THE EXERCISES AND VOCATIONAL THERAPY

SOME CONVERGENCES

By LOUIS GENDRON

DURING the last few years, the *personal* character of the experience proper to the Spiritual Exercises has been more and more stressed. Eight-day or four-week retreats are carried out more and more in the context of strictly individual guidance on the part of the director. Each day the retreatant meets his director, who listens to him, helps him to discern, and if needed proposes certain biblical themes for prayer.[1] Historical studies show that this way of guiding the Exercises is very similar to that conceived and utilized by St Ignatius himself.

Another recent phenomenon is the Exercises carried out in the course of daily life. The retreatant does not leave his work, but strongly intensifies his spiritual effort. Under the individual guidance of a director whom he usually meets once a week, he wishes to undergo the typical experience of the Exercises. This experience normally lasts about one whole year.[2] St Ignatius has already foreseen this way of giving the Exercises, especially for the person 'who is engaged in public affairs or necessary business' (Exx 19), but this method was later abandoned. Those at present engaged in giving this type of Exercises do not reserve them only to those who cannot leave their work. Experience is tending to show that these Exercises are producing certain spiritual results less easily obtainable during the Exercises according to the intensive method, away from the preoccupations of daily life. The Exercises in daily life frequently include some days exclusively dedicated to prayer; and at times (for example in certain Jesuit 'tertianships') they even end with the experience of the intensive thirty-day retreat.

These two relatively recent phenomena, the directed retreat and the Exercises in daily life, seem to indicate that certain objective exigencies of spiritual growth have now become clearer for a good

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[1] Cf John English, S.J., *Spiritual Freedom* (Guelph, 1973). It is a manual for directors of directed retreats.

[2] Cf Gilles Cusson, S.J., *Conduis-moi sur le chemin d'éternité* (Montréal, 1973). See especially the first part: 'Généralités sur les Exercises faits dans la vie courantes', pp 15-41.

number of spiritual directors. A retreat during which the retreatant does not have frequent contacts with the director, where he is left completely to himself, and has to content himself with lectures given to a group, runs the risk of missing the particular mark, especially if it is a prolonged retreat, or undertaken at a crucial moment of one's spiritual growth. The directed retreat, thanks in part to the interpersonal relationship of the retreatant and the director, paradoxically renders possible a greater solitude of the retreatant and a deeper intimacy with his Creator and Lord. The daily contact with the director also fosters a more total sincerity of the retreatant towards himself. I will not take the risk here of trying to describe the psychological dynamisms that help towards the attainment of such results; but I take it that these results are intuitively perceived as naturally flowing from the method of the directed Exercises.

The Exercises in daily life, although originally conceived as a method for candidates too busy to leave their daily work, also reveal another objective exigency of spiritual growth: that is, the temporal dimension. The 'growth' here mentioned is always the one aimed at by the Spiritual Exercises, that is, an in-depth reform of one's life, a new or renewed commitment to Christ, a decision to walk in the way prepared by the Lord and discerned in the Holy Spirit. As proposed today, they intimate that the process of decision and growth goes beyond the time of the intensive Exercises, even in their full form of thirty days, and requires a more frequent guidance than the ordinary 'spiritual direction'. It is not my intention to outline the psychological processes easily triggered off by a weekly encounter lasting over a one-year period which play their part in bringing to maturity the spiritual fruits proper to the Exercises.

A new trend

After drawing the attention to two important features of the movement of the Spiritual Exercises today, I would like to introduce another type of 'exercises', which has no link with the Spiritual Exercises as such, but which, from more than one point of view, seems to produce very similar fruits. My intention is to give a general idea of the method followed and to indicate its theoretical foundations. Moreover, we may be able to understand better some of the deficiencies of the traditional Exercises, as they are often observed in the concrete unfolding of the experience, even under the improved forms either of the directed retreat or of the Exercises in daily life (or of a combination of both).

The rest of this article is based on a double personal experience, and it may be useful for me to explain it briefly. As a student in psychology,[3] I had to take part in a didactic psychotherapy. This experience came towards the end of the jesuit formation, after several years of contact through study and practice with the ignatian tradition, and just before the intensive month of Exercises that marks the end of the traditional jesuit formation. It seems to me that the therapeutic experience not only fitted well with that long process, but also made it possible to break down certain resistances that had always limited the impact of the Spiritual Exercises.

