



PSYCHOLOGY AND IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY

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The Way is an international journal of contemporary Christian spirituality, published by the British Jesuits. Through writing informed by critical and creative scholarship, it aims to provide a forum in which thoughtful Christians, from different walks of life and different traditions, reflect on God's continuing action in human experience.

Among particular concerns of **The Way** are:

- the role of spirituality in the struggle for justice
- the spiritual issues raised by intercultural and interreligious dialogue
- the interactions between spirituality, politics and culture
- the fostering and development of the Ignatian spiritual tradition

The Way warmly invites readers to submit articles with a view to publication. They should normally be about 4,000 words long, and be in keeping with the journal's aims. The Editor is always ready to discuss possible ideas. Further details about how to submit an article can be found on **The Way's** website, www.theway.org.uk. The Special Number for July 2004 will explore the relationship between the Spiritual Exercises and contemporary theology; contributions on this theme would be especially welcome.



He decided to keep a vigil of arms for a whole night . . . before the altar of Our Lady of Montserrat, where he had resolved to abandon his clothes and clothe himself in the armour of Christ.

Reminiscences, n. 17

In the mother of Jesus, especially in the triple colloquies, he recognised the female figure whose role is to give wisdom and lead us on deep into the soul, to the self, to her son.

Kenneth L. Becker, Unlikely Companions, p. 232

INTRODUCTION

‘That man we are going to find difficult, because he is full of melancholy—you can tell it even from his eyes. If God does not call him to stay with us, I’m worried in case the melancholy will take over completely, and that he’ll lose his reason. At the moment he wants to serve God but can’t. But I’m hopeful. . . . Although he will have difficulties—even quite heavy ones—God will help him.’ (MHSJ MN 1, p. 21)

The speaker is Ignatius himself; the date is 1545; the person he is talking about is Jerónimo Nadal, later to be one of Ignatius’ closest helpers but at this point a rather troubled exercitant; the person hearing and reporting Ignatius’ remarks is Jerónimo Doménech, Nadal’s director.

Ignatius’ comments are based on his own conversations with Nadal, on his intuition, and on his observations. However appropriate we find what he says—the insight proper to a saint, or over-pushy supervision?—the use of the term ‘melancholy’ is significant. It shows us that the ministry of the Exercises has drawn right from the beginning on the more or less systematic resources for understanding the human mind and heart available in the surrounding culture. In Ignatius’ mouth, the word ‘melancholy’ is still connected to a precursor of Jungian type-theory: the idea of humours, of four fluids thought of as acting in combination to determine a person’s physical and mental disposition. At the same time, there is something spontaneous, unreflective about how Ignatius draws on technical language. In this present collection Howard Gray tells us about an attempt to promote Ignatian vocational discernment in a modern university, and notes how the team just fell into psychological language as they sought to communicate Ignatian ideas among people hitherto unfamiliar with them. Ignatius’ comments on Nadal show us that there is nothing new in this phenomenon.

Psychology is now pursued rigorously and systematically. The essays published in this collection draw on various developed ‘schools’: Freudian, Jungian, Eriksonian, Object-Relations, Psychosynthesis, Psychodrama. But Ignatius’ throwaway, almost irresponsible use of

humour-language can still in at least some ways serve as a model for the role of psychological knowledge in the ministry of the Exercises. There could be no question, even in a much larger collection than this one, of dealing adequately with the whole range of psychological resources that might be brought to bear on Ignatius' process. Nor could there be any question of providing a grand theory of how 'psychology' and 'spirituality' interrelate. We can learn from claims that psychology somehow better articulates what a spiritual text is trying to say; we can also learn from claims that the Exercises, and Christian spirituality in general, provide important resources calling into question the worldview implicit in various psychological practices. This collection contains fine examples of both these kinds of writing, essays which we can enjoy and learn from in their diversity long before we settle the questions of how both kinds of writing are possible, or whether one is somehow more legitimate and proper than the other. A similar set of points can be made another central question. Do spiritual and psychological language amount to two ways of referring to the same reality? Or must we rather insist that Ignatius' talk of thoughts that come 'from outside' (Exx 32.3) or 'from above' (Exx 184.2) means what it says, and refers to a reality beyond psychology's reach? Such questions are certainly worth exploring, and perhaps there are in the end rights and wrongs of the matter. But at the outset of the Exercises Ignatius reminds us that even in what people put forward wrong-headedly, there is something worth preserving (Exx 22: *salvar la proposición del prójimo*). We need to keep learning and maturing. May the divine goodness use this first Special Number of the renewed Way to take us all forward along this path. And perhaps some readers might like to take the issues forward on the forum page of our website . . .

Philip Endean SJ

The cover depicts the statue of Our Lady of Aránzazu, where Ignatius kept vigil shortly after leaving his home. Special thanks to Brendan Callaghan SJ (London) and to Hermann Kügler SJ (Berlin) for their help and advice in seeking themes and authors.

GROWING INTO GOD

Ruth Holgate

HOW ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND the process of growth promoted by Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*? It can be interpreted both as a psychological process and as a spiritual process. Perhaps we can see it as one process of human growth, described by two different languages, each of which distinctively enriches how we understand the dynamic of the Exercises.¹

This article draws on the pioneering work of the US American Jesuit, W. W. Meissner, as a way of illustrating this claim.² It explores a few key concepts: the 'psychology of grace'; reality orientation and the First Week; the transvaluation of identity and the imitation of Christ; discernment; and asceticism.

Some Key Terms

Id, Ego, and Superego

In psychoanalytic theory the psyche is composed of the id, the ego, and the superego. 'Id' refers to the energies of unconscious, instinctual, libidinal drives; 'superego' refers to attitudes arising from the introjected demands of parental and other authorities; 'ego' refers to the conscious, reality-orientated part of the psyche. Meissner describes the relationship between these elements of the psyche thus:

The function of the ego in the interaction between these structural components is to arbitrate between the forces of the id, the demands of the superego, and the demands of external reality to

¹ What is said here obviously presupposes a person in reasonable psychological health; the Exercises are unlikely to help, and may well do great harm to, people suffering from a pathology.

² Meissner's major works relating to Ignatian spirituality are: *Life and Faith: Psychological Perspectives on Religious Experience* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1987); *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); *To the Greater Glory: A Psychological Study of Ignatian Spirituality* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999).

which the organism must adjust. The ego is, therefore, the agent of intrapsychic harmony and adjustment to external reality.³

Ego Strength

Ego strength can be described as the ability of the ego to direct and control its energy in the face of the various pulls from the id, from the superego, and from outside forces. Sufficient ego strength implies a level of conscious self-control, restraining the drive of the id and the admonitions of the superego, and holding on to one's considered and internalised values and ideals in the face of external opposition.

Reality Orientation

Reality orientation is the relationship between the facts as they actually are, for instance concerning self, other people, situations and the nature of relationships, and the way in which they are perceived by the individual concerned. For example, if a woman has grown up with a basic sense of mistrust owing to early life experiences, she probably regards other people as likely to let her down, to disappoint her, perhaps even actively to try to hurt her. Such a perspective will affect the way in which she relates. Thus, even if she is in a situation where the intentions of other people are neutral or indeed good regarding her, she is not likely to perceive this easily. To the extent that how she perceives the situation is different from how it actually is, her reality orientation is distorted.

Reality orientation also relates to self-perception: a person can have an over-inflated sense of self, of their abilities and worth; more commonly, they can have a low level of self-regard, and they can be effectively blind to much of the good in themselves.

Ignatius, Identity and Psychological Growth in the Exercises

Meissner discusses in psychological terms the processes that may have been at work in Ignatius (referred to as the pilgrim) during his conversion experience. He states:

³ Meissner, *Life and Faith*, p. 24.

The substantive effect of this process was internal growth within the ego itself. Looked at solely from the point of view of the psychology of the ego, that growth is achieved through increasing integration within the ego and between ego and superego and by the progressive integration of instincts . . .

Such integration freed up energy and psychic potential, enriching Ignatius' self-structure and his sense of identity. Ignatius thus came to appropriate ever more deeply,

. . . a fuller, more realistic and more spiritual system of values. It is this same path of spiritual development that Ignatius proposed to exercitants following the programme of the Spiritual Exercises.⁴

Note how Meissner begins here by considering growth within the ego and then towards the end refers to 'spiritual development'.

Meissner sees the transformation of Ignatius' identity as of central importance to the overall pattern of growth. This transformation occurred as Ignatius took on a new set of values and made them his own. These new values, based largely on the insights that occurred during his convalescence from a serious illness, were at odds with his previous values and ideals. This conflict of internalised values in time produced a crisis of identity. Ignatius,

. . . had to experience a transvaluation of identity, a transformation of the value system and ideals that formed the core of his sense of identity. That transvaluation required, in a sense, an internal reorganization and resynthesis of . . . the pilgrim's psyche. The primary agency of that reconstruction was centred on the pilgrim's ego. The primary target was the superego, along with those narcissistic elements constituting the ego ideal.⁵

Transvaluation of identity as described by Meissner, then, involves the ego relinquishing one set of internalised values and internalising another set. Conversion in Ignatius—and by extension in others—can be understood as psychological growth:

⁴Meissner, *To the Greater Glory*, p. 613.

⁵Meissner, *To the Greater Glory*, p. 76.



There was an enrichment of the ego which achieved a fuller realisation of its own potential and a higher level of internal organization and synthesis. In a sense then, the transforming experience of Iñigo made him more fully, more authentically himself.⁶

The Purpose of the Exercises

Spiritual Exercises having as their purpose the overcoming of self and the ordering of one's life on the basis of a decision made in freedom from any disordered attachment.⁷

This heading summarises Ignatius' intention for the Exercises and involves two elements:

- 'the overcoming of self', which Ivens elaborates as a 'graced process of personal integration';

⁶ Meissner, *To the Greater Glory*, p. 76.

⁷ Translation from Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), p. 22.

- the ordering of life through a decision made as freely as possible, unhindered by anything within the person that reduces their freedom, keeps them attached to something harmful, or acts as a blind spot distorting perspective.

Ignatius hopes that exercitants will, by the grace of God, become more themselves through self-mastery, and thus be more free to ‘order’ their lives. In the Principle and Foundation, the exercitant is asked to own the truth that they are created for relationship with God: all else must be understood as either fostering or detracting from that relationship. If this orientation is appropriated, the person will then have at least the desire for the indifference described subsequently and thus the impetus for making the Exercises well. Or, to put the matter in psychological terms, their ego strength will be bolstered by the desire to be open to God’s grace.

A Possible Psychology of Grace

In this dialogue between faith and psychology, the concept of grace can appear problematic. What does it mean to say that *God* acts in the concrete circumstances of daily life? Meissner addresses this theme by examining the *function* of grace in the person rather than by trying to prove its actual existence, since such proof is not possible from a purely psychological perspective. What we can do is to theorize on what the effects of grace might be, and on how, if grace is accepted as a given, they might be made manifest:

The basic principle is that grace works in and through the resources of the ego. Its influence is manifested in the vital capacity of the ego to perform its proper and autonomous function. In this framework, therefore, grace can be regarded as a dynamizing activation of the energy resources latent within the ego. Its effect is to reinforce, support and energize the ego in the exercise of its proper ego functions.⁸

Whether or not grace exists at all is a matter of faith. The point being made here is that the effects of grace should not be understood in almost magical terms, transforming the self from the outside. Grace

⁸ Meissner, *Life and Faith*, p. 23.

can also, and more fruitfully, be understood as a power that energizes from within the normal structures of the human psyche. This claim converges with the solid theological principle that grace builds on nature and perfects it.

The Grace of the First Week and the Reality Orientation of the Ego

In the First Week the exercitant, this reasonably mature individual with a positive image of self and God is asked to reflect first on the nature of sin, and then specifically on their own sin. Up to this point in the Exercises the ego-ideal of the exercitant (the perception of the self) has been reinforced and strengthened by their reflection on the love of God for them and on their inherent self-worth. With the consideration of the Principle and Foundation, it is possible that some doubts about their self-image may creep in. However generously they have entered into the process, they are perhaps not totally indifferent to all but the will of God. This doubt is then increased by exercises on sinfulness. 'The guilt and shame connected with a deep recognition of one's sinfulness puts the exercitant's ego-ideal under pressure and begins the process of transformation of the sinful self.'⁹ Even a well-integrated ego will probably have to contend with an ego-ideal that is at least to some extent unrealistic.

In the First Week, an exercitant can deepen their sense of God's love by discovering how it remains untouched despite their fallibility and sinfulness. Within the perspective of straightforward spiritual direction, this movement seems natural, spontaneous; it does not have to be forced. Love empowers the person to recognise the truth of themselves. In psychological terms, the greater the ego-strength, the more likely it is that an individual can accept the negative aspects of themselves. Then, as such acceptance occurs, that ego-strength increases yet further.

The First Week, then, can encourage a more realistic perspective on the self, a better reality orientation. It does this by stimulating changes in the ego-ideal within the context of a loving, supportive and

⁹ Meissner, *To the Greater Glory*, p. 120.

accepting relationship—with God, and to some extent, with the director who tries to mirror God's acceptance.

Transvaluation of Identity and the Imitation of Christ

After the First Week, the exercitant sees reality differently. In ideal circumstances, they are moving towards the deeper, more realistic sense of identity just described. They are now open to a radical imitation of Christ as evoked in the meditation on Two Standards:

. . . first, poverty in opposition to riches; the second, reproaches or contempt in opposition to honour from the world; and the third, humility in opposition to pride. (Exx 146)

These three objects of desire which Ignatius puts before us as values to be internalised and lived out represent a significant challenge to most egos:

To internalise such standards and norms means to personalise them, to make them a functioning part of one's own inner psychic reality. In the process of internalisation, therefore, such values are modified, changed, given a uniqueness and specificity within the personality of which they are part. They must become an integral and functioning part of the person.¹⁰

As these values are internalised they in turn affect the identity, already changed by the experience of the First Week. This is more than the simple replacement of one set of values with another, bringing about a change in outlook and identity. The values offered to the exercitant by Ignatius are directed not only towards change but also towards growth. The growth envisaged is an increased desire freely to love and to serve in all things, a theme which recurs throughout the Second, Third and Fourth Weeks. The service invited from the exercitant is not simply a response to orders from a more powerful or more talented master, but a response drawn out of love—love for God, for Jesus, and for others. This desire for service can withstand opposition, because the exercitant has begun to recognise who they

¹⁰ Meissner, *To the Greater Glory*, p. 78.

truly are. This service emerges naturally from of a growth in ego strength and in identity.

Tools for Growth

Discernment of Spirits

The Rules for Discernment of Spirits (which are more guidelines and practical counsels than rules as such) are written in terms determined by the theology and worldview of the sixteenth century. The person is seen as being acted upon by a number of external and internal forces: good spirits (or the Holy Spirit); bad spirits (the personification of evil, or its agents); and influences arising from within the person. Today, Ignatius' rules, when interpreted in the light of more contemporary assumptions, can still be used as guidelines for the spiritual life:

[Discernment] . . . can be broadly defined as the wisdom which enables a person to distinguish by inner sense (as well as by objective criteria) between the spiritually authentic and its opposite, between what is and is not of the Spirit. Its operation presupposes particular qualities and dispositions, which include psychological balance, self-knowledge and good judgment.¹¹

These 'rules' provide the basis for much of the work of recognising and attending to areas of unfreedom, so central to the dynamic of the Exercises.

Seen theologically, discernment of spirits is concerned with the action of the Holy Spirit (the action of grace) within the believer, as a gift of God. Ignatius' full title is here instructive:

Rules to aid us towards perceiving and then understanding, at least to some extent, the various motions which are caused in the soul: the good motions that they may be received, and the bad that they may be rejected. (Exx 313)

The process of discernment of spirits involves reflection on inner movements, which may well be 'involuntary', and the attempt to understand where they are coming from and where they are leading, in order to act appropriately. This is not an absolute science, as the

¹¹ Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, p. 205.

phrases ‘aid us towards’ and ‘at least to some extent’ make clear. Nevertheless, the informal wisdom enshrined in such rules of thumb is helpful as we try to act reflectively.

Seen psychologically, the limitations of Ignatius’ framework appear in sharper relief. His approach is limited to conscious processes. He has never heard explicitly of the unconscious, and therefore assumes that what moves a person is accessible to reflection, and at least amenable to being perceived, however hard it may be to understand. For contemporary psychology, the matter is more complex, even if the rules retain some usefulness within the realm of the conscious, particularly as regards growth in self-knowledge, and hence in the capacity to change or develop in areas of weakness.

The Rules for Discernment are based on a particular way of perceiving the human person, on a belief that the action of God is moving individuals towards greater wholeness, towards a greater integration of the person they were created to be. If psychology, too, assumes a basic orientation in human beings towards lifelong growth and integration, it can articulate similar principles and practical advice concerned with how to become more fully oneself. It can help teach us how to receive and act upon those influences that direct us towards fuller life, and to reject what keeps us from growing.

Asceticism and Psychological Growth

Asceticism is an element in many approaches to the spiritual life. Asceticism is a broader reality than mere self-discipline, the attempt to control detrimental influences or impulses (important and essential though this may often be). Asceticism also involves renouncing things which are in themselves good for the sake of a higher value. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, this higher value is described as love of God, or as God’s greater glory.

The asceticism of the Exercises varies. It can be expressed in simple instructions regarding the way in which an exercitant can adapt their environment in the First Week in order to maintain an appropriate mood: ‘I should not think about pleasant or joyful things’ (Exx 78); ‘I will deprive myself of all light, by closing shutters and doors while I am in my room’ (Exx 79). It can be a matter of penance (Exx 82-86); it can also be more theologically expressed in the self-abnegation of the Third Degree of Humility. Throughout the Exercises asceticism is directed towards the ideals expressed in the Principle and

Foundation: namely, that exercitants may free themselves from anything that hinders their progress towards the end for which they were created, that is of being in a loving relationship with God.

In the Exercises of the First Week Ignatius encourages the exercitant to consider areas of sin and unfreedom. He offers suggestions for penance, not as a punishment but rather as a means towards growth in freedom. In his discussion of penance, which he is careful to distinguish from its extremes of neurotic guilt or masochistic behaviour, Meissner sets out some of the possible effects of penance. He states:

Penance . . . represents a form of self-assertion in the face of forces tending to diminish one's autonomous functioning. It is equivalent to assuming responsibility for one's own self-direction and maturity, and thereby constitutes a decisive reinforcement of the independence of the self, particularly the ego subsystem, particularly *vis-à-vis* instinctual attachments and entanglements, through the execution of self-disciplinary action. The ego, in this process, assumes active mastery of instinctual impulses and desires, thus establishing and later maintaining its authentic control. When this dynamism has become an internalised and synthesized part of the functioning self, it can be said that the advance from contrition to penance involves a development in ego-capacity and another step towards self-maturation.¹²

Penance and mortification are, along with prayer, suitable means for seeking and disposing oneself for God's grace. Psychologically speaking, penance undertaken in this fashion represents a translation into positive action of spiritual desires and purposes. Consequently, it requires directive activity of the ego, which conceives of the purpose, selects the means, directs and organizes its energies to seek its objective, and translates this energy into effective action by its executive capacity.¹³

A decision to take on penance, therefore, is the fruit of reflection and discernment about the movements experienced during the retreat. When faced with feelings and thoughts that undermine growth in freedom and love, the exercitant may take on a penance as a means

¹² Meissner, *To the Greater Glory*, p. 168.

¹³ Meissner, *To the Greater Glory*, pp. 172-173.

towards establishing greater ego control at the service of their chosen values.

There is an obvious danger that the process comes to appear as a matter of 'no pain, no gain', of effort and straining at spiritual growth. But here we should recall Meissner's approach to grace as energizing the resources of the ego. In this perspective, the process becomes one of 'graced collaboration'.¹⁴ It is an active not a passive spirituality envisaged here, one energized by God.

