sense) does have its place in the relationship between retreat-giver and exercitants. It is not the former's task to possess or, as one contributor put it, to 'eat people', nor regularly to enter into a relationship demanding continued contact after the termination of a given retreat. At the same time the point was made that as, in psychological parlance, there is a valid distinction between guidance and counselling, so in a retreat, instruction can and should be given. Where the retreat-giver has especially to exercise restraint is in any temptation he may undergo to make decisions for others. In the end, the desired balance in these matters will stem from a truly founded reverence on the part of the retreat-giver for the exercitants, coupled with a keen awareness of the divine economy within which both find themselves living and dealing. The suggestion was further made that some of these considerations might come into an introductory talk by the retreat-giver.

In reply to a question as to what St Ignatius meant when he said that the retreatant was to regard the director as 'an angel sent from heaven', the speaker said that he did not know. Holy scripture however does indicate that angels come and go. They are not sent to remain visibly with those they visit.[2]

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[1] Exx 5.

[2] Lk 2, 29, 38.