The second experience is that of a helping relationship established with young religious, seminarians and priests in formation. Their experience, as it has gradually unfolded before me during our bi-weekly meetings, over successive months, has often appeared strangely similar to the experience of the retreatant doing the Exercises.

It is this double experience, confirmed by that of other priests and religious involved in the same orientation, which invites me to explain here theoretical and practical aspects of the method followed, in the hope of contributing something to the present reflection on the Spiritual Exercises.

The first contact: personality assessment

Let us suppose, for example, that a major seminarian, in his first year of theological studies, comes to our consultation centre for an assessment of his personality. He conceives this activity as one among other elements of his preparation for the priesthood. He hopes to obtain a better knowledge of himself, to confirm or correct certain conceptions he has about himself: habitually he is aware of certain personal difficulties either at the level of his spiritual life, of his human relationships, of the meaning of priestly or religious life, of his vocation: he often feels some anxiety about his future.

The personality assessment usually requires two ninety-minute interviews and a battery of psychological tests. A final session, lasting from sixty to ninety minutes, consists in a feedback about the main results of the assessment.

The effort of the psychologist, in this type of assessment, does not consist simply in assessing the state of the person's mental health, although this is an important aspect of the assessment, especially when one detects the presence of psycho-pathological aspects. The aim of

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the assessment is mainly to observe the principal areas of the personality, to describe them separately and in their interaction, to understand the past growth of the person and to foresee, in so far as possible, his future evolution and that of his vocational commitment.

During these two interviews, the psychologist will obtain information on the main aspects of the past and present life of the client; he will try to see how much self-knowledge the person has of his own character, values, conflicts, and ideals, of his spiritual and vocational experience, and so on. He is also on the look out for the non-verbal messages, is attentive to his own affective reactions in the presence of the client and what they mean. The interview actually supposes a solid knowledge and practice of the techniques of the psychiatric interview, as described in particular by Harry S. Sullivan,[4] but adapted to the context of a psychologically normal client and also of a relationship between persons sharing the same faith and the same basic vocation in the Church.

The tests used are for the most part projective tests,[5] such as the Rorschach and the Thematic Apperception Test, or semi-projective ones, like Sentence Completion Tests. The purpose of tests, whose analysis supposes a special training and requires a prolonged effort, is the verification and completion of the observations gathered during the interviews; they help to understand better the subconscious components of the client's personality, as well as the influence of the subconscious upon his conscious personality and behaviour. Often, too, the tests are indispensable for a realistic assessment of the future possibilities of growth of the client, and for the choice of the methods more likely to foster further maturation and a greater integration of the different levels of the personality. It goes without saying that the analysis and the synthesis of the information gathered during the interviews and the tests presupposes, in addition to the personal qualities and the experience of the psychologist, a good theological and spiritual formation as well as a vast psychological training in harmony with the spiritual dimension.[6]

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[4] Harry Stack Sullivan, *The Psychiatric Interview* (New York, 1954).

[5] Cf David Rapaport, M. M. Gill and Roy Schafer, *Diagnostic Psychological Testing* (New York, 1968). Also, A. C. Carr, 'Psychological Testing of Intelligence and Personality', in A. M. Freedman, *et al., Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry/II* (Baltimore, 1975), pp 736-57.

[6] See Luigi M. Rulla, *Depth Psychology and Vocation. A Psycho-social Perspective* (Chicago, 1971). Also L. M. Rulla, J. Ridick and F. Imoda, *Entering and Leaving Vocation. Intrapsychic Dynamics* (Rome, 1976). A Summary of the theory has appeared in *Supplement to Doctrine and Life*, 70 (July-August 1977), by Roger Champoux, S.J., 'New Perspectives in Religious Formation', pp 203-24.

After the two interviews, and the analysis of the tests, the psychologist should be able to describe the main elements of the gradual development of the client's personality and vocation, as well as the present psycho-dynamic structure of the personality. He will consider the interaction of values, attitudes and psychological needs, assess the defence mechanisms, the intra-psychic consistencies and inconsistencies, as well as their impact, either positive or negative, on the personal, spiritual and vocational potentialities of the person.