Another central idea in Ignatian spirituality is the principle of *agere contra*, going against. Whereas healthy penance is always a response to sin or to what frustrates growth, *agere contra* may involve voluntarily giving up something good in itself in the hope of developing greater freedom, or, in psychological terms, of attaining greater ego-control. If the exercitant has a particular attachment, effort is directed towards its opposite. So: if you are tempted to shorten the hour of prayer, then you should try to extend it a little beyond the hour (Exx 13); similarly if you feel repugnance towards desiring poverty (as opposed to the indifference towards it of the Principle and Foundation), you should actively ask to be placed in a situation of poverty (Exx 157):

The objective here as always is to strengthen the position of the exercitant by helping him gain greater control of the psychic forces at work in his soul. Understanding and insight are essential to effective ego-functioning, but they do not constitute the total realm of effective ego-function. Sources of motivation must be brought into play, if gains achieved through insight are to be consolidated and made effective.¹⁵

Ignatian asceticism promotes ego-control. It is undertaken discerningly. It is not a matter of general principles: 'in situation *x* always do *y*'. Rather, it emerges from the exercitant's reflective sifting of their experience and their reactions, leading to greater self-knowledge and freedom, and helping them become more themselves, less determined by 'inordinate attachments'. Rightly understood, the process has nothing to do with self-absorption, with navel-gazing, or with narcissistic perfectionism, despite the language sometimes used.

¹⁴ Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, p. 2.

¹⁵ Meissner, *To the Greater Glory*, p. 131.

The aim is always a move away from self-preoccupation and towards the greater love and service of God and of others. But this love is possible only if one possesses oneself enough to give oneself away.

The Dialogue Continues

Modern psychology reveals much about the Spiritual Exercises. Perhaps it tends to distort the balance between God's action and the role of the exercitant, although there are many resources for avoiding this difficulty.¹⁶ In any case, there is no need to hold that psychological interpretations of the *Spiritual Exercises* need converge completely with more conventionally theological approaches. We should simply acknowledge the existence of some common ground. A psychologist may not necessarily be comfortable with the concept of grace, but they might nevertheless acknowledge a holistic concept of personal growth. If for their part a spiritual director can move beyond quasi-magical understandings of God's action, and see the grace of the Exercises working in and through a human process, then there is some basis for dialogue. The world-view of each remains different, but they are not mutually exclusive—or at least not totally so. We can draw on each perspective in complementary ways as we continue exploring what it is to be human.

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¹⁶ See, for example, Meissner's own article in this collection, 'The Ignatian Paradox', pp. 33-46.

DO TEDDY BEARS MAKE GOOD SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS?

Ignatius Loyola Meets Donald Winnicott

Brendan Callaghan

MY FIRST TEACHER OF PSYCHOLOGY SAW IT AS AN AXIOM that ‘the facts are friendly’—that is, that good science should point us towards the same reality as Christian reflection and insight. I would want to hold to that principle as being not only axiomatic, but also demonstrable. Good psychology is not antagonistic to religion, (any more than a good psychotherapist is). Though Freud was an atheist and saw religion as essentially a neurosis, he also recognised that his own system would nevertheless be used as a tool for greater understanding by those sympathetic to religion.

As a Jesuit and a psychologist, I share the belief that my Master Ignatius was himself a fine psychologist, and that the same observation can be made of many (and perhaps all) of the outstanding pastoral figures in the life of the Christian community. Their psychology was not expressed in the language of the psychoanalytic consulting room, nor of the experimental laboratory, to be sure; but the best psychology rarely is.

It seems to me, too, that the traditional insights of the Christian community, as expressed by some of its outstanding members, come together with the best of what psychology has to offer us, particularly once we start looking at the question of what makes for genuine human growth, growth understood in the light of faith, growth *sub specie aeternitatis*. So I want to look at some aspects of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola in terms of what some psychologists, and particularly some depth psychologists, have to say about processes of growth and transformation.

The Exercises and Freedom

The tools which help me to make the Exercises are simple and traditional: imaginative engagement with gospel events and other events in the life of Jesus; thoughtful and prayerful reflection on a few key Christian images; prayerful attention to my own faith-story; and, crucially, the willingness to be aware of how I react to these various exercises, of what sort of response they elicit in me at the deeper levels of my experience. It seems to me that we can speak of two tasks here:

***The Ignatian
Exercises
engage the
whole person***

the first is immersing myself in gospel events by prayerful fantasy; the second is allowing myself to recognise the ways in which God has been and is tangibly present in my life. Ignatius presents me with exercises: imaginative contemplations on gospel scenes, rememberings of my own life-story, reflections on aspects of Christian life embedded in vivid imagery. None

of these, as I understand them, are primarily intellectual exercises, if we understand 'intellectual' in a detached, rationalistic sort of way. Each of them is intended to engage the whole of us, above all through our imaginations and through the life of the feelings, which our imaginations mobilise so effectively.

Ignatius would have me recognise, not the general truths of our common belief, but the particular truths of how God engages with me, and how I both co-operate with and resist that engagement. For Ignatius, God calls me to become who I am capable of being: God works in particular ways in particular individuals. The US American monk Thomas Merton put it like this:

It is true to say that for me sanctity consists in being myself, and for you sanctity consists in being yourself, and that in the last analysis your sanctity will never be mine, and mine will never be yours, except in the community of charity and grace. For me to be a saint means to be myself. Therefore the problem of sanctity and salvation is in fact the problem of finding out who I am, and of discovering my true self.¹

David Lonsdale has this to say:

¹ Quoted in Evelyn Eaton Whitehead and James D. Whitehead, *A Sense of Sexuality: Christian Love and Intimacy* (New York: Crossroad/Herder & Herder, 1994), p. 67.

Taking possession of ourselves, telling, retelling and reflecting on the history of God's dealings with us, helps to set us on the road to freedom. True freedom is the ability to become the person God destined me to be; the capacity to allow my relationship with God—and hence the grace of God—to determine the shape and direction of my life.²

But this might just sound like a matter of autobiography—of coming to recognise and give an account of the events in my life as they have been influenced by the ever-present love of God. There is more to it than this. Taking possession of myself, I want to stress, is a hard and lengthy task, because it includes taking possession of my inner life as well as of that which can be narrated as events. It also includes coming to accept biases, preferences, and compulsions as aspects of myself, the causes of which may be so buried that I can never recover them. Freud says: 'To be completely honest with oneself is the very best effort a human can make'.³

Object-Relations Psychology

Freud's reductionism clearly belongs in a world very different from Ignatius' confidence in God's active presence within the self. Freud himself saw the fundamental powerhouse of human motivation as being a biological one—in the strict sense of the reduction of biologically driven tensions. But it was not very long before thinkers influenced by his insights developed alternative descriptions of human motivation, descriptions which they felt provided more adequate accounts. That the terms 'object' and 'Object-Relations' have become standard in describing these post-Freudian developments is unfortunate if by 'object' we are led to think in terms of the non-personal, of objects rather than people. The term refers, rather, to object as opposed to subject: Melanie Klein and later writers have been exploring the ways in which individuals learn to relate to 'that which is other-than-I'. Thinkers within the tradition of the Object-Relations school, itself largely a British phenomenon, have put great stress on the

² David Lonsdale, *Dance to the Music of the Spirit* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1992), p. 29.

³ Quoted in Abraham Maslow, *Towards a Psychology of Being* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 57.

drive towards relationship as being fundamental in human development.

This stress on relationship (besides giving the Object-Relations school the second part of its name) shifts the fundamental locus of human motivation away from the strictly biological. This in turn makes it possible to develop a psychoanalytic account of aspects of human behaviour that do not seem to fit within a more reductionist or biological understanding other than as neurotic aberrations. If relationship is a key motivating factor in human life, then the range of ways in which human beings seek to form relationships becomes a legitimate field of study for others besides those with an interest in pathology.

Donald Winnicott (1896-1971) was a paediatrician-therapist who is perhaps best known for his oft-cited opinion that ‘there is no such thing as a baby’ (in which he was pointing out that what there *is* is mother-and-baby as one ‘nursing couple’), and also for his notion of ‘good-enough mothering’.

***To learn that
I am separate
is potentially
terrifying***

While it has served to rescue innumerable women from the strain of trying to ensure that they were perfect mothers, Winnicott’s term ‘good enough’ here has another reference, namely to the gradual process by which the infant comes to realise that it is not both all-powerful and coterminous with everything in its experience. To learn that I am separate and hence sometimes alone, to learn that I am not all-powerful and hence must sometimes be helpless—these are potentially terrifying transitions. But I must make them if I am to become a functioning adult in the world.

Paradoxically, ‘too-good mothering’, in which all my needs are anticipated and met, makes this a more difficult task to complete. But normal experience does not include ‘too-good mothering’, and so I have to learn to cope with being alone and helpless as an infant. Typically I do this by means of a transitional object—something which is both ‘out there’ in the physical world and which carries significance for me in my internal world—an object which I both discover and create. This object also shares the crucial quality of the experience of my mother’s breast: here too my ‘creative’ desire is matched by the ‘discovery’ of what another makes present. That I am not the creator (‘The Creator’) is something I have to learn, and it is a further irony that I typically learn this by creating—or rather by creating-and-discovering—a ‘transitional object’. Linus, in the Peanuts cartoon strip,

has his blanket; one of my relatives had a little ball of cotton-wool; while another, growing up in the house of a religion teacher, had a fluffy toy cat called 'Grice' (as in 'Grice has died, Grice is risen, Grice will come again'). But the stereotype of the transitional object is the teddy bear.

The teddy bear exists in transitional or intermediate space: neither the 'autistic' totally internal space of my fantasy and imagination, nor the 'objective', measurable, replicable space of the outside world, but a space which is 'between'. The making of the transitional object is both creation and discovery—a fellow Jesuit and psychologist points out that the child creates the object out of the raw material provided by the outside world—but it is also the making of 'transitional space'. While the teddy-bear may get left behind (though some have hung around their partners for many decades, and one or two have been through the Spiritual Exercises), the capacity to live with or in transitional space does not die away, but rather 'spreads out' or diffuses. It is because I can operate in this 'between' space that I can sit with others in a concert hall and be moved by a piece of music, that I can engage with a novel or a poem or another human being—or with God. Culture, religion, art, love—all of these essentially human activities and experiences rely on my capacity to stay at the point of intersection between the outside and the inside, between the autistic and the objective. They depend on my capacity to play, to engage in a healthy manner with illusion.

For Freud, religion was both illusion and delusion—religious belief was based on wish fulfilment, and it was false, counter to reality. Illusion—belief based on wish fulfilment—has an essentially defensive role in Freud's psychology. It has a short term and necessary function of providing breathing-space, enabling me to gather enough strength to encounter the real. But it can all too easily slide into the longer term and always disabling function of providing me with a more acceptable alternative to the real (and thus making it unnecessary for me to move on to that adult encounter). But illusion as understood by Winnicott and others has a different and more positive role to play, and I would suggest that their understanding takes better account of the sophisticated levels at which even quite small children (as well as adults) can operate. The small child knows that their teddy bear was bought at Hamleys, or can be dry-cleaned; my relative knew that those little balls of cotton wool were quietly replaced as she slept once they

had begun to verge on being major health hazards; the opera-goer knows that Tosca will sing again tomorrow night, that Valhalla was not irrevocably consumed in flames. But small children and opera-goers also know that we are moved, touched, changed in significant ways—and that these experiences more often leave us better able to engage with reality than assist us to evade it. Illusion, in the Winnicottian sense, does not just have the quality of ‘between’ as in ‘located between’, but also as in ‘leading between’ or ‘bridging between’.

It is important to realise that we are not talking about a ‘third way’ of knowledge here:

To him [Winnicott] illusion is not an error but a source of truth. The creative intuition fostered in the transitional space is a crucial human form of knowing. . . . Contemporary philosophy of science, as summarised in a book authored jointly by a cognitive psychologist and a philosopher of science, converges with Winnicott’s concern to transcend the dualism of objectivity and subjectivity and reinstate imaginative interaction as a source of knowledge . . .⁴

God and Transitional Relationships

The Argentinian-born psychoanalyst Ana-Maria Rizzuto has developed the language of Object-Relations in a way that allows us to look at the representations we have of God in a useful manner. She starts from the axiom that we relate to one another by means of the representations we have of each other—it is you-as-I-represent-you-to-myself that governs how I respond to you and relate to you. These representations can be ‘located’ in transitional space—they belong in that ‘between’ which is neither purely private nor simply public. We know from our own experience that how we represent a particular individual to ourselves is not static, and that it can get ‘out-of-synch’ with the reality of the individual, so that meeting them after a time can be a shock—pleasant or unpleasant. We also have a self-representation, and that also can stay more or less ‘in synch’ with our own reality.

⁴ James W. Jones, ‘Playing and Believing: D. W. Winnicott’, in *Religion, Society and Psychoanalysis*, edited by Janet L. Jacobs and Donald Capps (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 106-126, here pp. 117-118.

John McDargh⁵ suggests that Rizzuto's research findings about our representations of God can be summarised under three headings:

'1. No one coming to awareness in a society where the symbol "God" has any cultural currency is without a conscious or unconscious object representation of God.'

This is a bold assertion—but one supported both by her own research and by more general arguments resting on Winnicott's notions of how the child makes use of widely varied material in 'his or her creative weaving together of memorialised interpersonal experience and cultural interactions'. It is also an assertion that Rizzuto herself wants to see empirically investigated. It should be noted that she is not saying that all individuals somehow secretly or unconsciously believe in God, but rather that all individuals have a representation of God: non-believers, she points out, can tell you in great detail about the God they do not believe in.

'2. The object representations of God are not simply derived from the child's experience of the historical father, and once fashioned, they do not remain static and unchanging. Rather, they are available for further elaboration, revision, refashioning, or rejection in ways related to the function they are called upon to serve at any given moment.'

In her book *The Birth of the Living God*, Rizzuto puts these two together thus:

It is a central thesis of this book that no child in the Western world brought up in ordinary circumstances completes the oedipal cycle without forming at least a rudimentary God-representation, which he may use for belief or not. The rest of developmental life may leave that representation untouched as the individual continues to revise parent- and self-representations during the life cycle. If the God representation is not revised to keep pace with changes in self representation, it soon becomes asynchronous and is experienced as

⁵ John McDargh, 'Creating a New Research Paradigm: Ana-Maria Rizzuto', in *Religion, Society and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 181-199.

ridiculous or irrelevant or, on the contrary, threatening or dangerous.⁶

McDargh points out that there are three ways in which Rizzuto goes beyond Freud here: a) the 'raw material' for these psychic representations is not simply drawn from the male child's biological father; b) the representations of God are not static, but can (note *can*) develop through life; c) these representations can play an adaptive and positive role in the process of developing and maintaining a sense of being a self-in-relation.

'3. It is important to distinguish the more preconscious, imaginal, primary process dimensions of an individual's "God" from the more public, secondary process, conceptual elaborations of "God".'

Rizzuto puts it like this:

When dealing with the concrete fact of belief, it is important to clarify the conceptual and emotional differences between the concept of God and the images of God which, combined in multiple forms, produce the prevailing God representation in a given individual at a given time. The concept of God is fabricated mostly at the level of secondary-process thinking. This is the God of the theologians, the God whose existence or non-existence is debated by metaphysical reasoning. But this God leaves us cold. This God is only the result of rigorous thinking about causality and philosophical premises. Even someone who believes intellectually that there must be a God may feel no inclination to accept him unless images of previous interpersonal experience have fleshed out a concept with multiple images that can now coalesce in a representation that he can accept emotionally.⁷

Similarly, Winnicott points to our ability to operate in transitional space, and suggests that this ability supports much (perhaps all?) of what is distinctively human in us:

⁶ Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 200.

⁷ Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God*, pp. 47-48.

The infusion of meaning from the inner world into actions and objects in the public sphere, or the expression of inner-generated truths by means of external physical and verbal forms, describes not only children playing with teddy bears and empty boxes but also the creation of symphonies, sculptures, novels, and even scientific theories.⁸

Rizzuto takes us a step further, and shows us how our God-representations can be seen as operating in transitional space, and so are themselves open to development (or the absence of it). In turn, our God-representations have an effect on how we represent others, and ourselves, to ourselves, and thus have a profound effect on how we live our lives. I would add that there are other representations significant to our living as religious people that can also be included here, alongside our God-representations themselves. As religious individuals, we live in relation to a rich variety of religious symbols, each with a significance, great or small, for how we represent God, others and ourselves, and thus for how we live our lives.

Ignatius and Imaginative Prayer

Let me return to the *Spiritual Exercises* before drawing all this together. How might depth psychology help us understand what takes place in Ignatian imaginative prayer? Typical of the tradition which Ignatius inherited is this paragraph from Aelred of Rievaulx:

First enter the room of blessed Mary and with her read the books which prophesy the virginal birth and the coming of Christ. . . . Next, with all your devotion accompany the Mother as she makes her way to Bethlehem. Take shelter in the inn with her, be present and help her as she gives birth . . .⁹

Ignatius has a distinctively different approach. First, he simply gives directions concerning what to pray about, rather than writing a meditation to read and reflect on: the imagination of the individual is left free. Secondly, Ignatius requires the one making the Exercises to

⁸ Jones, 'Playing and Believing', p. 114.

⁹ Aelred of Rievaulx, 'Rule of Life for a Recluse', nn. 29, 30, in *Treatises and Pastoral Prayer* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1971), pp. 80-81.

reflect on the experience of praying with each gospel passage: he asks me to do what he did, and note my reactions. (He does not ask me to *react* as he did—this is not a programmed experience with programmed outcomes.)

***Ignatius' interest
is not in general
truths, but in
how God
engages with
me personally***

What might a psychologist see as happening here? First of all, Ignatius is confronting the one making the Exercises (or the one praying in the spirit of the Exercises) with the fundamental images and symbols of the gospel. (Jung makes the point that the symbols of Christianity take up all the key themes of human living, so that in confronting all these symbols I am confronting all that I need to foster my growth as a human being). But let me repeat what I have already said, in slightly different form: Ignatius would have me recognise, not the general truths of our common belief, but the particular truths of how God engages with me. In other words, Ignatius would have me put myself in the presence of these archetypal Christian *symbols* of life, not in the presence of credal or even of pious formulas that seek to articulate one possible account of their content. In Rizzuto's terms, he wants me to encounter my God-representations, not my God-concepts.

This might sound static: 'Here is what is given and fixed: face it and go on your way according to what you have been given.' But Ann Ulanov, an American writer on prayer, says this about archetypal symbols:

The real thing is not a mental concept but a living presence to which we must work out relationship. This we do by putting together live bits from our personal biography, from images in our culture, and from the archetypal images that emerge from the unconscious. The archetype confers a readiness to respond, not a set content. . . .

Archetypal images, it must be stressed again, are just not set contents of new coercive forces in our lives. On the contrary, archetypal images and our efforts to relate to them—which also may mean changing them according to idiosyncratic conditions of personality and epoch—offer antidotes to . . . stereotypes . . . ¹⁰

¹⁰ Ann Belford Ulanov, 'The Objectivity of Subjectivity', in *Jung and Christianity in Dialogue*, edited by Robert L. Moore and Daniel J. Meckel (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990), pp. 144-145.

Thus, just as Jung sees me in dialogue with archetypal images, so Ulanov makes the point that such a dialogue can affect not only myself but also the images and symbols with which I am in dialogue. A living symbol is, very precisely, the opposite of a fixed stereotype. (In the same way, a living tradition such as a religion is, very precisely, the opposite of a fixed set of customs—whether of belief or behaviour.)