This first contact presupposes, on the part of the two persons involved, a considerable investment: two long interviews, and a few supplementary hours to take or to analyse the tests. Specialized methods permit a deeper and more complete knowledge of the client; there is a special stress on the objectivity of the assessment. A variety of mental categories are employed to organize the information gathered and are systematically integrated into a coherent whole corresponding to the nature of the priestly and religious vocation.

Yet this remains a first contact, similar, in a certain way, to the initial step taken by the director of the Exercises to know the retreatant before beginning them. Cusson insists on the importance of this aspect of the preparation for the Exercises in daily life.[7]

The report of the psychologist

How does this initial contact end? The scope of the testing, the variety of the many topics dealt with during the interviews and often the subjective impression of never having revealed so much of oneself to one person in so short a time, usually lead the client to expect a great deal from the report that the psychologist is to communicate to him. This expectation is often laden with anxiety, but there is also the hope that the psychologist will help him in one way or another to solve the problems that will be discovered or confirmed. From his side, the psychologist is very much aware that it is not the simple feedback about a situation, or the mere description of the personality as he has observed it, that will lead to the maturing of the personality or of the vocation. The client, especially if he is well-balanced, will evidently experience the intellectual satisfaction of a clearer understanding of a fact or a truth; if he has an intellectual perception of the true nature of his conflicts, he will also have the impression that such an assessment has not been in vain; and even the client who was

[7] G. Cusson, s.j., *Conduis-moi* . . . p 34.

feeling overwhelmed by his personal problems will be relieved by a report which brings to light the positive aspects of the personality, and indicate potentialities that have not yet been exploited. At the same time, the psychologist sees clearly that all this will contribute very little to a real growth towards a maturation that will render the client freer and more available. He knows quite well that this initial contact cannot, by itself, bring a decisive contribution to the human and spiritual formation of his client. The conflicts, the inconsistencies, the lack of balance will be more or less the same, the potentialities underdeveloped.

Often the psychologist decides not to present a whole picture of the personality; he chooses rather to use the time at his disposal in a more 'therapeutic' way: to bring into evidence, through a special technique, one or two crucial aspects of the subconscious dynamics of the person (aspects that will be at the root of many of his decisions and behaviours). If the procedure is well done, it may provoke in the client an emotional (and not only intellectual) understanding of his situation. Such an emotional 'insight' has a true corrective value, much stronger than an intellectual type of comprehension; but it remains always a very partial and problematic growth. The most that can be hoped for is that the emotional insight will become for the client the *symbol* of growth to a maturity fostered by a longer relationship.

Conditions necessary for a work in depth

To put it briefly, the initial contact is not really growth-producing or freedom-inducing; it is like the first acquaintance between the retreatant and the director at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises. What really counts is what will follow: that is, the actual experience of the directed Spiritual Exercises, or those done in daily life, or the regular contact (once or twice a week) with the psychological counsellor. But is the client ready for such an experience? He must be *subjectively* ready: that is, willing to make the Exercises or to enter a prolonged relationship with the psychological counsellor. He must also be *objectively* ready: that is, capable here and now of undergoing such an experience, and of drawing from it the profit that will justify the considerable investment of time and energy, both on his part and on the director's.

As for the establishment of such a relationship with the counsellor, some seminarians, priests or religious see quite easily its advantages. They understand the importance of the psychological factors in spiritual growth; they are open to the theoretical possibility of using

methods of psychotherapeutic help in an *educative*, and not only clinical context; often they are aware of the negative influence of their personal conflicts upon their spiritual, communitarian and apostolic life. They have not succeeded, in spite of their repeated efforts, in reducing such an influence in a significant and permanent way; but they believe that it is still possible to change something in their life. When the psychologist encounters such persons, and when the initial contact (the personality assessment) has shown that they are objectively ready to establish a profitable relationship, he can then propose, at the end of the verbal report, the establishment of a prolonged relationship, similar to that which the retreat director accepts, when after an initial acquaintance he agrrees to give the exercises in daily life to somebody who has asked for them; or like the spiritual director who proposes such an experience to his directee.

Other seminarians, priests or religious, could draw great profit from a helping relationship, but they are not ready to accept such an experience. For example, they may be under the impression that only sick people (psychotics or neurotics) regularly visit a psychologist. Often they are not yet open to properly educative dimensions of the helping relationship established with a psychological counsellor. Other people do not realize certain of their limitations, and the considerable negative impact these will have on their future apostolate. They are thus insufficiently motivated to seek help; and the report of the psychologist, at the end of the first contact, does not always succeed in convincing them. Others finally are aware of their limitations, and of their need to change what can be changed and to integrate as well as possible whatever cannot be changed. But they hope to achieve this by their own efforts, through a gradual natural growth, through friendly relationships, through prayer life. Confronted with such cases, the attitude of the priest-psychologist is certainly not to deny the value of personal efforts, of friendly relationships, of sacramental life. But he also wishes that some will gradually recognize, possibly after several failures, that they could profit from the help of a therapist, or that they could greatly accelerate the process of their human and spiritual maturation. He thus leaves the door open for the future, declaring himself ready to meet them later on, if they would ever wish so. Or else he undertakes to establish a 'spiritual direction' relationship, with monthly or more frequent encounters. If the client, periodically confronted with this person who helps him take an honest look at all the dimensions of his life, would be willing to seek the establishment of a type of relationship

both more intensive and more formative, it would then be possible to accept such a desire, and effect a qualitative change in the nature of the relationship. In addition to such efforts on the individual level, one must evidently explain, to ecclesiastical and religious circles, through lectures, writings, workshops, and similar programmes, the services that psychology could render in the domain of the *formation* of seminarians, religious and young priests.

At the end of this first contact with the psychologist, other persons may be very eager to pursue the relationship, but may not be *objectively* ready for such an experience. Good will is not enough. St Ignatius himself was very exacting about admission to the Exercises, and several candidates had to content themselves with the first week, while others had to wait before Ignatius would accompany them in the experience of the long exercises.[8] The same is true for the type of experience that we mention here. The therapeutic helping relationship, as we conceive of it for seminarians, priests or religious in formation, requires a good capacity for tolerance in front of frustration, and of the discovery of less ideal aspects of the personality. In principle, the one who is called to a function of responsibility in the Church should be humanly capable of passing through the 'trial' of such a helping relationship. But often one must first become more aware of the values that give a meaning to his life and to his vocation. Without a real knowledge of the ideal which is pursued, and a strong desire to be faithful to such values, it is probable that the client will not have the necessary energy to sustain the helping relationship, to face up to his problems, and to work with patience to establish in his life new structures more conformable with his vocation. It is thus important to ensure first a clarification of values.[9] This can be done in the context of spiritual direction, of study, of reading, of sacramental and communitarian life.

The 'exercises': the context

After the initial contact, when the external circumstances and the personality of the person allow, one can then begin these 'exercises'.

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[8] See C. A. Bernard, *Eléments pour un Directoire des Exercises* (Rome, 1971), pp 4-5; P. Favre, *Mémorial* (Paris, 1960), pp 112-15.

[9] 'With the majority of young people entering today, one cannot simply take the values for granted; they may be there, but sometimes only implicitly, and sometimes confusedly, so that the first task with such people is to try and uncover the values to see if they are there . . . otherwise they do not have the necessary minimum security in their vocation to start pushing them around' [personal communication of a master of novices].

The relationship becomes more stable: there are normally one or preferably two meetings every week.

The context in which such a relationship is established is clearly one of christian faith and of vocation (presently lived or considered as possible), of consecration to God and of active service in the Church. The seminarian, for example, sees and affirms the values of christian faith as having a meaning *for him*. At the level of his clear awareness, he wishes to integrate more and more these values into his life. On his side, the psychologist is aware of the values of his own christian faith and of his own priestly or religious vocation. This 'vocational awareness' is inseparable from his 'professional identity'. He has himself actually sought in the past to integrate in his personal life the spiritual, moral and affective dimensions, and he continues to work toward a better integration. There exists, then, between him and the directee, a common affirmation of the same basic values, the desire to seek the will of the Lord and to implement it both in personal life and in apostolic activity. The psychologist will often refer, during the meetings, to the values professed by the client. The reference can be explicit, as in a confrontation between a value clearly expressed by the client and a concrete attitude that seems to contradict it. But the reference to values is often implicit, as when the psychologist proposes an interpretation that may provoke a strong anxiety, with the knowledge that the client will be able, thanks to the values that inspire his life, to accept and profit from such an interpretation. The client is often brought back, implicitly or explicitly, to his values, to the affirmations of his faith, of his ideal; in such a way that the sessions with the psychologist, during which he gradually feels totally accepted and free to express himself as he is, with his fears, conflicts, temptations and mistakes, are not an escape out of the reality of his faith and of his values. The psychologist does not offer a sermon, nor does he try to propose his own values as examples. He merely reminds the client of the ideals that *already* have a meaning in his life; although there may be the need at times to reformulate them in an attractive way, or to bring them back to the centre of the picture at the right moment. If the client did not already have such values in his life, he would be unable to enter into the process of the 'exercises' we are now proposing. It would be necessary first to work toward the establishment of such values.