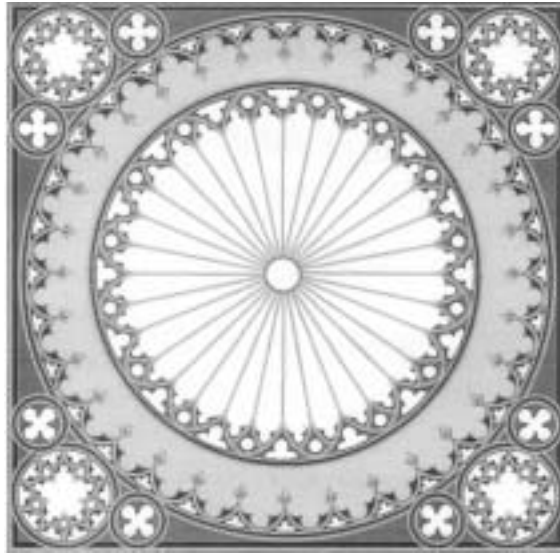
Encountering the central symbols around which I order my life changes me: it cannot do otherwise. In the Exercises Ignatius puts me regularly in contact with the key symbols of my living: should we be surprised if I am transformed by this repeated experience? But the symbols are symbols: should we therefore be surprised if they too are transformed in this dialogue?

If the God representation is not revised to keep pace with changes in self-representation, it soon becomes asynchronous and is experienced as ridiculous or irrelevant or, on the contrary, threatening or dangerous.¹¹

In other words, it is not just that the experience of the Exercises provides a regular ‘reality check’ for me, as I come face to face yet again with these guiding images and symbols of the Christian community to which I belong. It is also, rather, the case that regular engagement in the Exercises permits these symbols—inevitably shaped individually by my unconscious—to be reshaped in ways that reflect my growth and development. To the degree to which we can understand our representation of God as itself influenced by and largely fashioned from such archetypal symbols, this potential for them to change is crucial.

I am suggesting, then, that in the Exercises Ignatius provides a mechanism enabling the revision of my God-representation—note that neither Rizzuto nor I are talking about the cognitive conceptualisation of God, but the symbolic representation of God, ‘the living God’ of the title of her book. In so doing, Ignatius helps me continuously to ‘upgrade’ my faith—my lived relationship with God and others. He also assists me in the process of disengaging from a possessive, idolatrous attachment to any particular image of God, or to any particular image of myself in relation to God. Theological study and

¹¹ Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God*, p. 200.



reflection can help us see that this or that concept of God, this or that doctrinal formulation, cannot be more than a concept or formulation; we can recognise with Abraham Heschel that there are levels of our religious experience where all formulations and articulations disappear as understatements. Similarly in prayer—including the prayer fostered by the Exercises—we can come to see also that our symbols and representations of God are, and can only be, other-than-God.

Growth and Life-Stories

I have therefore been naming two tasks which Ignatius sets us: that of recognising how and where God has been active in my life, and that of engaging in imaginative gospel-based prayer. But it would be misleading to see them as two distinct tasks. As I engage in that process of ‘taking possession of [myself], telling, retelling and reflecting on the history of God’s dealings with [me]’, I am inevitably reshaping my image of God. As any experienced director will know, the inability to allow my image of God to find a new shape can be an near-insuperable obstacle to growth.¹² One aspect of the ‘darkness’ that is a

¹² That the image that needs to be reshaped might itself be a terrifying one is the possible start of another discussion.

consistent experience of those faithful to prayer consists in the struggle and the pain that comes from letting go of our old and insufficient God-representations. A wise psychoanalyst speaks in terms of the loss of our old God being experienced as a desertion, however nagging or infantilising such a God may have been. Such attentions were all we knew, and we took them for love. Recognising them in their true colours leaves us pained, rageful and alone.

The second task—that of engaging in imaginative gospel-based prayer in the way Ignatius would have me do it, with the essential element of reflection on my own interior responses—is inseparable from the knowing of self-in-relation-to-God. As I become more sensitive to how I respond to these central symbols, to my movements of attraction and repulsion, consolation and desolation, so I inevitably deepen and refashion my awareness of myself *sub specie aeternitatis*. As I become more aware of and engaged with the key symbols of my faith-life, so I become more aware of the key metaphors by which I live, and from which I derive the meaning of my life. Two US American writers on therapy put it like this:

A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives. Self-understanding requires unending negotiation and renegotiation of the meaning of your experience to yourself. In therapy, for example, much of self-understanding involves consciously recognising previously unconscious metaphors and how we live by them. It involves the constant construction of new coherences in your life, coherences which give new meaning to old experiences. The process of self-understanding is the continual development of new life-stories for yourself.¹³

What Ignatius does in the Exercises, it seems to me, is to enable me to recognise and tell myself ever-new stories of the ways in which my life is caught up in God's love. It is important here to acknowledge what may be obvious, namely that if I am genuinely growing before God, then such stories, as they develop one from another and maybe supplant one another, are not fictions but ever-closer approximations to the truth of who I am.

¹³ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 233.

Only God knows the whole of that truth. If I may borrow a concept from Winnicott and apply it in a way of which he would probably approve: it is when I see myself mirrored in God's loving gaze that I will know myself fully for the first time. But as I grow in my living towards that moment of death-and-life, I can grow in seeing God and myself more truthfully. The Spiritual Exercises, and the ways of prayer they enable, are one way in which that growth can be fostered. That psychology provides a glimpse of some of the mechanisms which make the Exercises effective in fostering our growth before God seems to me to be good news for spiritual directors and psychologists alike, as for all those who share in the common task spelt out by the Jesuit General, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, in 1995:

. . . to help men and women disengage themselves from the tarnished and confused image that they have of themselves in order to discover that they are, in God's light, completely like Christ. (quoted in GC 34, d. 2, n. 6).

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THE IGNATIAN PARADOX

W. W. Meissner

MOST JESUITS AND MANY OTHERS who have experienced the Spiritual Exercises, whether as retreatants or as retreat-givers, have encountered the Ignatian paradox: the effectiveness of the Exercises depends both entirely on one's personal effort and at the same time entirely on divine grace. The familiar Ignatian formula says 'Pray as though everything depended on God, and work as though everything depended on you'. More recently, it has been claimed that the authentic version of the saying is yet more provocative: 'So trust God as if the success of things depended only on you, not at all on God. Yet so bend every effort as if you are about to do nothing, but God alone everything'.¹ However, even the more familiar version raises issues of interest to any student of Ignatian spirituality, and it is these that I shall explore here.

The interplay of divine and human action was for Ignatius no impersonal abstraction, but rather an effective guiding principle in his own spiritual and mystical life. As he was discussing pastoral training in the *Constitutions*, Ignatius commented:

Although all this can be taught only by the unction of the Holy Spirit and by the prudence which God our Lord communicates to those who trust in His Divine Majesty, nevertheless the way can at least be opened by some suggestions which aid and dispose one for the effect which must be produced by divine grace.²

In his biography of Ignatius, Ribadeneira wrote: 'When he undertook something, most frequently he seemed not to count on any human

¹ For a convenient and illuminating discussion of the historical issue, summarizing and developing insights of Gaston Fessard and Hugo Rahner, see J. P. M. Walsh 'Work as if Everything Depends On—Who?' *The Way Supplement*, 70 (Spring 1991), pp. 125-136.

² *Constitutions* IV.8.8 [414].

means, but to rely only on divine providence; but in carrying it out and bringing it to completion, he tried all means to achieve success'.³ I would conclude not only that Ignatius' personal psychology is of critical significance for understanding the basic psychology of the Exercises,⁴ but that a deeper understanding of the paradox provides a kind of opening wedge into the complexities of the psychology of grace. In this light, the paradox is a reflection of the deeper paradox of human freedom—that human beings become more free to the extent that they submit to the grace and freedom of God.⁵

Before taking a step further, it may be well to dispense with an old and discredited canard, namely that psychic determinism and human freedom are antithetical. The Freudian insistence on determinism as the guarantee of scientific rationality does not eliminate or stand in opposition to the notion of human freedom. The case for freedom in human action and as a necessary element in psychoanalytic theory and therapy has been amply and effectively argued elsewhere.⁶ Psychoanalysis and the psychology of the Exercises in fact share a common goal—the enhancement of freedom and of the capacity for free choice.

Desolation

There are any number of contexts in which the paradox finds application in Ignatius' spiritual teaching. His advice in dealing with desolation in the Rules for Discernment for the First Week serves as a good example. He suggests three steps for dealing with desolation: (1)

³ MHSJ FN 4, p. 882, cited in Gilles Cusson, *Biblical Theology and the Spiritual Exercises* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1988) p. 71, n. 75. See also FN 3, p. 631; 4, p. 846; *Constitutions* X.2-3 [813-814].

⁴ See W. W. Meissner, *To the Greater Glory: A Psychological Study of Ignatian Spirituality* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999).

⁵ See Karl Rahner, 'Grace and Freedom' in *Sacramentum Mundi*, edited by Karl Rahner et al., vol. 2 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), pp. 424-427.

⁶ See, for example: Robert R. Holt, 'Ego Autonomy Re-evaluated', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 46 (1965), pp. 151-167; Edwin R. Wallace, *Historiography and Causation in Psychoanalysis* (Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press, 1985); Ernest Wallwork, *Psychoanalysis and Ethics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); and the following publications of my own: 'Freedom of Conscience from a Psychiatric Viewpoint', in *Conscience: Its Freedom and Limitations*, edited by William C. Bier (New York: Fordham University Press, 1971), pp. 125-142; *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); *The Ethical Dimensions of Psychoanalysis* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003).

recognise it for what it is; (2) resist any impulse to change prior decisions leading to spiritual growth; and (3) do what seems advisable to deal with the desolation and its causes.⁷ These points resemble what therapists and analysts say about treating depression.⁸ The patient must first recognise their condition as a depression, but even more importantly they must accept and bear the pain and anguish connected with it. Then they should take hold of themselves, and not allow their tormenting feelings and the discouragement and hopelessness of their condition to lead to significant changes in their life or to any other important decisions. And lastly, they have to find a way to mobilise their resources to deal with the causes of their depression and work themselves out of it.

The process involves, therefore, both passive and active components—passive in bearing the painful feelings, active in doing something about them. Even to recognise and accept a state of depression (the first and second of the steps identified above) involve an active engagement with the situation, a mobilising of one's personal capacities for self-observation, and a certain distancing from the affective affliction of the depression. All these are preparing the way for the person to deal more actively and effectively with the depression later on. Ignatius' advice in the First Week Discernment Rules echoes what I have identified in therapeutic terms as the third step:

Although we ought not to change our former resolutions in time of desolation, it is very profitable to make vigorous changes in ourselves against the desolation, for example, by insisting more on prayer, meditation, earnest self-examination, and some suitable way of doing penance. (Exx 319)

This approach also converges with the *agere contra* (Exx 13, 97, 157), which plays such a dominant role in Ignatian spirituality.⁹ While these points would seem to emphasize human efforts to overcome desolation,

⁷ Exx 322; for this interpretation see Jules J. Toner, *A Commentary on St Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: A Guide to Principles and Practice* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982).

⁸ See E. R. Zetzel, 'On the Incapacity to Bear Depression' (1965), in *The Capacity for Emotional Growth* (New York: International Universities Press, 1970), pp. 82-114.

⁹ See also *Constitutions* III.1.13 [265]: 'Temptations ought to be anticipated by their opposites, for example, if someone is observed to be inclined toward pride, by exercising him in lowly matters thought fit to aid toward humbling him; and similarly of other evil inclinations.'

the efforts must be supplemented by a prayerful turning to God for grace. Once again we find a reflection of the Ignatian paradox: trust completely in God, but act as though the result depended on your own effort.

Desolation implies that the effort to establish control and achieve proper organization and integration in the spiritual life has encountered a snag of some sort, some resistance which one is not able to overcome. Ignatius' suggestions were intended to help exercitants to bring their effort to bear on that area of resistance and overcome it. In prayer, for example, we not only beg God's help to overcome desolation, but in the very act of prayer we have begun to mobilise our inherent psychological strengths. Self-analysis can help to discern the source of the resistance and direct our resources to overcoming it. Likewise, the use of penances implies and reinforces the disposition of psychic resources in countering desolation. The reinstitution of inner control and autonomy, and the regaining of a degree of more adaptive self-functioning, are accompanied by the experience of consolation. The role of grace, working in and through created power and effort, may be synonymous with the effort of the subject in willing a change. While some spiritual writers would insist that such effort, unaided by grace, cannot undo spiritual desolation,¹⁰ the question to my mind remains open. Perhaps the issue hinges on the extent to which desolation and depression may be mingled—the one responsive to spiritual means, the other to natural. But, practically speaking, it makes little difference, especially since we cannot know when grace is playing a part. In fact, as I have argued, the self-conscious mobilisation of natural resources may be one expression of a motivation sustained by grace. What counts is the mobilising of resources to counter the desolation—another expression of *agere contra*.

Poverty

Another striking example of the role of the paradox is Ignatius' prolonged, laboured, and doubt-filled preoccupation with the nature of poverty in the Society of Jesus. Granted that the decision regarding the status of poverty in the Society was weighty and fraught with

¹⁰ Toner, *A Commentary*, for example pp. 159-160.

implication, his vacillations, as described in his *Spiritual Diary*,¹¹ reflect a process of severe obsessional doubt and hesitation—reaching the decision, then undoing it, then returning to a sense of confident assurance only to undo it again in a paroxysm of doubt, and repeating the whole cycle seemingly endlessly. But, nonetheless, it is interesting how he resolved the issue, using his own rules for discernment and coming to a decisive resolution through extensive periods of prayer and consultation, seeking to find the path of human wisdom and divine guidance. From a psychoanalytic perspective, none of this sounds unfamiliar. Given the strain of obsessiveness in Ignatius' personality,¹² none of this is surprising. Whatever dynamics of unresolved conflict were at work in him, they did not prevent, but certainly prolonged, his coming to a definitive conclusion.

The ultimate test for Ignatius, the kind of confirmation he valued most, was in the order of mystical illumination, along the lines of the first Ignatian 'time' for making an election (Exx 175). That he was able to bring himself to a meaningful resolution of his ambivalent conflicts on the one hand, and to discern effectively the compromising aspects of his need for divine confirmation on the other, speaks eloquently to his persistent resolution and determination. But such illumination was not often available to him. His efforts are eloquent testimony to the persistent strength of his ego, his sense of self. Here again we find the basic Ignatian paradox—he exerted every effort as though the outcome were dependent on the genuineness and strength of that effort, but prayed, sought the consolation of divine illumination, as though everything depended on God. The criterion he chose was strikingly subjective: a sense of security and a lack of desire to seek any further confirmation. He spoke of 'a certain security or assent that the election was well made' (10 February 1544); of 'great tranquillity and security of soul, like a tired man who takes a complete rest' (11 February); of confirmation by 'tears and a complete sense of security about all I had decided' (12 March). Yet this mystical inclination was combined with a more practical and down-to-earth mind-set that would not rest easily in this

Ignatius had to face and resolve his ambivalent conflicts

¹¹ Available in Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Personal Writings*, edited by Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 65-109.

¹² See W. W. Meissner, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 373-375.

subjective certitude, but rather sought a broader base of security in data and reasons.

Love in the Spiritual Exercises

The Ignatian paradox also finds expression in Ignatius' views on love. The *Spiritual Exercises* have little to say directly about love, but a good deal more about service. Yet clearly the motivational driving force behind the ethic of service is love, specifically love for God and humanity. At the very end of the Exercises, Ignatius speaks of 'the great service which is given to God because of pure love' (Exx 370) as a goal to be prized above all else. Motifs of love and service are fused into a mutually sustaining theme pervading all of his spirituality. If there is justice in de Guibert's distinction between mysticism of love or union and mysticism of service,¹³ the motif of service dominates the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions*, while the motif of love emerges as the dominant theme in his *Spiritual Diary*.

The essence of Ignatius' teaching on love is found in the Contemplation to Attain Love (Exx 230-237), specifically in the two preliminary comments: love is found in deeds rather than words (Exx 230), and love is a matter of mutual exchange between lover and beloved (Exx 231). Ignatius stresses humble service in the kingdom of God as the preferred expression of love for God—the theme that found such dramatic expression in the meditations on the Two Standards and on Christ as King. Secondly he brings out the mutuality in giving and receiving that takes on special relevance in the context of returning love for love in response to the loving initiative coming from God as Creator, Lord and Redeemer. These themes become leitmotifs throughout Ignatius' spiritual teaching and practice.

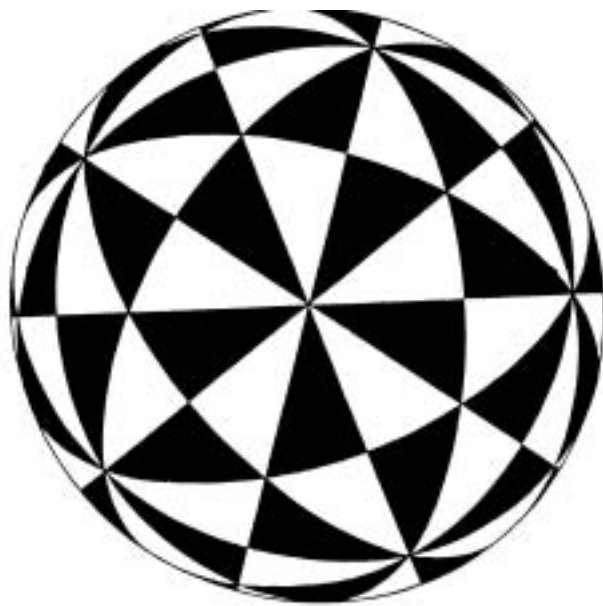
In his discussion of love from a psychoanalytic perspective, Erich Fromm pointed out that love is an activity, not merely a passive emotion.¹⁴ Moreover, it consists in giving rather than receiving. One common misunderstanding is that such giving means giving something up, being deprived, sacrificing. Some would be willing to give, but only

¹³ Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986 [1942]), pp. 176-181.

¹⁴ Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper and Bros, 1956).

if there is the prospect of receiving something in return. Some make a virtue out of the sense of sacrifice involved in giving up: it is better to give than to receive, meaning that it is better to suffer deprivation than experience satisfaction in giving. But for more mature personalities, giving can be an expression of potency, strength, of the cup overflowing with bounty and joy. Giving is better than receiving because it expresses my vitality and activity.

However, in the *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius' ideas about the love of God are embedded in certain concise formulae that simply make one



central point but then say little more.¹⁶ It is as though the matter of love was to be left between the exercitant and God—as though a love that could be spiritually transforming and elevating was too personal, too intimate, too much a private matter between God and the soul to permit any further descriptive or prescriptive statements.

Thus the love of God, which was so central to Ignatius' spiritual life, was not—or at least not merely—a matter of human desire or passion. The love that inflamed the soul with spiritual desire and drew

¹⁶ See, for example, Exx 2, 15, 180.

it into closer loving union with God came from God as a gift of divine grace. The theme recurs even more explicitly in his second description of the third 'time' of Election:

That love which moves me and brings me to choose the matter in question should descend from above, from the love of God; in such a way that the person making the election should perceive beforehand that the love, whether greater or less, which he or she has for the matter being chosen is solely for the sake of our Creator and Lord. (Exx 184)

Clearly Ignatius had something more in mind than is implied by the rhetoric of service. For him the love of God reached ecstatic, all-encompassing, all-consuming proportions, and if the unitive themes are not explicitly expressed, they are felt as a powerful presence in the text.¹⁷

Love and charity in Ignatius' spiritual vision were intimately linked to freedom, and to how freedom was contained within the dynamics of grace. Love, along with freedom and grace, was a gift of divine generosity, calling forth a response of loving self-surrender and service. Yet in Ignatius' hands these profound themes have a strikingly human quality—he does not speak of mysteries and transcendence, but of service and mutual exchange. In a unique and powerfully intimate sense, the love of God was for Ignatius a form of object relation between the loving believer and the loving God—for Ignatius, God becomes an object of a personal loving relation. In this sense, Ignatius stands firmly in a Thomistic tradition founded on an idea of a personal relation between God and humanity through grace.¹⁸

At the same time, specifically in terms of such a relation, the human and psychological dimensions have their place. Fromm, for example, connects the need to love with the need to compensate for the anxiety of our human separateness by seeking loving union—at one level in strictly human terms, but also at another level religiously, in terms of union with God. The quality of love of God is a function both of the personal qualities the individual brings to this connection

¹⁷ See Sylvie Robert, 'Union with God and Election', *The Way Supplement* 103 (May 2002), pp. 100-112.

¹⁸ See W. W. Meissner, *Life and Faith: Psychological Perspectives on Religious Experience* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1987).

and of the kind of God-image or God-representation in the mind of the believer.¹⁹ In some cultures, the maternal qualities of the godhead predominate; in others, the paternal; in others still, some amalgam thereof. The love of the mother is unconditional, protective, enveloping; it is also a love that cannot be acquired—the mother loves her children because they are hers, not because of what they do or accomplish. Paternal qualities, however, make demands, establish laws and regulations, require obedience. The child is loved best who is most like the father and most obedient to his commands. As Fromm commented:

In the matriarchal aspect of religion, I love God as an all-embracing mother. I have faith in her love, that no matter whether I am poor and powerless, no matter whether I have sinned, she will love me, she will not prefer any other of her children to me; whatever happens to me, she will rescue me, will save me, will forgive me. Needless to say, my love for God and God's love for me cannot be separated. If God is a father, he loves me like a son and I love him like a father. If God is mother, her and my love are determined by this fact.²⁰

Nature and Grace

The Ignatian paradox thus suggests an approach to the psychology of grace. We can see grace as enabling us to become more fully human and to live more ethically, morally, and spiritually in the love and service of God.²¹ The paradox carries us back to the fundamental Thomistic principle: *gratia perficit naturam*. Grace does not replace or override the resources of human nature, but 'perfects' them. It works in and through natural human capacities, strengthening, facilitating, enabling them to do what is ultimately in the self's best interest: to live a good spiritual life and to attain the love of God. Divine loving

¹⁹ See Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

²⁰ Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, p. 67.

²¹ In more traditional terms, such grace would have been categorized as actual and sanctifying grace. For an attempt to explain how Rahner transformed the standard post-Tridentine understandings of grace, see Philip Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 32-67.

intervention through grace, therefore, does no violence to the human subject, but works its effects in and through the inherent powers of the soul.

While Aquinas speaks of grace as perfecting or completing human nature, the underlying assumption concerning the experience of grace is that grace and nature remain separate orders of existence. As Roger Haight, expounding Rahner's theology of grace, explained the matter:

Scholasticism assumed that what human beings experience in the world is simply nature. In the Scholastic view, grace and the operation of grace do not enter into consciousness. 'Nature alone and its acts are the components of the life which we experience as our own.' Grace and all that belongs to the supernatural realm are purely 'ontic' structures, components of being, and do not enter into natural human or psychological experience. The result is that nature and grace (the supernatural) are seen as two layers of reality that scarcely penetrate each other. Grace thus has no part in a person's everyday experience of concrete living.²²

Rahner developed this understanding of grace. He argued for what he called the 'supernatural existential', and for a corresponding obediential potential of human nature as regards grace. In Rahner's view, grace is universally experienced, but not normally *as* grace. It is never to be identified with an object; it is, rather, a horizon of transcendence that is generally 'unthematic' (unadverted to). One consequence is that there is no way of psychologically or experientially distinguishing the effects of grace since they inhere in natural psychic functions. But correspondingly, there is no basis for the suggestion that grace could ever be absent from the human soul. In Ignatius' own life, there is no plausible way of discriminating between how far his spiritual experience was motivated by natural factors and how far it reflected the riches of divine grace. The hagiographic instinct—informed as it is by a less adequate account of grace and nature—would emphasize the latter, but in fact we have no way of knowing. The Ignatian paradox, however, gives us firmer ground for entertaining the possibility that divine grace was profoundly meaningful in shaping Ignatius' psychological and spiritual development.

²² Roger D. Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 126.

In fact, such a division or discrimination between the effects of grace and those of nature would seem to be alien to the Ignatian perspective and contraindicated by the Ignatian paradox.

The question for Ignatius is not whether grace *or* nature is effective in the production of spiritual effects, but rather how such effects result from the combination of grace *and* nature. There is no way we can conclude that a specific action or course of action is entirely within human capacity

**Not ‘grace
or nature’
but ‘grace
and nature’**

without the influence of grace; nor, conversely, can we say that such an action is the effect of grace without human activity. What the paradox affirms—the synergism between grace and nature—is balanced by what it denies. And this denial can at times be even more challenging. If it is false and misleading to believe that we can achieve good works and win our way to virtue and salvation without the help of grace, it is equally false and misleading to think that grace and divine intervention will soothe our pains, solve our problems, ease our burdens, answer to our desires, resolve our conflicts and uncertainties, without a commensurate effort of desire, will and action on our part. On these terms, then, God, if you will, helps those who help themselves.

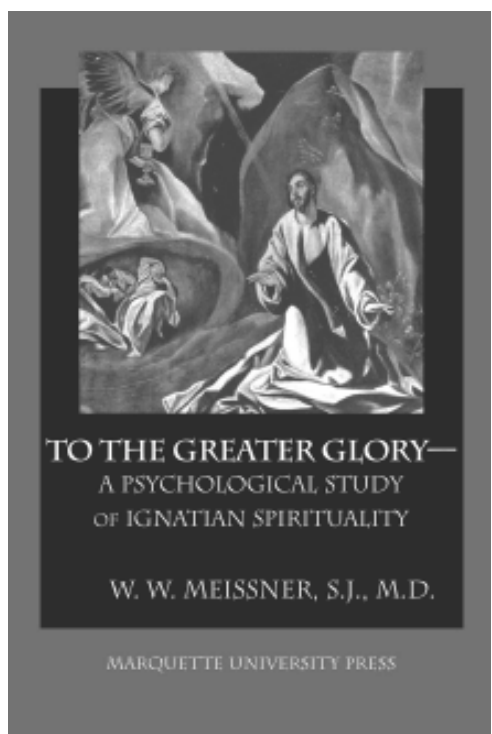
In a 1977 text (though echoing material written many years earlier), Karl Rahner gives some examples from everyday life that he feels reflect the experience of the Spirit in the human soul:

Let us take, for instance, someone who can no longer make their life add up. They cannot fit together the different items in the account: their good will, their mistakes, their guilt, their disasters—even when (what may often seem to them impossible) they try to add contrition to the account. The sum doesn’t work, and they can’t see how God might fit in as an extra item that would make the income and expenditure balance. Then this person gives themselves over—with their life’s irreconcilable balance—to God, or (to put it at once more and less accurately) to the hope of a final reconciliation of their existence, of a kind that cannot be calculated, in which precisely the One whom we call God dwells. In trust and hope they let go of their opaque, unbalanced existence; they do not even know how this miracle occurs that they cannot enjoy and take to themselves as their own self-attained possession. . . . Here is someone who discovers that they can forgive though they receive no reward for it. . . . Here is someone who tries to love God although from God’s silent past-all-graspsness

no answer of love seems to come back. . . . Here is someone who does their duty where they seem only to be able to do it with the burning feeling that they are really denying, exterminating themselves, where they seem only able to do it by doing something terribly stupid that no one will thank anyone for. Here is a person who is really good to someone from whom no echo of understanding and thankfulness is heard in return—then the goodness is not even repaid by the feeling of having been selfless, noble, and so on. Here is someone who is silent although they could defend himself, although they are being unjustly treated. . . . Here someone is obedient, not because they must and if they don't they'll get into trouble, but simply because of that mysterious, silent reality past all grasp we call God and God's will.²³

Without contesting the dynamic subtleties of these examples—whether and in what degree some at least might be questioned in regard to unconscious motivations that would suggest masochistic and narcissistic components—we would have to remark on the sense in which all of these examples would strike the practising psychoanalyst as reflecting familiar themes and falling well within the scope of recognisable human motivations. The analyst would tend to look to unconscious strata of motivation, whereas Rahner is concerned only with conscious and manifest content. The point of emphasis is that these instances of the experience of the Spirit in Rahner's terms are simultaneously reflective of ordinary human capacity. I would add that there is plenty of room for endorsing this principle of integral action of nature and grace as proposed in the Ignatian paradox in the clinical interaction with patients in the analytic setting. Even in that highly secularised and medicalised context, the hand of the Lord may play a role in our best efforts, just as we, in our humble role as healers or

²³ Karl Rahner, 'Experience of the Spirit' (1977), reproduced in *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality*, edited by Karl Lehmann and Albert Raffelt (London: SCM Press, 1985 [1982]), pp. 63-70, here pp. 67-68, published translation heavily revised.



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counsellors, may play a part in the drama of divine and human interaction.²⁴

However one resonates with these themes, my reading of Ignatius locates him in a transitional phase, as though his thinking was rooted in classical Thomistic doctrine whereas the dynamism of his spirit and inspiration pointed more toward the world of modernity that was only beginning to emerge in his day. The motifs of service and love find a more compatible resonance in the modern context, even given the degree of subjectivisation and humanisation the ideas of God and of his love may have undergone. But Ignatius allowed little room for illusion—his God could not serve as any kind of opiate and basis for illusions of the betterment of the human condition. The vision called for the realisation of Christ's kingdom in this world—and to this extent it carried with it elements of a vision of a more hopeful, even millennialist, future as embodied in the triumph of the kingdom of Christ. But the vehicle lies in the human response to divine initiatives, in devotion to the cause of Christ and self-immolating service—not in any transforming action of God exclusive of human participation and cooperation. The theme echoes the Ignatian paradox—we depend totally on God and his sustaining grace for any effectiveness or achievement, but we act as though the outcome was totally dependent on our own initiative and effort.

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²⁴ See my tentative exploration of these issues in W. W. Meissner, 'So Help Me God! Do I Help God or Does God Help Me?' in *Does God Help? Developmental and Clinical Aspects of Religious Belief*, edited by Salman Akhtar and Henri Parens (Northvale, NJ, and London: Jason Aronson, 2001), pp. 75-126.

DEPRESSION AND SPIRITUAL DESOLATION

Brigitte-Violaine Aufauvre

OUR INTERIOR LIVES ARE LARGELY HIDDEN from us. It follows that it is not always obvious how we should respond to what we find ourselves experiencing. Any spiritual director with Ignatian training wants to ensure that the person to whom they are listening comes to recognise what is at the root of their life-experience. These days there are very many who label as 'depression' what is really just weariness, exhaustion or overwork. Similarly, it happens that many others label as 'spiritual desolation' what is simply disappointment regarding an idealized spiritual life, and only sometimes true depression.

These confusions arise because the Christian spiritual life, while having its own reality, occurs in and through the human faculties. If we are to avoid such confusions, we need some minimum criteria for distinguishing between spiritual desolation and depression. One resource that helps us is the Rules for Discernment given in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, who has bequeathed to us an invaluable little treatise on spiritual desolation. Another resource is the essay 'Mourning and Melancholia' in Freud's *On Metapsychology*,¹ where Freud tells us what characterizes a true depression. As a Freudian psychoanalyst and a disciple of Ignatius, I will try to draw out in this article some of the criteria that allow spiritual directors to distinguish spiritual desolation from depression. Three case studies will help us.

A Person in Desolation: Florence

Florence talks nostalgically about the time of her conversion: 'I was given to taste the word of God and to be nourished by it every day'. She

¹ (London: Penguin, 1984 [1917, 1915]).

remembers her daily life at that time, when she fulfilled her tasks as a mother under God's gaze, and experiencing God's presence. One question constantly comes to her lips: 'How could the inner joy that I was experiencing have disappeared? I have not only lost that path of happiness, I have even lost myself.' Indeed, a completely different state has followed that blessed time. Florence states: 'I hardly pray at all any more, and I don't understand why I no longer have the courage to go to the Eucharist, which for me was bread for the journey. Anyway, the Lord has left my house, and I am in despair about it. Also, I no longer have the heart to perform my household chores. . . . Painting is the only activity where I can find myself. In fact, it is my own kind of prayer, since I have decided to make an offering of it to Christ.'

But the memory of that time of conversion was stronger than everything else, so much so that Florence sought out a spiritual director. Reviewing her experience allowed her to realise that she was living out certain characteristics of the spiritual desolation described by Ignatius:

- Desolation comes after spiritual consolation, and is everything that is its contrary. There is no doubt that Florence experienced an authentic spiritual consolation. She is disconcerted by the contrast between her present state and that of the blessed time when, as she puts it, she knew an inner joy and when she was being given to love 'in the Creator of all things' (Exx 316).
- The disappearance of the felt effects of consolation leads to a real darkness of soul. Florence does not understand what has happened to her; it is as though she has gone blind, and she says she is 'lost'.
- Her faculties are disturbed and in turmoil. Cognitively, she misinterprets what has happened to her ('the Lord has left my house'); her sensitivity is heightened by the loss and causes her to become centred on herself ('painting is the only activity where I can find myself'); her will has become weaker ('I hardly pray at all any more', 'I haven't the heart to perform my household chores').

- ‘The soul is completely listless, tepid and as though separated from its Creator and Lord.’ (Exx 317) Florence no longer has the courage to go to Mass.
- ‘In time of desolation, it is chiefly the evil spirit who guides and counsels us.’ (Exx 318) Florence no longer prays and adopts deceptive thoughts as her own: ‘The Lord has left my house.’ She has succumbed to temptation.

A Person in Depression: Peter

Peter is a student who is very involved in scouting. The team of head scouts that he supervises sees in him the authority that they need, so much so that in October new responsibilities are offered to him. He makes a request for spiritual direction, because, as he says: ‘I can’t get to the point of making a decision’. At the time of the direction, Peter seems disturbed, and very quickly turns the conversation to what is tormenting him. He had failed his physics examination in June, and the incessant brooding on this failure during the summer had, according to him, caused him to lose sleep. Falling asleep is still a problem; getting up in the morning is even worse.

However, paradoxically, it is not the failure itself that seems to be touching him directly, but the supposed disappointment of his parents. Peter says that his father regards him as useless, although he shows him deep respect on many occasions. Moreover, though Peter’s story is marked by self-reproach, there is little shame in it. Finally, a question emerges: ‘I’m so incapacitated, how could I take on more important responsibilities?’ At the same time, Peter incessantly repeats that he has but one desire: to run away from all responsibility, all relationships. But he immediately adds every time: ‘And yet, I do pray, because I always have confidence in God. But it’s useless to pray to the Lord to give me his light. I don’t see clearly with it any more. That’s why I am knocking at the door of a servant of God like you, and hoping for God’s light to come from you.’

The story provokes a question: has Peter knocked at the right door? The truth is that in some of the elements contained in his account, we find the characteristics of certain depressions:

- A *triggering event*: his failure sets off in Peter a profound psychological disturbance, without it being possible to establish a causal connection.
- A *contradiction* which raises a difficult question: how can Peter be so convinced of his father's disappointment, and at the same time be able to acknowledge the esteem that the latter has many times expressed for him?
- A *lowering* of his self-esteem.
- *Insomnia* indicating an anguish on which he has no grip.
- A *loss of interest* in the outside world: responsibilities and relationships have lost all their attraction for Peter.

The spiritual director notices that Peter's torments are caused above all by his relations with others and with himself, but do not in any way weaken his confidence in God. He is still praying. Moreover, when that prayer gives him no clarity he is coming to place his trust in a servant of God. The content of his thoughts does not lead back to events, to concrete or precise realities, but seems largely to derive from his imagination.

A Person in Desolation and Depression

Edmund, a priest of about 40, is considering asking his bishop to relieve him of certain responsibilities. 'I've been keeping them at arm's length for several months.' Edmund's director was not surprised by this: their recent conversations had been marked by a recurring complaint on his part. 'For me, all activity is like trying to lift a mountain. It is only out of faithfulness to my priesthood that I get up in the morning. I have to celebrate the Eucharist from 7.30 a.m. Though "celebrate" is a pretty big word, and I can't even manage to prepare a brief commentary on the day's gospel any more. In any case, am I worthy at this point to celebrate the Eucharist, I who no longer have a taste for the Word of God? My parishioners expect from me an expression of faith, but have I still got any faith? I am at the bottom of a quagmire, and it's no good for me to pray; God doesn't grant my prayers. Because of that I have got to the point of not being able to trust God any more. Speaking of God's love to my parishioners sounds like hypocrisy. My priesthood used to give meaning to my life, but, today, it doesn't mean anything to me.' At the heart of all this, another request is heard: 'All this struggle is exhausting

me, I spend hours slumped in an armchair, unable to do anything; it would be better for me to be completely relieved of everything and go away for a rest.'

The depressive state of this priest is obvious:

- A *profoundly painful mood*: 'a recurring complaint'.
- The *inability to choose* new areas of interest: 'It would be better for me to be completely relieved of everything'.
- An *inhibition*: 'I spend hours slumped in an armchair, unable to do anything'.

But there is more to it than depression. Edmund presents, in fact, some traits characteristic of a state of *spiritual desolation*:

- The feeling that *he no longer has faith or hope*. It is thus really his Christian spiritual life, the free gift of a relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, that seems to have been attacked at the root. The person who welcomed this gift and responded to a personal call has come to doubt it: 'Have I still got any faith?'
- *False thoughts* concerning the celebration of the Eucharist. False, because, as any priest knows, the validity of this sacrament does not depend on his feeling worthy or unworthy to preside.

Similarities and Differences

It is not easy, even for the person concerned, to distinguish between what derives from a spiritual desolation and what comes from a depression; and one can be suffering from both at the same time. Nevertheless, on the basis of the three situations just described, we can note that these conditions have some traits that are similar, and some that are truly different. First the similarities:

- The complaint refers to *past experience*: by contrast, current experience is presented as affectively unsatisfactory, tedious, painful.
- The faculties of the will are weakened; those of the understanding are *operating inappropriately*.

- A whole dynamism of life and of interest in the outside world seems to have *run down*.

But then we also have criteria for distinguishing the two states. In someone living in *spiritual desolation*:

- The complaint refers chiefly to the person's relationship *with God*.
- The focus of the problem is on *how the effects of consolation have disappeared*.
- The faculties are working in a *distorted* way.
- The root cause is a *temptation* to which the person has more or less succumbed.

In a person who is *depressed*:

- The complaint revolves around the image that they more or less consciously have *of themselves*, or around the image that they think others have of them, or around both.
- The focus of the problem is *puzzling*, and attempts to locate and describe it are not convincing, even for the person concerned.
- The faculties are to a greater or lesser extent *inhibited*.
- The root cause lies in *unconscious processes*.

Two Types of Listening

Spiritual Listening

Ignatian spiritual directors base their listening on the following:

- The gift of discernment and the art of accompaniment, which they develop principally through their knowledge of the Rules for Discernment in the *Spiritual Exercises*.
- An unwavering assurance of the Holy Spirit's presence and action in the soul of the directee.
- Familiarity with Scripture, intimacy with Christ, and knowledge of the paths of the Christian spiritual life.

Psychoanalytic Listening

Psychoanalysts base their listening on the following:

- Knowledge and professional training.
- The conviction that, if repression excludes from the conscious mind a certain number of images and affects, these are not simple static elements buried in the unconscious. They are symptoms freighted with the conflicting intentions and drives that lie at their source. They represent provisional and unstable compromise solutions, perhaps waiting to be developed or reconfigured.
- A familiarity with the ins and outs of the transference and counter-transference relationship—the space where the particular unknowns of a psychoanalytic cure are played out.

Thus, the listening of an Ignatian spiritual director is based on faith and a tradition, whereas that of the psychoanalyst is based on scientific competence. This article is concerned only with spiritual accompaniment, whether of a person in desolation or in depression, or in both at the same time. We will therefore now develop what is appropriate for each of these types of accompaniment.