This is not to say, however, that the fundamental values of the psychologist, in conformity with those of the client, will not indirectly manifest themselves in his words and attitudes. They will

thus be an inspiration for the client, who will want to assimilate them into his personal life and to integrate them into his own value-system. The attraction of the psychologist's values to the client does not come so much from the values themselves, which are basically the same as the client's, but from their integration with other dimensions of the personality. For example, the client who realizes that the psychologist is really attentive to what he says, and is trying to understand him, that he knows how to listen more than those who usually declare themselves his friends or advisers, may then be moved to seek and develop within himself such a compassion. And when he becomes aware that the psychologist is sufficiently detached and free to propose interpretations that may provoke the expression of aggresive and frustrated feelings, perhaps lasting quite a long time, he then discovers another aspect of a truly evangelical love; and he will desire to integrate into his personal life, in spite of all the renunciations that this will entail, this type of love that does not expect a reward.

The aim

In the relationship with the psychologist, then, there exists the possibility of a real transmission of values. But the aim of this type of 'exercise', which already presupposes from the start a subjective affirmation of values, is not primarily to transmit an ideal. Rather, it is to increase gradually the space of inner freedom and the capacity really to choose; and then to assimilate the values, instead of being more or less *driven* to proclaim ideals that will never be internalized. The purpose is to increase in the client the capacity for spiritual discernment, in view of an availability that will be more sensitive to the calls of the Lord, and more capable of a true gift of oneself to the service of a supernatural mission. The aim of these 'exercises' is thus identical with that of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius (Exx 1, 21, 16).

When the client, thanks to the therapeutic interaction, progressively arrives at identifying, in the concrete attitudes of his daily life and deep within himself, his 'inordinate attachments', and when he begins to resolve his conflicts, he becomes naturally more sensitive to the impact of the values in which he already believes and which he observes around him, either in the word of God listened to or meditated, in the living example of his brothers and sisters, or in the person of the psychologist.

The helping relationship thus consists mainly in the elimination of certain obstacles, in order to allow the person really to confront himself, face to face with the Lord who calls him from all eternity.

To eliminate the obstacles, it is first necessary to identify them. One must also overcome the illusion of not being able to live without them; an illusion overcome *only* when new 'patterns' of life have replaced the old habits. The process of these 'exercises' thus consists first of all in the *identification* of the inordinate attachments, and in the establishment afterwards of new attitudes more in conformity with the professed values, with the consequence that the person will then be more free, more detached from himself, more sensitive to the inspirations of the Spirit.

This approach lies precisely in the *radicality* and realism of the work of identification of the inordinate attachments, of uprooting the illusions and establishing new attitudes: concrete signs of a radical change and a guarantee of a future different from the past. Such a process cannot be achieved within a month; it habitually requires one or two years — which makes it, as far as length is concerned, similar to the Exercises in daily life. Once this period is finished, the relationship with the psychologist can be concluded, unless it changes into a relationship of spiritual help, in the normal sense of that phrase.

The approach described here implicitly suggests that the Spiritual Exercises, as they are usually made in most cases, do not sufficiently elucidate the identification of the interior conflicts preventing one's availability in listening to God's word and implementing it, especially in the context of a priestly and religious life entirely dedicated to the service of the word. Moreover the Exercises, in spite of the spiritual, intellectual and often affective intensity they trigger off, do not succeed often enough in influencing certain deep attitudes of the personality (identified or not). Or else the work of identification and of conversion of the interior attitudes takes place, but at a very slow pace, and amidst failures and sufferings that could be avoided. The type of 'exercises' proposed here tends to accelerate the unfolding of the spiritual itinerary, with evident advantages for the person (for example, a more definitive strengthening of the vocational decision before ordination to the priesthood or before permanent vows) and for apostolic commitment (a more immediate attainment of the capacity to give oneself to the service of others).