Accompanying a Person in Spiritual Desolation

When listening to a person who is clearly living through spiritual desolation, the conduct of the director is clearly indicated in the Rules for Discernment presented by St. Ignatius:

- Assisting the person to *recognise in themselves* certain features of desolation, as Ignatius names them in Exx 317 of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Thus, Florence will become aware that she is living ‘everything the contrary of’ the spiritual consolation that was given her at the time of her conversion. The director also affirms that she has a real spiritual life, a living relationship with the Lord.
- Inviting the person to remain *patient*, because this time will not last if the person takes ‘unremitting action against such desolation’ (Exx 321).

- Seeking with the person the *cause* of this desolation. Florence is lost when faced with how the felt effects of consolation have disappeared. Of the three main causes presented by Ignatius, she will recognise that this desolation allows her to realise what she is worth and how far she will go 'in serving and praising God without so much pay in consolations and increased graces' (Exx 322).
- Recognising the *work of the enemy* of human nature. Florence has been deceived by his suggestion, because she says, 'The Lord has left my house', but this deception is thwarted, because she has entrusted herself 'to another spiritual person who is acquainted with his trickery and malice' (Exx 326).
- Emphasizing the *freedom* that she has, by considering with her 'how the Lord has left her to her natural powers' so that she may resist the enemy, for she can do this 'with the divine aid, which always remains with her, even though she does not clearly perceive it' (Exx 320). The memory of the inner joy experienced at the time of her conversion has not enclosed Florence inside herself, because, through grace, she was driven to request spiritual direction.

Directing a Person in Depression

Any director listening to the plaintive story of a person trying to communicate their psychological suffering is careful not to interrupt. This attitude of profound respect allows them to detect in the story certain elements which help them to note that the person is not experiencing spiritual desolation. Thus their conduct will consist of:

- Assuring the person that their suffering is *being heard*. Thus Peter has lost sleep, he is haunted by the supposed disappointment of his parents, he devalues himself. . . . And affirming that none of this allows the conclusion that the suffering described has a spiritual origin.
- Being careful *not to give advice* about this psychological suffering, because what led to the depression is not within the realm of spiritual direction.

- Helping the person to notice that their spiritual life is in no way altered by this suffering. Thus Peter's director would affirm Peter's great faith. Not only does Peter affirm that he prays and preserves great trust in God, but also, faced with what he experiences as silence from God, he does not hesitate to come knocking at the door of God's servant. The director will also emphasize that, even if Peter cannot come to a decision, he is still motivated by charity: he remains attentive to the request that has been made of him.
- Suggesting that the person consult a psychotherapist who has the skill to help them. Peter's insomnia should be taken seriously. He is being rendered relatively powerless by the incessant brooding on his failure. . . . All of the content of Peter's story gives good reason to conclude that the suffering he is experiencing is of a psychological nature.
- Considering with the person how they can continue to nourish their spiritual life. In Peter's case, this will mean looking at how to maintain his prayer-life without its being adversely influenced by the fact that he says he has not received the light he is hoping for.

Directing a Person in Both Depression and Desolation

This direction is more delicate. It is important to be clear on where one is, so as to avoid serious error.

In the first place, the person should be helped to recognise what in their complaint indicates *suffering of a psychological nature*. For Edmund, all activity is 'like trying to lift a mountain', and he is spending hours slumped in an armchair. But this should not be understood as the avoidance and refusal of any effort, as a symptom of laziness. What he presents is a sign of an interior blockage over which he does not have much power. It is a matter of common sense to make him understand that this will not be relieved by spiritual direction, but through psychotherapeutic intervention.

In the second place, the person should be encouraged to face their desolation. For this is possible, despite their depression. The gift of grace received at baptism cannot be destroyed by a bad physical or

psychological condition. The director will therefore be concerned with the following:

- Emphasizing all that indicates an *authentic spiritual life* in the person. Edmund is continuing to celebrate the Eucharist and to pray, difficult as this may be for him. In the most essential, he is faithful.
- *Naming the temptation* to which the person has succumbed. Here, the priest has allowed himself to be deceived by false thoughts and to be influenced by the feeling that he might have lost his faith.
- Inviting the person to *fight against the temptation*, at the same time as helping them to recognise that they are depressed. Thus Edmund was invited to make an act of faith, and did so freely. He resolved to kneel before his crucifix every evening. In the following weeks, his union with Christ was shown by a profound peace, on which the symptoms of his depressive condition had no hold. This peace came from outside; it came from God.

A Final Thought

Psychology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis provide much insight into the self. But spiritual directors need not be expert in these matters. They provide a service which is distinctively their own. They must persevere with integrity at their own proper task: that of 'helping people to recognise themselves as both graced and sinful at the same time, receiving their lives from God and yet evading God'.²

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² Odilon de Varine in *La Croix* (27 October 2001). This present article was first published in the January 2003 number of *Christus*, and is translated with the Editor's kind permission.

TRANSCENDENCE, RESISTANCE AND THE DRAMA OF THE EXERCISES

William A. Barry

GIVING THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES TO ANOTHER over a thirty-day period is a challenge, a challenge of which Ignatius himself, it seems, was aware. In the *Constitutions*, after noting that scholastics who have experienced the Exercises themselves 'should get practice in giving' them to others, he goes on to write:

They could begin by giving the Exercises to persons with whom less is risked, and consulting about their method of procedure with someone more experienced, noting well what he finds more appropriate and what less so.¹

Ignatius was aware of the dangers of allowing amateurs to use this instrument without the help of a 'supervisor'.

Ignatius also seems to have recognised that some directors were better able than others to help people through the Exercises. He was accustomed to say that of the early companions Pierre Favre was the best at giving the Exercises.² In this essay I want to look with the lens of the psychologist at the dynamic interplay of actors that constitutes the drama of the Spiritual Exercises.³

¹*Constitutions* IV.8.5 [408, 409].

² The source for this comment, cited in Mary Purcell, *The Quiet Companion* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970), on p. 43, is Luis Gonçalves da Câmara's *Memoriale* (MHSJ FN 1, p. 658). An English translation of this text has been prepared in Oxford by Alex Eaglestone, and moves towards its publication are under way.

³ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach focused my attention on this dramatic nature in 'Discourse on Exercises and Co-Workers', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, 33/1 (no. 99, 2002), pp. 25-34. At the outset Kolvenbach writes of four actors: God and Ignatius, the one who gives and the one who makes the Exercises. I would prefer to view Ignatius' role as the author of the play and would add one further actor, 'the enemy of human nature' (Exx 7.2).

***Ignatius expects
dynamic tension
during the
Exercises***

The experience of the Exercises is dramatic in form and includes at least four actors: God, the exercitant, the director,⁴ and 'the enemy of human nature'. Any drama worthy of the name is fuelled by dynamic tensions between the characters. To recognise that the experience of the Exercises is dynamic in nature, we need only to remind ourselves of the sixth Annotation. This counsels directors to be concerned if they perceive that 'no spiritual movements, such as consolations or desolations, come to the soul of the one who is exercising themselves, and that they are not being moved by different spirits' (Exx 6.1-2). Clearly Ignatius expects dynamic tensions during the Exercises. But Ignatius wants the director to stay out of the principal action of the drama as far as this is possible, in order that the creator may 'act immediately with the creature, and the creature with its Creator and Lord' (Exx 15.5-6).

Still, directors necessarily play a part in this drama. The Annotations expect that directors will intervene in the drama unfolding during the Exercises. Thus they are expected to be in a dynamic relationship not only with the exercitant, but also with God and with the enemy of human nature.

The 'Contract' and 'Working Alliance'

In psychological circles, the agreement made between counsellors and clients is called the 'contract'. The two parties agree at the beginning on the purpose of their meetings, on how often they will meet, and on aspects of their relationship such as confidentiality and fees. With this 'contract' they begin to establish a 'working alliance'. Clients come to counsellors because they sense that something is wrong with their lives, and because they hope that these meetings will help them to live in more integrated and less self-defeating ways. Counsellors ally themselves with their clients' desire for a less divided self. In the process of setting up this 'contract' and 'working alliance', both parties are made aware that the work will be difficult and often painful, because the clients have developed their self-defeating patterns of behaviour in order to make sense of a dangerous world. They will not

⁴ For the sake of simplicity I will use 'director' rather than Ignatius' more cumbersome 'the one who gives the Exercises', and 'exercitant' rather than 'the one who makes the Exercises'.

give up these patterns without a fight. So counsellors ally themselves with desires that will necessarily arouse resistance in clients. A strong 'working alliance' is essential at the beginning of the relationship, so that it can be appealed to in times of such resistance.

When people come to make the Spiritual Exercises, they and their directors need to establish an analogous 'contract' and 'working alliance'. Both need to agree on the purposes of their time together, on how often they will meet, on what they will discuss, on what the exercitant will be expected to do prior to each meeting, on the role of the director, and on matters of confidentiality and fees (if fees are in order). In this preliminary discussion they will be establishing a 'working alliance'.

What is the nature of this 'alliance'? The director, I believe, makes a working alliance not only with the exercitant, but also with God, specifically with God's indwelling Spirit, who works to draw each human being into a harmonious relationship of friendship with God, a friendship that leads to the developing of harmonious relationships with all of God's creatures.⁵ The director and exercitant agree that they will work together so that God can free the exercitant from inordinate attachments and thus enable the exercitant to live freely in harmony with God's project or dream for the world, a dream that includes the actions of the exercitant. In making this alliance, the director helps the exercitant to realise that there will be turmoil and resistance during their time together.

Given the nature of this 'working alliance', some preliminary requirements for directors become clearer. Directors need to have a relatively well-developed relationship with God themselves, so that they know what God wants and how God acts and is experienced. They need to be freed by God from some of their more egregious inordinate attachments that could get in the way of their giving of the Exercises. They need to know from experience, in other words, the saving power of God and the desire of God for friendship. Since they are making an alliance with God's Spirit indwelling in directees, they need an experiential knowledge of the ways of the Spirit. The more

⁵ It may well be that secular counsellors who ally themselves with the desire for wholeness in their clients are, unwittingly in most cases to be sure, allying themselves with the indwelling Spirit. See William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1982), pp. 138-140.

developed their own relationship with God, the freer they are, and the more helpful they will be to exercitants.

They also need to know from experience how resistant they themselves can be to the promptings of the Spirit, how persistent the Spirit is at trying to overcome the resistance, and how clever the enemy of human nature is at fostering such resistance. In other words, they will need to have experiential knowledge of the discernment of spirits.

‘Resistance’

In counselling and psychotherapy ‘resistance’ refers to all the ways of avoiding therapeutic change. Therapeutic growth requires the change of psychic structures that were developed to manage great anxiety; facing the possibility of such a change reproduces the anxiety, and clients try to avoid such anxiety at all costs. In such circumstances clients will only remain in therapy or counselling if the ‘working alliance’ is strong—in other words, only if there is a strong trust in the counsellor and a strong desire to move beyond the self-defeating behaviours that brought them into counselling in the first place.

In the course of making the Spiritual Exercises exercitants will experience similar resistances. Ignatius expects as much. They enter this drama in order to develop a closer relationship with God and to attune their lives more closely with God’s dream or project in this world. But they do not enter the drama without impediments to such a closer relationship with God.

All of us develop psychic structures that help us make sense of our world. Among the most important of these structures are those that help us make sense of our relationships with ourselves, with important others and with God.⁶ These structures are learned ways of patterning our relationships with others. Since they begin developing at birth or soon after, they are freighted with the accumulated experiences of our lifetimes with significant other people and with God. With these structures⁷ we meet new situations in our lives, and they colour our experience of these new situations.

⁶ These structures are discussed in psychoanalytic circles in terms of ‘object relations’.

⁷ One could use the term ‘images’ to denote these structures, but that term carries the connotation of conscious and developed pictures of oneself, others or God. What I am describing here are not so

Consider instant likes and dislikes, for example. Such instant reactions occur because we assimilate the new person or situation to a pattern developed earlier in life; we transfer the old pattern onto the new person. We can learn to differentiate this new person from the past person or situation if we are willing and able to stay in the new situation long enough to experience the new person as different from the past person.

We have similar structures that pattern our relationship with God, patterns that begin to develop very early in life and govern our approach to God as we begin the Exercises. Just as we need to allow new people to teach us that they are different from what we expect if we want to develop healthy relationships with them, so too we need to allow God to teach us new patterns of relating to God. For this very purpose we enter upon the Exercises. But the patterns we have of relating to God resist change. Many people have not allowed their relationship with God to develop as they have allowed other relationships to develop. Since these patterns of relating with God develop as ways of making sense of our presence in this world, they ward off existential anxiety, anxiety before the ephemeral nature of life itself. People may consciously want to develop a more mature relationship with God, but to do so brings them into a situation that threatens these 'world-ordering' patterns. Without knowing why, they will resist the changes required by a new experience of God.

***People resist
the changes
required by a
new experience
of God***

In addition to these relatively unconscious sources of resistance exercitants will encounter more conscious ones. Soon after entering upon the Exercises, they ask God to reveal sinful patterns that hinder them from living out God's dream. As they become aware of these patterns, they may realise that God wants them to look at attachments that have a strong hold on them, and they will try to avoid such attention. Later in the Exercises, the cost of discipleship may lead to resistance to knowing Jesus more intimately. The very process of engaging in these Exercises will bring resistance to the fore in much the same way as engaging in the process of psychotherapy does.

much pictures as the psychic structures to which we assimilate new experience. For the most part these structures operate without conscious awareness. We only become aware of their presence when we reflect on experiences that disturb our ordinary way of acting.

How will resistance show itself? It varies with each person, of course, but one of the clearest is the lack of 'spiritual movements' (Exx 6.1). Engaging in a real relationship with God will never be boring. When the conversations between director and exercitant become boring, then directors can suspect that resistance is at work. That is when they need to inquire about the exercitant's daily order, fidelity to prayer, and so on. But I would like to focus our attention on another way that resistance shows itself, in the relationship with the director.

Transference

In psychoanalytically oriented counselling the main line of resistance to therapeutic change comes through distortions of the relationship with the therapist. Instead of feeling involved in a 'working alliance' with the therapist, the client begins to have feelings and thoughts that get in the way of this alliance. Sometimes these feelings and thoughts are 'positive', such as a strong attraction towards the therapist, or even love for them; at other times they are 'negative', such as a strong dislike or fear of the therapist. The therapist is treated as though he or she were a loved or feared important person from the past. Such reactions are called 'transference' and distort the 'working alliance' that has led to effective therapeutic work up to that point. Instead of focusing on their self-defeating behaviour and its origins and effects, clients now focus on the therapist in either a love- or a hate-relationship. Psychoanalytic therapy now focuses on helping the client to examine these distortions in order to see how such distortions in real life have led to the self-defeating behaviour that brought the client into therapy in the first place.⁸

In psychoanalysis not only is transference expected to occur, but its appearance is fostered by many of the arrangements of the therapy itself, such as the frequency of meetings (four to five times a week), the position of the client (on a couch), the position of the analyst (behind the couch), and the neutral attitude of the analyst (like a 'blank screen'). These arrangements and the intimate nature of the

⁸ For a more complete explanation of the concept of transference in psychoanalysis see Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, pp. 158-161.

conversations lead to the eruption in the therapeutic session of the very attitudes and behaviours that have been self-defeating in life.

Directors of the Spiritual Exercises try to help directees develop more healthy ways of relating to God, but they do not foster the development of transference. The whole purpose of the Exercises is to 'leave the creator to act immediately with the creature, and the creature with its Creator and Lord' (Exx 15.6). Hence, directors eschew arrangements that would make them easy targets for such transference reactions, such as a couch for directees or the adoption of a neutral or 'blank screen' attitude onto which exercitants can project the distortions that colour some of their significant relationships.

Transference reactions, however, can be expected to occur in any helping relationship such as spiritual direction, and these can be used by the directee to resist the development of a more mature relationship with God. In addition, some of the arrangements that have to be made for the sessions in the enclosed thirty-day Exercises very easily arouse transference reactions. For one thing, directors and exercitants meet every day for thirty days in succession, for conversations that can be quite intimate. In addition, the only outlet in most cases for conversation during these days is the session with the director. Finally, directors, no matter how much they try to relate to their directees as one Christian to another, cannot help but be seen as authority figures during these thirty days, and as such they will draw to themselves some of the ambivalence exercitants may have had towards authority figures in the past: parents, teachers, employers, priests and others. While directors may desire that the main action of the drama of these days take place between God and the exercitants, their position in the drama leaves them open to the distortions of transference, and resistance will easily slip into these grooves.

***Transference
can impede
maturity***

How will this type of resistance be recognised? Transference reactions show themselves by their intensity, their ambivalence, and their inappropriateness. Exercitants may show a positive transference by taking an intense interest in the life of the director, and asking personal questions that have little to do with the matter at hand. They may show a negative transference by a sudden coolness and wariness in speaking of their experiences with the director. The clear indication that these are transference reactions will be that they divert the conversation away from what is happening during the prayer sessions



of the previous day. The enemy of human nature could not find a better means to slow down or even derail progress toward a more mature relationship with God. Whether the transference reaction is positive or negative, the exercitant may spend hours ruminating about the director instead of communing with God.

An example may help. Years ago, when I first directed the Exercises in an enclosed setting, one exercitant remained somewhat distant and aloof throughout the entire period of thirty days. Only later did it come out that on the first night at the retreat house he had felt trapped in his room, a circumstance that brought him back to the time in his earlier life when he was locked in his orphanage room at night. The whole retreat, it turns out, was coloured by this reaction transferred from the past. I was quite inexperienced at the time and did not know how to help him talk about his obvious unease with me and with the situation. Here is a clear case of a transference reaction to the whole situation of the retreat. No doubt this reaction became a powerful vehicle for resistance to new initiatives by God during this retreat.

How can directors deal with transference reactions? For one thing, we need to remind ourselves that such reactions reveal the vulnerability of exercitants during the Exercises. Resistance is to be expected and it will, in all likelihood, take the form of a distortion of the reality of the director. Such reactions are not a personal affront to

the director; they indicate that something dynamic is happening, and are a cause for rejoicing, even if they make the director's job more challenging. Positive transference reactions may be missed, at least in the beginning, because directors are human and enjoy being the object of positive thoughts and feelings. But these, too, can become challenging when they become intense, and directees make demands on directors' emotional investment in them.

Negative transference reactions are, at first, more difficult for directors because all of us are aware of our shortcomings and prone to become defensive about them. So questions such as 'How many retreats have you directed anyway?' or implied criticisms such as 'My spiritual director doesn't ask as many questions as you do' may hit a vulnerable spot. Moreover, exercitants during a period of thirty days get to know directors' foibles and shortcomings. When resistance to God's initiative arises, they can use this knowledge, perhaps unconsciously, as a weapon of resistance to strike close to the bone. But directors need to keep in mind what their job is and what they undertook when they entered upon a 'working alliance' with this exercitant. Positive or negative transference reactions towards directors, even if uncomfortable, are a sign that the dynamic of the Exercises is working.

But we still must answer the question of how to respond to these transference reactions, which can be quite personal and challenging. It makes no sense to attack the reactions directly with such remarks as 'You're treating me as though I were your mother' or 'I'm just the target of your anger because you're angry with God'. Such reactions tend to feed into the distortion, because the director is here taking on the role of the all-knowing authority figure. Nor is it helpful to try to force the exercitant back to talking about the experience of prayer if the relationship between director and exercitant itself is the problem for the exercitant at this moment.