After describing the context in which these 'exercises' take place and elucidating their aims, we will now explain, in broad outline, the method followed.

The method

These 'exercises' are in great part the application of the methods of

'insight-oriented psychotherapy', in the context of religious life and of subjects relatively free from psycho-pathological manifestations. It is distinct from psychoanalysis, but related to it, in that it makes use of its theories and discoveries to understand and formulate the psycho-dynamic organization of the personality. It accepts the decisive importance of subconscious factors in the organization of the personality in the process of the 'exercises', of bringing the client to discover the subconscious elements blocking the harmonious development of his personality and freedom, as well as the realization of his vocational goals. The defence-mechanisms must be recognized. In contradistinction to psychoanalysis, 'insight-oriented' psychotherapy brings the therapeutic effort to bear on the *present* psycho-dynamic structure of the person, rather than on his past history. Consequently, the regression induced by the interaction between the psychologist and the client is less deep, and the therapeutic process itself is less intensive and shorter, as is the relationship established between the client and the psychologist (transference and counter-transference). Moreover, the attention is often centred on the inter-personal relationships of the client outside the therapeutic context, and occasionally on his past relationships with his parents, or with other important persons of his childhood. The analysis of the *present* attitude toward the psychologist and other important individuals, with all the emotional density of such relationships, allows the client to have *emotional* insights which have a corrective and pedagogical value. They permit him to overcome some of the unadaptable attitudes inherited from the past, and to establish new affective perceptions of a more realistic nature.

The process of insight-oriented psychotherapy passes through determined phases, and requires the use of a strategy suited to the psycho-dynamics of each person and of tactics adapted to each phase of the process. It is a helping relationship both highly individualized and also governed by a precise and reliable method: one specifically different from psychoanalysis, and from the non-directive therapy of the Rogerian School, which tends to neglect the subconscious factors.[10]

[10] This is not the place to enter into the technical details of the method, but one could consult the following books: I. B. Weiner, *Principles of Psychotherapy* (New York, 1975); P. Dewald, *Psychotherapy: A Dynamic Approach* (Oxford, 1973); Roy Schafer, 'The Termination of Brief Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy', in *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy* 2 (1973), pp 135-48; R. L. Stewart, 'Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytical Psychotherapy', in A. M. Freedman, *et al.*, *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry/II* (Baltimore, 1975), pp 1799-1823.

On the other hand, the method assimilates, according to needs and circumstances, certain elements of other psychotherapeutic trends, such as logotherapy (V. Frankl), rational-emotive therapy (A. Ellis), transactional analysis (E. Berne) and behaviour therapy.[11] A group therapy of psychoanalytical inspiration may eventually bring a useful complement to the individual therapy.

Terminology

The use of the expression 'insight-oriented psychotherapy' or 'psychoanalytically-oriented psychotherapy' and the comparison with other psychotherapeutic schools may give the impression that we are miles away from the Spiritual Exercises, and that we are addressing ourselves to 'sick' individuals, since we offer them a 'therapy'. It is true that these methods have been conceived in a clinical context, hence the expression 'psychotherapy'. But this does not prevent them from achieving a deep conversion of an intensive formation to religious life and to the apostolic ministry. The 'wisdom of this world' is here brought into the service of another wisdom. It might be better to avoid 'psychotherapy' or other similar expressions, which run the risk of being misunderstood, and to speak, simply of 'exercises', of 'counselling', of 'spiritual direction', or other words of the kind.