Directors need to address the issue of their relationship with the exercitant when it becomes clear that transference reactions have become the vehicle of resistance to a new initiative from God. I could have been more helpful to the exercitant mentioned earlier had I focused on the unease I picked up. I might have tried something like this: 'I sense that you feel ill at ease; is there something troubling you?' or 'You seem on edge when you're with me. Am I correct?' Such remarks might have opened the door for him to talk about his

experience of feeling trapped in his room and eventually about his relationship to me. At least they might have given him the idea that he could talk about troubling issues in the situation of the retreat.

If the transference reactions are positive and show themselves by excessive interest in the director, the director could open up the door by saying something like this: 'I know that you are interested in me, but it seems that we have got away from the usual topic of our sessions together, namely what is happening in your relationship with God. Let's focus our attention on what happened when you prayed yesterday and see where that leads.' This kind of question invites the exercitant to recall the 'working alliance' and also brings the conversation back to the matter of what is going on during the day. The response may reveal that thoughts about the director are often intruding into the time of prayer. Then the director can help the exercitant to take a look at this pattern and to try to find out when it began. In this way they may find that the intrusive thoughts about the director began when a particularly troubling aspect of the relationship with God came up in prayer.

Pursuing the matter in this way reminds us of Ignatius' advice in the fifth and sixth Rules for the Discernment of Spirits appropriate for the Second Week. In these rules Ignatius points out that we need to attend to the whole course of a series of thoughts and reactions. Anything that leads eventually to disturbance in the relationship with God probably comes from the bad spirit. Once we have discovered his influence, Ignatius writes:

. . . it helps the person who was tempted by him to look immediately at the course of the good thoughts which he brought them at their beginning, and how little by little he aimed at making them descend from the spiritual sweetness and joy in which they were, so far as to bring them to his depraved intention; in order that with this experience, known and noted, the person may be able to guard for the future against his usual deceits. (Exx 334.2-4)

The bad spirit often uses transference reactions, I believe, to deflect exercitants from their purpose during the Exercises. Noting the deflection and helping exercitants to examine the course of their thoughts and reactions in a non-judgmental manner brings them back to the reality of the relationship with God, and also reminds them that

the relationship with their directors is at the service of this primary relationship.

Supervision

Directors of the full Spiritual Exercises are engaged in challenging and demanding work. They are asked to play a role that facilitates the primary relationship between God and the exercitant. In the process, they find themselves confronting their own relationship with God, their own resistance to that relationship, their own struggles with the enemy of human nature, and their own psychological dynamics. This work brings their whole person into play, not just their intellectual knowledge.

In the field of psychotherapy, it was when the whole person of the therapist came to be seen as the therapeutic vehicle that the process of supervision was developed, as a way of assisting therapists to become more effective helpers. Supervision focuses attention not on clients but on the therapists themselves, and on their experience of engaging in psychotherapy. Supervisors do not ordinarily give advice about how to treat the client; rather they try to help therapists understand their own experience in order to become better therapists. Supervisors act toward the therapists whom they supervise in a way analogous to the way therapists act in the helping relationship. Just as the therapist focuses on the experience of the client in order to help the client become a more mature and free person, so the supervisor focuses on the therapist's experience as a therapist in order to help the therapist become a better professional helper.

***Supervision
focuses not on
exercitants, but
on what directors
themselves are
experiencing***

Supervision in the context of the Spiritual Exercises works analogously. The supervisor or supervisory group focuses on the experience of the director in directing others through the Exercises. Supervisors are not so much interested in what exercitants experience as in what their directors experience while conversing with exercitants. This will reveal the personal strengths and weaknesses of the directors so that they can become more professional and helpful directors of the Spiritual Exercises. If we had been using supervision when I first gave the full Spiritual Exercises, the supervisors would have asked me to examine my feelings of unease as I directed the man mentioned earlier. In this way they would have helped me to notice that something was

awry in our relationship. I would not have had to reveal anything about the exercitant except the unease I experienced as I listened to him. Once I understood my unease I could have taken some steps to discuss with the exercitant what seemed to be happening between us and to invite him to look at what was going on in him. Supervision need not involve a breach of confidentiality.

In the course of supervision directors may discover weaknesses in their own psychological dynamics. They may find themselves caught in a relationship of what is called countertransference⁹ with a directee, for example, and recognise the need to engage in some psychological counselling of their own. They may also discover that areas of trouble in their own relationship with God hinder their effectiveness as directors. In this case, they will need to do some work on this relationship and take it up with their own spiritual directors. The point is that supervision aims to help directors to become better professional directors of the Spiritual Exercises. This means engaging in whatever is needed in order to make oneself a better instrument in God's hands, a better actor in the drama of the Spiritual Exercises. Supervision of the kind proposed may be the best way in our time to implement Ignatius' advice in the *Constitutions* for helping novice directors become more professional.¹⁰

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⁹ That is, the director begins to act toward the exercitant on the basis of an interpersonal pattern from the past. For a discussion of countertransference in spiritual direction see Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, pp. 170-174.

¹⁰ For more on supervision see Maureen Conroy, *Looking into the Well: Supervision of Spiritual Directors* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1995).

PSYCHOLOGY, NARRATIVE AND MINISTERIAL FORMATION

Howard J. Gray

SPIRITUALITY IS FUNDAMENTALLY NARRATIVE, the story of God's walking with a person through his or her life. A good narrative presents characters who are themselves revelations.¹ In theological terms, I am trying to point to the light of grace, the ability that some people possess to show God's presence within themselves and to illuminate how God is present in the world around them. This revelatory ability is different both from moral posing and from facile aestheticism. It is a gift that the bearers frequently do not realise they carry, a gift of being in grace—not a state you are in, but a presence you possess. It is what Ignatius Loyola termed 'good example'.

Assessment and the Evolving Narrative

This essay focuses on how this 'good example' can be nurtured, and on how psychological resources enrich and complement the wisdom we gain from our spiritual traditions and from our immediate intuitions. Firstly it will look at the role of psychological screening within the overall assessment of candidates to apostolic service. Then its focus will broaden: it will look at how the individual's life narrative or relational story—the material on which any competent psychological assessment concentrates—lies at the heart of all vocational choice. I link together narrative, character, and psychological screening for

¹ On revelation within history and human relationships, see Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999 [1991]); Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 2000). On good example in Ignatius Loyola, see *Constitutions IV*, Preamble [307]. On narrative and spirituality, see Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). I am deeply grateful to Dr. Donna Markham OP, who, despite a crammed schedule, found time to read and to criticize my draft, helping me reorient what I wanted to say here.

several reasons: telling one's story remains the best way of explaining how God lives within a life; ministry is basically about relationships; and ministerial formation is the guidance of another through developmental stages of personal and professional growth.

I am not a trained psychologist or psychiatrist, though I claim the weary bromide that some of my best friends are both. I am treating this topic as someone long involved in religious and ministerial formation, and as someone increasingly aware that the pastoral survival of the Church depends on a diversified core of professionally and systematically trained ministers, ordained and not ordained, supplemented by part-time adjuncts.

For both these groups training will need to be on-the-job. Thus ministerial formation, whether it takes place in the seminary, or at a formation centre, during a training programme, or through occasional weekend workshops, will increasingly have to be sensitive to, and honour, the one, basic process of life-integration already established in the people who present themselves for ministerial education and formation. The process of incorporation into ministry has to be faithful to a founding and still influential tradition, but it must also be able to adapt to the prior experiences and current time-constraints of those involved. Formation work requires people with three qualities: the ability to illustrate what the mission means; the gift of helping others tell their story in ways that converge with the institution's mission; a level of psychological health sufficient to donate themselves to a work greater than just self-fulfilment.

The Role of Psychological Assessment

Church ministry today—in the parish, retreat or social action centres, schools, or health facilities—has to possess a core of sound leadership. Psychological screening helps ensure the quality of this core leadership. It serves three functions. First, the tests and their interpretation can uncover serious liabilities that inhibit a candidate from functioning peacefully and productively in a work that demands relational skills. For ministerial formation is not therapy; it is a process that presumes healthy people who can give generatively, that is, who can help other people. Ministerial formation presumes a healthy self-identity, a good sense of one's talents and energies, and a basic integration of the ups and downs of life into a realistic view of the world as 'wounded but

worth saving'. These are all common-sense observations about basic psychic health. But to have them confirmed by professionals in clinical psychology assures those in charge of formation that they are working with psycho-socially well people. This in turn means that the formation programme has a better chance of concentrating on mission and not on psychic maintenance.

Secondly, psychological assessment points up possible future problems, especially in the areas of sexuality, of relationships with authority, of anger, of fear, and of social adaptability.

The compassionate heart does not just happen; it is usually banged into shape by the blows that come from all parts of our personal history. In ministerial formation we deal with basically sound people who nonetheless are struggling with their liabilities, recognising them, and trying not to let those liabilities hamper their ministry. Leaders in ministry and in ministerial formation should be able to help people cope with or work through their personal problems. For example, people coping well with their problems are able to face down the wave of self-defence that arises when someone in authority questions or confronts them, and to move beyond the memory of their less than perfect past encounters with authority in family, church, or school. No one likes to be corrected, but correction is a part of good formation. Mentors are not cheerleaders. They are guides and teachers, that is, people meant to show the way and to assist in the development of the knowledge, insight, and skills necessary to proceed along that way. We learn by mistakes, but someone has to tell us when we make mistakes. Authority goes with the territory of formation leadership. It should be exercised with graciousness, adapted to the people with whom one works, and open to suggestions and even to correction itself.

Thirdly, initial psychological screening can alert formation leaders to areas of underdevelopment in candidates for ministry. For example, if the candidate is fundamentally healthy, but the psychologist notes a need for greater psychosexual integration, this helps those in leadership to make provision for addressing this need in the context of the formation process.

Psychological assessment of candidates for a life of ministry as a priest, or religious, or lay minister, is an essential part of the discernment about their readiness to relate to and help other people

The compassionate heart does not just happen; it is banged into shape by the blows that come from our history

professionally. My experience has been that the closer leaders work with psychological consultants, the better the formation programme. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the psychological consultant comes to understand the spirit of the community or the apostolic work better, and can therefore come to a greater intuitive understanding of the fit between a candidate and the community or work. Secondly, the leaders of the formation process develop a more discerning skill, a more sophisticated ability to read the distinctions between psychological development, graced insights, and vocational direction. Let me give a fictional example, based on experience with a wide range of people, of what I mean.²

A Case Study

A Jesuit novice in his second year of the two-year novitiate programme has moved peacefully enough through the stages of formal training, but he finds that the first stages of any new apostolic work are mildly traumatic for him. Leaving the familiar and going into the unknown or the less well known triggers anxiety and worry. He is not dysfunctional but he is hampered. In time he adapts well, once he gets settled into the new work and new circumstances; people really like him, and he finally does some excellent work.

As the novice director, I reviewed his initial psychological interpretations, noting that he was seen to be someone who could find change difficult. During my own spiritual guidance of this young man, he told me that the death of his mother when he was fifteen left a void in his heart, and that for some time he feared being left alone. Despite these feelings of loss and fears of abandonment, he studied abroad during his college years, and joined the Jesuit International Volunteer Corps after graduation, working in Tanzania for two years. I noted, too, how in his thirty-day retreat he went through a period of desolation, tempted to fear that Christ would leave him if he did not live his Jesuit life perfectly. Gradually, we worked through this and he came, in a moment of real freedom, to see that this temptation to perfectionism

² Two more detailed analyses of the interplay between psychology and formation can be found in Robert H. Albers, 'Unconditional Surrender', and Howard J. Gray, 'Beyond Abstinence and Toward Spiritual Integration', both in *Addiction and Spirituality: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, edited by Oliver J. Morgan and Merle Jordan (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999), pp. 139-156 and pp. 215-233.

was giving no room for Christ to forgive him; he was behaving as if a close relationship with Christ was dependent on his achievement and good behaviour. I noted, too, from his relationships with the other novices, that he was someone the other men trusted and opened up to, that he kept confidences well, and that he had a fund of common sense.

When we spoke about the direction of his future life as a Jesuit, he had a mature grasp of his talents and acknowledged his own ambitions, most of which centred on returning to Africa. His prayer life was disciplined but not rigid. Using the recurring liturgical readings of the Church had helped him to unite the gospels to the Eucharist. The words of Christ, 'Do this in memory of me', had brought together much of his life. 'I want to remember my mother', he said, 'but not because I want to bring her back—I did pray like that once—but to appreciate what her love has meant, to recognise how important it is for us to give people good memories. I want to be that kind of person. I want to imitate what my mother did for me. I want to be a good memory for the people I will serve.'

This Jesuit novice suffered some trauma from the death of his mother. This may contribute to the initial feelings of abandonment whenever he leaves something familiar and comfortable and walks into a new situation. But it has not crippled him; he takes up new tasks, adjusts, and grows. There is no pattern of self-pity or self-dramatization. He is socially at ease and a figure of trust and friendship to his companions. His prayer has been touched by the loss of his mother, but it has developed as a kind of self-donation. It has not become self-indulgence in grief or loss. In short, as his formation leader, I see this young man developing but also carrying his own fragility. The need to adjust to a recurring sense of loss may be with him all through his life. However, as long as he can recognise this need as one of the defining features of his psycho-religious development, as an important part of his narrative, as an opportunity to appreciate the power of human love more keenly, and as an apostolic window onto the losses that others feel, then he will give that good example that his order's founder emphasized.

No one can predict how this young Jesuit novice will mature. Over time he could encounter a number of setbacks that challenge his vocation. He may feel an emptiness in Jesuit community life that accentuates, deepens, and extends his feelings of abandonment beyond

new circumstances to all circumstances. Gradually, he may succumb to a self-pity and self-absorption that sap his apostolic zeal and his ability to relate to other people in self-donation. Over time he could become someone who chooses his work primarily out of the assurance it gives him that he is admired, needed, honoured, loved. He could come to the conviction that the loneliness of his heart can only be satisfied by the love of another person and decide to leave the Jesuits. Psychological screening gives no assurance that candidates for apostolic mission will persevere in a vocational choice. It can tell us only that they were free enough to make such a choice, that they showed hope of corresponding with God's graces, and that they could be reasonably happy and effective in doing the mission of the community, the diocese, or the institution.

In short, we should expect help from psychological screening because it calls attention to developmental factors that affect prayer, community life, and ongoing discernment. But we also live in times when new circumstances create different psychological problems. For example, older candidates will enter religious communities and diocesan seminaries, sometimes with long-standing personal and professional autonomies that make formation more problematic. There are also fewer cultural and familial supports for the explicitly religious vocation today. Religious communities and seminaries are generally smaller than they were ten or fifteen years ago. There is a legitimate and widespread suspicion about the integrity of people who claim celibacy and consecrated chastity as their way of life. All these factors urge us to look for a high level of psychological maturity, even in comparison with what we required just a few years ago. Screening, therefore, remains important. Moreover, the increase in lay leadership throughout the ministries of the Church seems to me to demand a concomitant effort to bring psychological screening into the formation of lay ministers.

Ministry, Psychology and Narrative

Now let me turn to the second concern of this essay, the ramifications of psychological insights beyond the initial screening of candidates. Many religious and clerical professionals have benefited from psychological consultation during crisis periods of their lives. Perhaps there is an issue here about privilege: sometimes it has been said that

only clerics, religious, and the economically well off can afford psychiatry and clinical psychology. But people from any segment of modern society—rich or poor, men or women, gay or straight, mainstream or marginal—can and should benefit from psychological help.

My immediate concern here is that the riches of psychological wisdom should enter into the apostolic lives of all those who minister in the Church. How do people become effective in ministry? At the outset of this essay I suggested that the following factors were important: one's narrative, one's emerging sense of self or character, and one's ability to discern where one is growing with the Lord. Let me begin with my own experience of a vocational discernment process in which the three components played a pivotal role.

Another Case Study

A few years ago Lilly Endowment offered a grant to investigate the theological foundations of vocations. Boston College was one of many Christian foundations, both Catholic and Protestant, to participate in this programme. It developed an institutional strategy to facilitate vocational discernment, and it continues today to help students make more reflective and grace-grounded life choices.³ In the course of the year-long study, those of us who guided the university-wide enterprise found that there was a number of ways to help students to examine their choices. But we also discovered that in this process the active presence of faculty and professional staff was equally important. In short, we had discovered that in vocational discernment there has to be something of a community ethos of vocational reflection. That discovery led us to investigate more closely what brings about such an ethos.

We began by formulating a descriptive definition of vocation: vocation emerges when one finds joy in using one's talents to serve others. 'Joy in using one's talents to serve others' may not initially seem sufficiently religious until one asks a further set of questions about this joy. Where does this joy come from? How did I receive these talents?

³ Boston College Vice President for University Mission and Ministry, Joseph A. Appleyard gives details of the history and development of this programme in *Intersections*, a brochure available from Boston College, Service Building 108, Chestnut Hill, Ma 02467-3814, USA.

Who will show me how to serve? Questions about vocation, about what a call means, lead into the transcendental questions of the ultimate where, how and who.

In his perceptive article, 'The Discipline of Building Character', Joseph L. Badaracco Jr makes a distinction between an ethical decision and a defining moment. An ethical decision focuses on choosing between two decisions, one we know to be right and the other we know to be wrong. A defining moment moves more deeply into the self, asking us to choose among two or more ideals in which we believe.⁴ Vocational choices emerge from questions about our defining moments.

Telling one's story in terms of the defining moments inevitably led participants to ask about the people in the narrative. Who were the people who brought me joy, who recognised my talents, who showed me how to serve? Conversely, who were the people who brought me heartache or caused me sadness? Who were the people who ignored or belittled or misused my talents? Who were the people who willingly accepted service, but never seemed to give it? It is essential to review important relationships, to acknowledge the presence of two drives—one expressing gratitude for relationships that lead to life and to love, another in search of the need for forgiveness for a life enfeebled and for a love denied or betrayed. These are also the questions on which any competent depth-psychological screening of candidates for ministry focuses.

Finally, from this awareness of joy in service and from the sense of personal history that this joy provoked, there emerged a third key element in vocation: the dreams, ambitions, and hopes inspiring and driving one's life and work. This third aspect of the vocation discernment process might be called 'emerging horizons'.

Ongoing Vocational Discernment

The basic structure of helping people to narrate their defining moments and then within that personal history to identify their

⁴ Joseph L. Badaracco Jr, 'The Discipline of Building Character', in *Harvard Business Review on Leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1998), pp. 89-113.



He appeared to the Virgin Mary. This, although it is not said in Scripture, is included in saying that he appeared to so many others, because scripture supposes that we have understanding.

Exx 299.2

The Great Mother is the origin of all life, to which one must return to be born anew. . . We must return to the earth on which we stand, to the unconscious, the mother from which our consciousness has come, to integrate ourselves in new life. . . . Thus, writes Jung in a letter, Christ's split is healed at Easter, the conflict resolved; and he recovers his perfect life when he is buried again in the womb of the virginal mother.

Kenneth L. Becker, Unlikely Companions, p. 264

defining relationships and to own the personal goals that inspire and guide their lives is essential to the discernment and development of vocation. What has been said here applied to a whole university community; hence it also applies to vocational discernment within priesthood, religious life, and lay ministry. The process involves our continually raising questions about affectivity, about spiritual movements, and stages of development. What are the healthy and unhealthy influences in the lives of students and professionals today? What have our relationships meant for us? How have they shaped us? How can our memories help us in our process of self-discovery? How is God's grace at work in these discernments?

Of course spirituality, particularly Ignatian spirituality, influenced the Boston College process. However, when we tried to translate Ignatian ideas into contemporary language for people unfamiliar with that tradition, we used parallels from psychology more often than not. Take the very idea of 'call', as an inspiration from God that leads a man or woman to a certain choice in life. We could not talk about call without referring to the psychological impact of interiority, the significance of recurring attractions, the interplay between freedom and choice, the difference between ethical demand and obsession, and the distinction between prayer and reflective interior dialogue with oneself. It would have been hard for those of us involved in the Boston College vocation project to do what we had to do without some common bonding in values and process. That bond was, more often than not, our understanding of interpersonal psychology. Our emerging inspirational bond was the realisation that the spirituality which had formed many of us was compatible with the idea of God working relationally within the lives of all people—young and old, male and female, student and professor and staff person. In short, we discovered, experientially and as a team, how much psychology and spirituality complemented one another and how the structure of our vocational process depended on both.