Some people may perhaps think that the means being used go beyond available resources; or that it is an exaggerated luxury, if not a waste of time and energy. Who can afford, during one year or two, such weekly or bi-weekly encounters with a professional? And yet, the recent evolution of the directed Spiritual Exercises, and the return to the Exercises in daily life, which imply frequent individual contacts with a specialist, are deemed necessary for a solid spiritual formation. Moreover, religious congregations do not hesitate to give their young members two or three years of exclusively spiritual formation, without speaking of the philosophical and theological studies that last at least five years. The 'exercises' of which we speak here demand only one or two hours a week and are compatible with a normal study or novitiate life. As for the training of the priest-psychologist, it is neither longer nor more costly than that of a priest-

[11] See J. D. Frankl, *et al.*, *Effective Ingredients of Successful Psychotherapy* (New York, 1978). This study presents the final conclusions of a research lasting twenty-five years. The authors do not propose any specific therapeutic method, but bring to light the decisive factors for the success of a psychotherapy. This study could be useful to spiritual directors.

doctor in physics or mathematics, and barely longer than that of a doctor in theology. And in addition to this, if such 'exercises' make it possible to strengthen the vocation (or to help in discovering earlier its non-existence), and to accelerate spiritual growth by removing certain fundamental blocks, they are indeed not a waste, but an economy.

The limitations of this approach

Finally, it is only right to indicate the method's limitations with regard to the Spiritual Exercises. It has been noted that the human relationship between the psychologist and the client is very central in psychotherapy; it is like a laboratory for a better knowledge of oneself and for the learning of new ways of being and behaving. This situation seems quite different from that of the Spiritual Exercises, where the laboratory is not the relationship of the director and the retreatant, but rather the relationship between God and the retreatant. But this contrast should not be stressed too much. In fact, the client in psychotherapy only spends one or two hours a week in the company of the psychologist. The rest of the time, he is left to himself, and becomes more and more able to study his reactions to the events of his daily life, to perceive the continuities between his present and his past life. He even becomes attentive to the hidden meaning of his dreams or of his memory blanks. All of this is in keeping with the goal of the Spiritual Exercises, in particular with the function of the examination of conscience. Moreover, the religious client habitually becomes more faithful to prayer, as he learns to face up to what he really is in truth; he does not deceive himself so easily about the validity of his reasons for not praying, and he feels an increased need to come closer to the One who alone can save. The psychologist has not told him that he should pray; he simply discovers himself more inclined to prayer, because he is more detached from himself and more free to respond to the call of his values. With the progress of the 'exercises', the person of the therapist gradually fades away, and the person of Christ becomes more and more invading; he penetrates into some dimensions of the personality that had remained until now out of his reach, because of the inordinate attachments. The desire of a more intense relationship with Christ becomes more and more pressing. As the ascetical stage has now produced lasting fruits, the client is ready for a complementary stage, more mystical, in which he is practically free from the therapeutic help, and at length contemplates his Creator and Lord. During the Spiritual Exercises, the

entrance into the third and fourth weeks is similarly marked by a greater independence of the retreatant from the director, who must discreetly withdraw.[12] Once the 'exercises' of which we have spoken here are terminated, the client feels the need to withdraw into a deeper silence to encounter at length the One he is now more able to appreciate, to love and to imitate. In this sense, the contemplative part of the Spiritual Exercises must complete what the psychotherapy has initiated, but is entirely unable to bring to fulfilment.

Conclusions

We have briefly introduced an approach to the personality and to a psychotherapeutic method whose intention and results are close to the Spiritual Exercises, at least for the ascetical part of the experience. We are aware that the success of the Spiritual Exercises, and the success of the psychotherapeutic experience in a christian and vocational context, depend on factors that in part escape theoretical reflection, such as the influence of grace, the subtle transferential components, and the unidentified layers of the deep personality. Moreover, the method proposed here, although possessing a solid theoretical foundation and having already produced concrete fruits, must still continue to show its effectiveness; whilst it is easy enough to point out the deficiencies of the directed Spiritual Exercises, forgetting perhaps the cases where they have led to a deep and lasting conversion of life. We believe that the method proposed here aims, in the last analysis, at increasing the proportion of truly successful Spiritual Exercises, in a much as this is possible in a world so deeply marked by sin.[13]

[12] Gilles Cusson, S.J., *Pédagogie de l'expérience spirituelle personnelle* (Bruges and Montréal, 1968).

[13] A french version of this article has already appeared in *Cahiers de spiritualité ignatienne III* (Avril-Juin 1979). The english version is published here in agreement with the director of *Cahiers*, Fr Giles Cusson, at the request of the author. *Ed.*