Spirituality and Psychology in Partnership

This essay has tried to lay out the complementary roles of spirituality and psychology in vocation. I take this partnership as a given, and as one that must deepen and develop. I have also laid out a practical ministerial paradigm that works in a variety of formation settings

(diocesan seminaries, religious life, professional ministerial schools, internship for new faculty and staff, *ad hoc* parish training) and within a variety of timeframes (from religious life formation programmes lasting a number of years to short-term programmes incorporating newly hired faculty and staff into the mission of a Jesuit University). This ministerial paradigm involves an evolving sense of narrative: a growing ability to read one's life in terms of its defining moments, its defining relationships, and its emerging ministerial horizons. This paradigm works at the outset of a life of service and throughout a life of service. It 'works' so pervasively because it relies on developmental realities for its data and on relational language for its interpretation, two realities that inhabit every narration. It works because it helps to form a community whose members read within each other's stories the presence of mystery, of those unplanned moments of grace and insight which help a person realise that there is something in life that only *they* can do. It forms a community that reaches out to younger generations still trying to make sense out of their gifts and talents, still sorting out strengths and weaknesses, still learning to read the crucial difference between ambition and ability. It helps all concerned recognise the enduring power of mentors, people who showed us how to use strength and power and how to endure suffering and frustration. Within the life of religious experience and spirituality, we need to read the direction of our souls.

***Unplanned
moments of
grace help a
person realise
there is something
only they
can do***

Ignatian Resonances

I opened this essay by suggesting that there was a connection between personal narrative, the power of example in apostolic formation and mission, and the role psychology can play in orienting this process and in guiding its development. How does all this integrate into Ignatian spirituality? I want to emphasize three areas where this process resonates with the Ignatian tradition.

First, the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises does not primarily reveal God to me or me to myself, but rather uncovers the quality of relationship, the graced mutuality that characterizes how God and I stand before one another. The naming of God throughout the Exercises is always relational: 'Creator and Lord', 'Christ our Lord',

‘The Three Divine Persons looking down upon the face and circuit of the world’. In other words, God is God-for-us; and the dynamic of the Exercises leads us to ask ourselves how we will be before God, culminating in the Election, where a man or woman answers that question by establishing a special relationship to the God who has called. This relationship is progressive, not static: it unfolds within a life-narrative of discipleship, within a permanent walking with the Lord.

Second, the relationship to God *within* the Exercises seems almost relentless in its quiet insistence on the fruit that will come only *after* the Exercises. It is not contemplation as such that is central, but action: the way one will live because of one’s prayer and contemplation. In the Exercises one prays to live by doing what Christ did. Consequently, the Contemplation to Attain Love is not only the climax of the retreat experience but also the orientation towards relational apostolic work. A man or woman sees that God operates as one who gives, who dwells, who labours, who reorients; and, because that person is in relation to this kind of God, they can find God only in seeing the divine as the enduring mentor, teaching a person how to live their narrative in a Godly way. One leaves the Exercises, then, in expectation: expectation that one’s relational life-narrative will continue to develop.

Third, the Ignatian Examen of consciousness can be seen as a reflection on one’s own narrative and relational history. The survey the Examen offers is not simply a set of questions about how one has performed but rather a contemplative assessment of one’s developing relationship with God. The norm for the direction of that relationship is the actions that one claims as life-giving, forgiving, and loving or as withdrawn, angry, and indifferent. The relationship is secure: God is always there. But the relationship is also always developing: people are always in process, writing the stories that become their spiritual personalities through the life-decisions they take.

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VOCATION AND MOTIVATION

The Theories of Luigi Rulla

Peter Egenolf

THE LONG YEARS OF RESEARCH undertaken by Luigi Rulla (1922-2002) and his colleagues into the psychology of vocation culminated in two volumes, published in 1986 and 1989, entitled *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*.¹ Rulla, who was both a Jesuit and a psychiatrist, began his research as early as the 1960s, with empirical studies on the psycho-social processes underlying decisions to embrace a priestly or religious vocation, to persevere in it, or to abandon it. He did empirical tests and conducted depth-psychological interviews with US American religious and seminarians, and was able to show that the decisions regarding entry, perseverance and leaving were significantly influenced by unconscious motives. The experimental results were published in the 1970s, along with the theories Rulla developed on their basis about the psycho-social dynamics of Christian vocation.²

From 1971 onwards, Rulla worked at the Institute for Psychology at the Gregorian University. With his colleagues he sought to develop still further the theoretical basis of his research, to extend the range of empirical data on which it drew, and to apply it within the formation practice of the time. Out of this work, the two volumes of *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation* grew. Here, the psychological focus of the earlier writings was complemented by both philosophical and theological approaches. The result was a truly interdisciplinary study yielding a comprehensive theory of human personality. Nevertheless, despite the broader disciplinary and methodological basis, the central focus of the research remained the formation of priests and religious.

¹ These were published in Rome by the Gregorian University Press. The first bore Rulla's name alone, and carried the subtitle *Interdisciplinary Bases*; the second was co-authored by Rulla, Joyce Riddick, and Franco Imoda, and was called *Existential Confirmation*.

² Luigi M. Rulla, *Depth Psychology and Vocation: A Psychological Perspective* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1971); Luigi M. Rulla, Joyce Riddick and Franco Imoda, *Entering and Leaving Vocation: Intrapsychic Dynamics* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1976).

The empirical data brought together in the second volume are about these groups, almost without exception, and the practical or pastoral conclusions drawn are about seminaries and houses of religious formation.

If we are to understand Rulla, therefore, we need to bear in mind what the situation of priests and religious has been since the 1960s. Vatican II's documents on priestly formation (*Optatam totius*) and on religious life (*Perfectae caritatis*) encouraged styles of formation that were more strongly pastoral, taking their cue more from the needs of the world. The practical consequence was a sharp rupture with older traditions and symbols. Plausibility structures that were previously very important for the way priests and religious constructed their reality just fell away. The result was that many priests and religious became significantly unsettled both in their faith and in their vocation, thereby showing that the values they were embodying had not really been fully internalised. They were being supported by outward mechanisms rather than by any deeply rooted inner convictions.³ If social pressure arose from outside, therefore, these people were especially vulnerable; and this was a time of powerful movements of protest and emancipation, challenging accepted structures and traditions in society as a whole, and encouraging self-development and individual freedom. The ecclesiastical changes, therefore, combined with the atmosphere of protest in society at large, led to sharp tensions within the Church, to an ideological rejection of tradition and authority, and to crises of identity among priests and religious. These people were asking disturbed questions about their role: some redoubled the search for external confirmation, while others simply left the institution.

How was it that this phenomenon of crisis in vocation and faith could arise? How was it to be addressed? Rulla was trying to answer these questions with his research. In what follows I shall begin by showing how Rulla understands Christian vocation within a wider picture of what it is to be human. Then I shall look at how his vision differs from that offered by other schools of psychology, before summarising his empirical and theoretical description of the psychological dynamics underlying spiritual motivation. This will lead into an account of his recommendations regarding formation today. At

³ See *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, vol. 2, pp. 11-21.

the end, I will name a few points that seem to me important to bear in mind when interpreting and evaluating Rulla's approach.⁴

Christian Vocation and the Nature of Humanity

Rulla defines Christian vocation as:

. . . the call of God to the human person so that the latter might co-operate as a partner in the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31; Ezekiel 36:26) which God willed to establish between Himself and man [sic].⁵

This call is an unmerited gift; moreover, humans can accept the call only because of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit within them. Nevertheless, God's call touches two fundamental features of human nature. In the first place, human beings have a capacity to orient themselves to God, to go beyond themselves. This fundamental capacity within the human person for God-centredness and self-transcendence is the basis not only of the divine call, but also of an innate sense of duty: the human duty towards objective values beyond the self as these values confront people during their lives. Encounter with these values brings with it a sense of 'you must', enjoining people to live according to moral and religious values, and not just to strive for natural goods (economic, political, social and so on).⁶ In the light of this, we can begin to understand a second definition of vocation offered by Rulla:

***Human beings
have a
capacity for
self-transcendence***

Every Christian is called to be a witness to a love that is self-transcendent and centred on God, in other words to take as the focus of his or her life the self-transcendent virtues which were revealed and lived by Christ. The essence of Christian vocation is to be transformed in Christ, so that one internalises his virtues to

⁴ For a fuller discussion, see my *Identitätsfindung im Ordensleben: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit L. M. Rulla über die spirituelle und psychosoziale Dynamik in der Ausbildung zum Ordensleben* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000).

⁵ *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, vol. 1, p. 11.

⁶ It should be noted, even here, that Rulla does not really think the relationship between 'religious values' and 'natural goods' through. His language often implies a crude contrast between them, in a way quite inconsistent with a gospel of incarnation and grace. This weakness in his theory leads to problematic consequences, as we shall see in the latter part of this article.

the point of being able to say, 'it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me'.⁷

But then we need to bear in mind the other basic human characteristic which Rulla names. Humanity is not simply endowed with the capacity for theocentric self-transcendence and with the quality of freedom that this entails; it is also in many ways finite, limited. And these limitations can restrict to a greater or lesser extent human freedom for self-transcendence towards God. Thus Christian vocation occurs within a fundamental tension or dialectic, shaped by two opposing tendencies: a capacity for self-transcendence fostering human partnership with God, and a limitation on freedom that can impair this partnership.

Psychology and the Christian Vision of Humanity

The programmes of formation that were set in place after Vatican II did not, for Rulla, pay enough attention to these limitations. Rulla is concerned to put forward an account of Christian vocation that does justice to both sides of the tension: to what a person *should be* and what they *actually are*. Thus Rulla presents his account as a mediating position between two extremes, both of which are in danger of oversimplifying what a human being is. There can be an abstract over-spiritualism, which simply assumes that growth in priestly and religious vocation is guaranteed and can be trusted to look after itself. This leaves candidates too much dependent on their own resources: those in charge of formation simply make the external arrangements, otherwise remaining in the background so that the candidates have complete freedom to respond to God's call. This model has a very high view of God's call, but it does not reckon sufficiently with how the human freedom to respond is a restricted one. The candidates are not offered enough help in overcoming their psychical restrictions, or in their growth in the freedom to internalise faith-values.

There are other models that take their lead from modern psychology, especially from the humanistic schools (Rogers, Maslow and the like). Reacting against an earlier approach that was rather impersonal and legalistic, these models stress interpersonal

⁷ *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, vol. 2, p. 11, quoting Galatians 2:20.

relationships, life in common, and personal development. On this model again, formation personnel are non-directive, but for a different reason. In these models, relationships and community life easily become ends in themselves. People are oriented towards individualistic self-fulfilment rather than to the transcendence of self proper to Christian vocation. In the face of such developments, church authorities often become very suspicious of psycho-social approaches to formation, and may indeed block them completely—something which then removes the great potential for good that psychological help can foster.

If psychology is to be used fruitfully in Christian formation, it is of central importance—as Rulla sees the matter—that an operative model of the human person be established which can incorporate what psychology has to offer while at the same time honouring the theological reality of Christian vocation. When the use of psychological approaches leads to negative consequences, this is often because people have taken on board, along with the psychological method, a secularist vision of the human person underlying it, often only unconsciously. For Rulla, therefore, it is important that we pay attention to the differences between the Christian vision of humanity and the implicit visions of humanity informing humanistic psychologies. The Christian vocation to theocentric self-transcendence is in no way reconcilable with accounts of humanity which link its capacities of self-transcendence simply to personal fulfilment, or to social and political ends, rather than to an ultimate *communio* with God. It is quite decisive for Rulla's approach, therefore, that right from the outset he reckons—even in psychological research—with an orientation of the human person to ethical and religious values, to a theocentric self-transcendence.

It follows that a proper study of Christian vocation cannot draw on other human sciences or psychologies without critically scrutinising the assumptions underlying them. This is not just a matter of avoiding theories that are openly antagonistic to the Christian vision of humanity. We need also to be critical about theories where the opposition is only implicit, or where the question is left open. For Rulla, these accounts too, even in areas which seem only peripheral or methodological, can convey, subtly and implicitly, a vision of humanity which conflicts with the reality of Christian vocation. Rulla cites Carl

Psychology must be used in a way that honours the theological reality of Christian vocation

Rogers' psychology, with its stress on a positive self-image and its absolute refusal to judge the self. Again, Erik Erikson's developmental psychology and Eric Berne's transactional analysis do not include any direct reference to the goal of human life. But implicitly they convey a sense of the ideal in terms of 'fulfilment' or 'self-development'. This rather excludes the sense of 'ought' proper to theocentric self-transcendence, and tends to strengthen a secularist sense of subjective autonomy.

Thus there is, for Rulla, an enormous ambivalence surrounding the use of all these approaches and methods in Christian formation:

Clearly, any vocational formation based on such presuppositions can be of some help in favouring growth in the natural sphere of human development, but may easily become an obstacle to development in the direction of theocentric self-transcendence, while the latter is basic to Christian vocation.⁸

A comprehensive view of Christian vocation must be informed by an adequately Christian account of what it is to be human. Only then will it become clear that Christian formation is not governed simply by what humans *want to be* or are *capable of being*. It must also be striving for the values and ideals specific to Christian vocation, in other words for what people *ought to be*. There is of course plenty of scope for changing structures, norms, roles and the like, but the essential, immutable values of Revelation must not be touched.

At the same time, an adequate theory of Christian vocation must reckon with another reality besides that of sovereign grace. Our freedom to orientate ourselves to God is limited to varying degrees and in different ways. This conflict within human freedom manifests itself in how our capacity for internalising Christian values is limited, and in our consequent vulnerability to social pressure and external influence. How are we to explain the psychological dynamics of this restricted freedom?

⁸ *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, vol. 1, p. 22.

The Psychological Dynamics of Spiritual Motivation

The empirical researches of Rulla and his collaborators in the Gregorian University's Institute for Psychology have shown that the spiritual motivation and development of priests and religious are decisively shaped by unconscious psychological dynamics. Even when a person is orienting themselves fully—in so far as their motivation is conscious—towards the values and ideals of religious life, their real relationships and behaviour may be determined by unconscious needs and attitudes in conflict with these values. There can be mismatches between the conscious ideal-ego and the unconscious real-ego. People might have inferiority feelings, or repressed sexual or aggressive impulses, arising largely from buried or unintegrated childhood experiences. In later life, these find expression in excessive needs for security, harmony, affirmation, recognition or emotional attention. What otherwise appear as particular problems such as difficulties in prayer or permanent conflict within communities may have their origins here.

Conscious and unconscious motivations in conflict

Rulla sets out the range of human needs in terms of how their content and function relates to the internalisation of religious and ethical values: are the needs in conflict with this internalisation, or are they neutral? This theoretical basis enabled Rulla to conduct empirical research into religious motivation, and to explore the consistencies and inconsistencies between the unconscious real-ego and the conscious ideal-ego. He investigated 946 subjects, using various structured tests and depth-psychological interviews that addressed both conscious and unconscious elements in the personality. By using various tests on the same subject, and by investigating different sorts of subject in different situations over a significant time-span, Rulla was able to arrive at secure empirical conclusions. The generalisations drawn from these could very probably be regarded as valid.

According to Rulla's researches, between 60% and 80% of priests and religious are influenced by unconscious inconsistencies. Typical manifestations of this are stereotypical styles of behaviour inappropriate to the real situation; uncontrolled projections; the inability to change one's behaviour even given good insight into the situation and a ready will. These restrictions on human maturity impede spiritual growth and apostolic effectiveness. If these unconscious inconsistencies are not worked through and overcome,

then it does not matter how intensive a spiritual, pastoral and communitarian formation the seminary or the religious order offers: it will not make any significant difference to the person's human and spiritual maturity. Quite the contrary: the discovery that 'it doesn't make any difference' leads often enough to embitterment, hopelessness and cynicism. The person feels alienated from their vocation: either they leave (with or without entering into a relationship), or else they organize their lives—including their vocation—around their needs. Neither of these is really a solution: the person is not working through their problems, but pushing them away and repressing them,

Rulla's research also showed that this dynamic of unconscious inconsistencies in priestly and religious vocations could in principle occur in any social or ecclesial context. The changes introduced by Vatican II make no difference here: the problems raised by unconscious inconsistency are still there despite all these changes. The ideals and symbols of priestly and religious life may have changed, but the danger remains that the motivation of young priests and religious, unconsciously, is fixed regressively on these ideals, rather than on the actual values of religious life. The roles adopted by priests and religious may have changed, but the danger remains that their motivation remains more strongly linked to the roles as such than to the values that those roles are supposed to promote. Respect for the observance of the Rule may have vanished; people may be assigning much more significance to interpersonal relations; people are no longer identifying themselves so much with the institution and its norms as with specific individuals, groups and tasks. But the danger still remains that even these enlightened forms of identification are somehow not right. These too might be traceable back to inconsistent unconscious motives such as the wish for security or affirmation rather than to the values of religious life.

Contemporary Formation

Given this background, Rulla suggests that priestly and religious formation should contain a further important component, over and above the internalisation of the values associated with religious life: people's capacities should be extended and deepened through their working through their psychological blocks. By working through their unconscious inconsistencies, a person will be helped to grow in inner

freedom and maturity, to accept and internalise the values of religious life, or alternatively to choose another form of Christian vocation, this time in maturity. If this inner freedom and maturity are not there, young priests and religious will simply identify themselves with their vocational ideals, and adapt to conventional expectations and customs, but without really internalising the values of religious life in a process of spiritual growth.

If this growth is to be promoted, formation cannot simply concern itself with conscious convictions and responsible behaviour, because the most important obstacles to a person's spiritual growth arise from unconscious dynamics. Consciously lived spirituality and freely chosen self-discipline do not go far enough. If formation is to promote this kind of maturity, it must draw on methods and ideas from the realm of psychology.

Formation is not only supposed to convey a sense of what Christian vocation means, but also to enable people to grow in the inner freedom that will enable them to live that vocation more fully and wholeheartedly. Experience has shown that it is not enough to change external structures, because this does not pay sufficient attention to the structural complexities of the human person. Priestly and religious formation needs to be based on a comprehensive account of Christian vocation so that it can proceed more realistically and therefore more effectively. These ideas need to inform formation planning, the structuring and evaluation of particular exercises in formation, and above all personal spiritual direction, which is the most important means promoting growth in Christian vocation.

**Formation
should promote
freedom**

Clearly this vision of formation makes great demands on formation personnel. Formation must be neither authoritarian nor permissive. It needs to avoid both reductionism regarding the spiritual life and naivety regarding psychological reality. It must provide real help towards maturity and integration of the unconscious. Thus anyone working in formation needs to be themselves a mature person, a vibrant model, a competent director. They need themselves to have internalised the values of the gospel that they are trying to convey. They need, too, a practical training that will enable them to help candidates grow in their own inner freedom. In this context, Rulla claims that there has been a serious lack in the systematic and practical training of formation personnel, compared—say—to the enormous effort put into intellectual formation. He therefore suggests

that we need to think in terms of two new kinds of formation personnel.

The first kind (novice directors, seminary rectors, spiritual directors and so on) need to be able to recognise every dimension of possible difficulties and problems, both conscious and unconscious. These people need themselves to have received an integrated formation, and to have worked through the inconsistencies in themselves. This will make them capable of avoiding projections, double messages and rigorism, and of promoting mature styles of communication. They will also be able to provide for immature candidates to receive help from specialists.

The second kind of formation personnel will be such specialists. Over and above the capacities of the first kind, these will be able to work through problems arising from unconscious factors in 'vocational growth sessions'. They will be able to support other formation personnel with their specialist knowledge, obviously with all due provision being made for the safeguarding of confidentiality. It will also be helpful if these specialists are themselves priests and religious, who have personal experience of the problems raised by their own ways of life, and who can guarantee the integration between psychological and spiritual direction.

In short, Rulla's *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation* and his other psychological researches have a pastoral purpose. He is trying to render our shared Christian life, and the apostolic mission of the Church and its institutions, more credible and trustworthy. He therefore seeks out some general principles and criteria for an integral human and Christian formation that do justice both to the natural and the supernatural. In psychological terms, he is concerned that people work through their unconscious inconsistencies. In spiritual terms, he is concerned with discernment, with discrimination between spirits—not, however, between virtue and sin (in the style of the First Week of the Ignatian Exercises), but between what is really good and what only appears to be good (as in the Second Week). What he says about formation, and about the training of those in charge, is a response both to the demands of Vatican II and to those of secular culture. If the Church's task is to foster people's freedom, responsibility and

credibility, then ‘more mature subjects will be needed, and more mature formators who can help these subjects become mature’.⁹

Questions Arising

Over the past twenty years, the literature on the psychological dimension of Christian faith and of vocation has grown enormously, and Rulla’s contributions were certainly significant. He was one of the first Roman Catholics active in psychotherapeutic practice to strive towards conceptual clarity and general competence in handling the relationship between theology and psychology, between faith and psychotherapy.

However, closer scrutiny shows that Rulla’s very strengths are also sources of weakness. Critical questions can be asked. I propose to focus on three points: how Rulla sets out the relationship between theology and psychology; the idea of ‘theocentric self-transcendence’; and the so-called ‘structural approach’.

Two Disciplines

Rulla starts from a Christian vision of humanity. He is very keen to distinguish his approach from that of secular psychologies that either deny or bracket any reference to relationship with God. That means, however, that theology provides a set of norms governing the way he uses psychology: psychology becomes a kind of ‘auxiliary discipline’, to be understood and applied only as a source of descriptive empirical data. This understanding has great strengths: theology and psychology are clearly distinguished; the theological approach is taken absolutely seriously, while the psychology guarantees the empirical basis on which everything is done. But the strengths also imply weaknesses: psychology’s own claims to interpret reality are not taken seriously, and not brought into relationship with theology and faith. There is no critical dialogue with theories of personality or development elaborated by psychologists, or with how psychology perceives and interprets social structures—and for that matter Church structures. In such a

⁹ *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, vol. 1, p. 396.

model, perhaps, faith and theology are in the end insulated from the disturbing questions raised by secular theories. But they are also then impoverished, because they lack the stimulus that such theories might bring.

'Theocentric Self-Transcendence'

The point becomes especially evident in connection with self-development. Rulla takes 'theocentric self-transcendence' as the starting-point and as the criterion for an adequate vision of the human person. He criticizes what he sees as the quasi-religious claims made by secular developmental theories. But then, conversely, he runs the risk of contrasting far too blatantly a theological concept like 'theocentric self-transcendence' with psychological categories. Is it really the case that *no* sensible correlation can be drawn between basic Christian ideas and the values of secular psychology? Surely self-expression and self-development can be understood by Christians as thoroughly legitimate if they are seen in the context of the doctrine of creation (and therefore in a real sense—albeit one different from Rulla's—theocentrically). Indeed, these 'secular' values can draw attention to elements of properly Christian tradition that conventional styles of education and formation, fixated as they were on ideals and norms of 'selflessness', rather repressed and neglected. We might think, for example, of healthy self-love: this, in harmony with love of God and love of neighbour, has a place within any mature Christian spirituality; indeed love of God and love of neighbour can only flourish if self-love is present. What, then, is 'theocentric self-transcendence' supposed to be? On what basis do we distinguish it from 'natural self-



transcendence'? When reporting his results, Rulla presents the following as 'self-transcendent' attitudes: self-discipline, humility, observance of rules, and mortification. By contrast, 'self-sacrifice for the sake of a better world', 'doing my duty', and 'serving the community of which I am part' count as natural values!¹⁰ The model of formation with which he is working seems, to put it mildly, one-sided.

The Limitations of a Structural Approach

How far this model of religious life influenced Rulla's therapeutic work is not a question that we can investigate here. It is, however, striking that Rulla's theories are remarkably vague on what 'maturity' and 'immaturity' amount to in practice. One reason for this is that Rulla adopts a 'structural approach', which seems to imply that 'theocentric' and 'natural' versions of transcendence are two wholly separate structures. This does have the advantage that the theological category of relationship with God is taken seriously in empirical research. But Rulla's focus on a proper relationship between the theological and the empirical leads him to neglect issues about the latter. What do 'maturity' and 'immaturity', 'consistency' and 'inconsistency' look like, especially when these realities are also unconscious? Can we make any connections between these categories and particular personality profiles, particular patterns of social or ecclesial socialisation, particular life-events? What effect do Church symbols and roles have on the spiritual growth of the person?

It has to be said, regretfully, that Rulla does not answer these questions, or even pose them. Nevertheless, Rulla has done serious research on the religious aspects of human motivation, and opened up a new set of methodological issues. And for that he must be given credit.

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¹⁰ *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, vol. 2, pp. 408, 413.



These desires were confirmed for him by a visitation as follows: being awake one night, he saw clearly a likeness of Our Lady with the Holy Child Jesus, at the sight of which, for an appreciable time, he received a very extraordinary consolation. He was left so sickened at his whole past life, and especially at matters of the flesh, that . . . he never again had even the slightest complicity in matters of the flesh. On the basis of this effect one can judge that the thing has been of God, although he himself did not venture to define it . . .

Reminiscences, n.10

The vision of Our Lady was accompanied by the near total repression of all sexual impulses and temptations. We know that such repressive barriers are difficult to maintain, and the psychoanalytic eye scans for displacements and derivatives of these thwarted and denied instinctual drives. One path for this sublimated diversion came in the form of the vision of our Lady.

W. W. Meissner, Ignatius of Loyola, pp. 241-242

DAYDREAMING REVISITED

A Psychology for the Examen Explored

Andrew Walker

THE IGNATIAN EXAMEN OF CONSCIENCE draws on ideas that have long been part of the Christian tradition. It is now acknowledged as integral to Ignatian spirituality and to the process of discernment; it has become fashionable to note that it is the style of prayer on which Ignatius insisted most. Of all the forms of prayer presented in the Exercises, the Examen is surely the one most consistent with their purpose and end.

The Examen is inextricably linked in traditional practice with the concept of sin, and continues to be presented in this light in the popular forms of Compline available. Seen then simply as an examination of conscience, it can often be reduced to cataloguing transgressions. George Aschenbrenner's seminal article¹ on the subject moved us forward. It reminded us that the Spanish word *consciencia* could, and perhaps should, be understood as 'consciousness' rather than 'conscience', given the moralistic overtones which this latter word now has.

Aschenbrenner's reworking of the Examen converges with the best insights of contemporary moral theology. Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught us that the central demand of ethics should not turn on the question of how I can do or be good, but rather on 'the reality of the reconciliation of God and humanity brought about through the life, death and resurrection of Christ'.² More recently, the papal encyclical *Veritatis splendor* similarly articulated a context for morality in the nature of the human person and their relationship with God. The Examen can be read in a way that supports this shift from an objective morality of action to an informed subjective morality of person.

¹ George Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', *Review for Religious*, 31 (1972), pp. 14-21.

² Quoted by Edwin Robertson from the new edition of Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* in *The Tablet*, 22 February 2003, pp. 26-27, here p. 27.

Personal unfreedom and inordinate attachment are set within the whole of an individual's relationship with the God of Jesus Christ, incarnate and risen, with the Father prodigal of love. To use the language of the Exercises, we now know that the Examen should always be connected with the First Principle and Foundation. There are links too, of course, between the Examen and the decisions which emerge from the Exercises. As John English has written,

. . . a reliable decision demands closer union with God, and . . . the closer one draws to God, the more often and more stringently God demands decisions in response.³

Nevertheless, the Examen is as much about a more intimate knowledge of self and God and about the growing and deepening relationship between the two as about any particular choice. What God is waiting for is not so much the right conclusion about a practical question as our suppleness in falling into the divine hands so that God can work in us.⁴

The Examen's efficacy depends on its frequency as much as on its accessibility and breadth. Ribadeneira tells us that Ignatius normally used to practise it hourly:

Once the blessed Father met a certain one of our Fathers, and asked him how often he had made his Examen that day. When he said 'seven times, if I am not mistaken', Father replied 'hey—so seldom?'—and this when there was still a good part of the day remaining.⁵

Nevertheless, the Examen has still—in my experience—not really caught on outside certain circles. Its traditional structure can seem cumbersome and off-putting, and its stress on introspection may make its use appear laborious or selfish.⁶ Even as a daily discipline it may not be sufficient in fostering the supple awareness and sensitivity that is

³ *Spiritual Freedom: From an Experience of the Spiritual Exercises to the Art of Spiritual Guidance* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1995 [1973]), p. 18.

⁴ John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, translated by Colm Luibheid and Benedicta Ward (London: SPCK, 1982), p. 244.

⁵ Ribadeneira, in MHSJ FN 2, p. 345.

⁶ Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn and Matthew Linn, *Sleeping With Bread: Holding What Gives You Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), represents a fine attempt to meet these objections.

sought. Perhaps, then, it might be helpful to explore how various schools of modern psychology might interpret the Examen—not simply because of the new insights this might yield, but also as a way of helping us understand what we are doing in the Examen and why we are doing it. Such an account may help us to follow what Joe Veale once memorably summarised as an Ignatian principle: ‘have a contemplative grasp of the end and be flexible in your use of the means’.⁷

Consciousness and Unconsciousness

Even though the Examen is an Examen of Consciousness, the unconscious certainly influences what happens when people make it. There is a tendency to dualism dogging any exploration of unconscious material: those training as spiritual directors, for example, are always asking for greater clarity about the difference between psychology and spirituality, about how spiritual direction differs from counselling or therapy. Some retreatants can see questions about feelings or about the past as intrusive, irrelevant, and inappropriate within the ministry of direction. Yet the unconscious is not just the place where unwanted thoughts, feelings and events get stored. It is also a place of integration. Thomas Merton lamented the widespread neglect of the unconscious in his day, not just for reasons connected with personal development, but also because of how attention to the unconscious brings with it social, theological and communal advantages. The unconscious is like some great underground river within us, at times flowing peaceably, at times a torrent. It can provide life-giving water and life-enhancing power. Its effects are both positive and negative. They can be harnessed creatively, though the prudent will always use caution, remembering how destructive these forces can be. The unconscious is a place of richness and energy.

In the realm of the unconscious, moral presuppositions, tidy divisions, and detailed cognitive maps cease to work in any straightforward way. In his account of the archetype of wholeness in the unconscious, Jung claimed—surely rightly—that it is impossible to

There is a tendency to dualism dogging any exploration of unconscious material

⁷ ‘The First Week: Practical Questions’, *The Way Supplement*, 48 (Autumn 1983), pp. 15-27, here p. 20.

separate the spiritual from the psychological; and were such a separation possible, it would probably be most undesirable.⁸

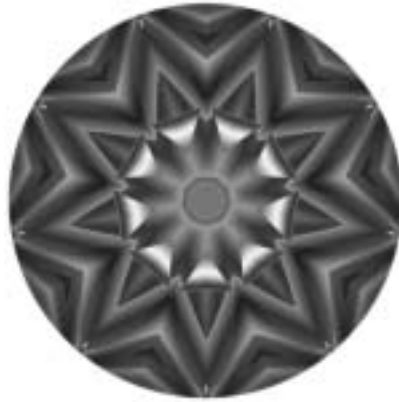
Many languages have developed as ways of articulating the unconscious. I shall draw particularly on transpersonal psychologies, in particular on Psychosynthesis. These are perhaps the approaches which most richly complement a faith perspective on human reality.

Clearly some distinctions are necessary if we are to talk of the value of unconscious material and of how the process of making this material conscious enriches us. Roberto Assagioli, the person whose inspiration did most to develop Psychosynthesis, suggests that there are three levels of unconsciousness.⁹ The middle level is the most accessible; to draw on Assagioli's metaphors, this level immediately surrounds the field of awareness or consciousness itself. The lower level contains the more 'animal', instinctual or darker material; the higher contains unrealised potential and other material that is more positive, though still repressed or suppressed. Higher and lower are equal in all but the nature of their content: they are equally valuable, equally difficult, equally near and far from consciousness itself. But, to repeat, tidy divisions and moral labels rarely work in this realm. Positive qualities can be feared by our conscious self (thus Nelson Mandela's famous speech suggesting that it is our greatness that we fear); so-called negative emotions, properly explored, can be bearers of great gifts (for example the gift of self-value and self-assertion that may lie at the heart of unexpressed rage or anger). Higher and lower unconscious material are always intimately connected and cannot be worked with in isolation. Many a therapist working with childhood trauma can bear witness to a birth of freedom or to a rediscovery of hope or meaning. Many a spiritual director whose mutual exploration of the faith journey with the directee begins to evoke some darker and more uncomfortable emotions can bear witness to this as well.

When material from the higher or lower levels comes into consciousness, our freedom is expanded, and our minds and hearts become more supple. It may be that our consciousness cannot hold the material in a sustained way, and so it returns to unconsciousness.

⁸ This paragraph draws on Judith Reger, 'Dreams in the Spiritual Life', *Human Development*, 18/3 (Fall 1997), p. 44.

⁹ *Psychosynthesis* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 17.



But now perhaps it will no longer be suppressed or repressed, but rather held in the 'middle unconscious', where it is still relatively accessible, just on the boundary of consciousness. The Ignatian Examen gently stimulates the negotiation of unconscious material. It helps us to befriend estranged elements or parts of ourselves, and to reintegrate them.

There are obviously questions to be clarified here about the meaning of 'consciousness'. Transpersonal psychologies generally present human consciousness as a reality with two strands. The first strand could be termed an animal awareness: the neural representation of the world that gives orientation to all animals, and to which they behaviourally adjust. The second strand is specifically human: it involves reflection and language.¹⁰ This sets us apart from the rest of creation. Not only do we know; we know that we know. Consciousness thus involves oscillations: between instinctual awareness and reflectivity; between reflection and articulation; between the content of consciousness and the part that seems to be aware. The different sorts of reflective techniques that have been developed—from Psychosynthesis' Evening Review to the Ignatian Examen—help school these oscillations.

¹⁰ See Zoltan Torey, *The Crucible of Consciousness* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), especially pp. 129-132—though Torey would not agree with my conclusions.

Psychosynthesis names what experiences and mediates these strands the self or I,¹¹ likening it to the conductor of an orchestra. The instruments are all that makes up the content of our experience, conscious and unconscious: body, mind, feelings, the different parts of ourselves, our knowledge, the roles we have taken on board, and so on. The self's role is to be aware, to co-ordinate. How successfully it accomplishes these tasks will depend on its strength, skill and motivation. There are obvious convergences here with Christian uses of the word 'soul'. Central to the self or soul are the faculties of love and will; modern theorists will speak of a link to the Higher or Transpersonal Self, just as medieval writers would use the comparison between the candle and the sun to talk of the soul's relationship to God.

This self or soul needs to be nurtured and shaped because it is always in the process of being formed. Its ability to be aware needs refining; its skill in co-ordination and integration needs fostering. In one sense it is a co-creator. Just as one of the creation accounts in Genesis sees God as brooding over the waters, and then ordering and bringing forth, so the self or soul must order and bring forth the unconscious elements within its own personality. Thus interior entropy is reduced and energy used more creatively: conflictive thoughts are harmonized; meaning is discovered in the chance events of life; there is a reconciliation between one's chosen goals and the natural forces of life.¹² These ideas from the theory of Psychosynthesis can give us insight into what is happening in the different stages of the Examen.

The Stages of the Examen

Celebrating the Present Moment

At the beginning of the Examen we focus, in gratitude and in the presence of our God, on the present. We are making a statement about how God's gifts are present to us *now*, and therefore standing against the tendency to avoid the present, whether by focusing on the past (letting ourselves be distracted by memories or by nostalgia), or by looking towards the future (occupied by hopes and fears which present

¹¹ Piero Ferrucci, *What We May Be: The Vision and Techniques of Psychosynthesis* (Wellingborough: Crucible, 1989 [1982]).

¹² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Evolving Self* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 239

attention will do nothing to change), or by making comparisons with other people or current situations ('if only that were different').

Of course we cannot leave behind the past and future completely. But their value to us at this point is wholly dependent on how they affect the present, on influences that may—at the outset—be unconscious. The German novelist, Bernhard Schlink, has put the point memorably with regard to the past:

If something hurts me, the hurts I suffered back then come back to me, and when I feel guilty, the feelings of guilt return; if I yearn for something today, or feel homesick, I feel the yearnings and homesickness from back then. The geological layers of our lives rest so tightly one on top of the other that we always come up against earlier events in later ones, not as matter that has been fully formed and pushed aside, but absolutely present and alive.¹³

Sometimes an encounter or event will trigger past unresolved material abruptly; at other times the material will come into awareness more gently. Either way we need to trust ourselves and God as we begin this exercise. The gratitude expressed is a sign of the giftedness of time, of the truth that lies beneath the surface of things, and of an offering back of the gift to the giver. Our self or soul holds the conductor's baton: we can begin to pay attention to the music.

Articulating Desire and Disposition

In the second step, we pray for enlightenment, we establish the priority we are giving to the uncovering of meaning. This is both a duty and a joy, a felt want and an injunction to which we commit ourselves. The habitual articulation of this ensures that the practice will endure, even when desire or inclination seem absent or weak. Perhaps, too, we have an inherited disposition towards meaning-making. Anthony Storr writes:

There can be little doubt that humanity is so constituted that we are compelled to seek symbolic solutions and syntheses, and that

¹³ *The Reader*, translated by Carol Brown Janeway (London: Phoenix, 1998 [1995]), p. 215.

this trait originated in an adaptive device which better fitted us to master the world in which we found ourselves.¹⁴

We may trust, too, that our very striving and desiring are borne by the Spirit, drawing us in divine discontent into ever more intense union.

Reviewing the Past

David Levin writes of the soul or self developing through different stages: hearing, skilful hearing, and hearkening.¹⁵ In the regular review of our day fostered by the Ignatian Examen, we reflect on the time just past and thus are brought to a place of listening and seeing with diminished ego. Over time we become more and more able to discriminate, to discern, and our potential as human beings in relation to God becomes ever more liberated.

In the process of reviewing the events, occurrences, encounters and experiences of whatever period of time has been chosen, all the associated feelings, connections, thoughts and deeper feelings become more apparent. There may then emerge an awareness of themes and patterns, of ongoing motives and interests—all the more so if we make this prayer regularly, sustaining the practice of reflection. We can become ever more sensitive to both the positive and the negative forces that lie beneath the surface of things, and to how the Holy Spirit works with us through them both.

Many traditions, including that of Psychosynthesis, attest also to a variation of this review, one that restricts and therefore sharpens the focus. The Ignatian Exercises contain also a Particular Examen, focusing on a particular fault. The principle can be extended. Some years ago, one director of mine noticed an overly self-critical streak in me, and therefore asked me to replace until further notice the General Examen with the question: ‘What three things have I done today that God might want to be grateful to me for?’ A nice example of both the Ignatian principle of *agere contra* in action and a contemporary extension of the Particular Examen.¹⁶

¹⁴ *The Dynamics of Creation* (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 217.

¹⁵ *The Listening Self* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 46-48.

¹⁶ See Exx 13, 24-31, 157.

Whatever the form it takes, this review allows the areas of congruence and consonance to come to the surface as well as any interior dissonance, agitation or disturbance. The review forms the heart of the whole exercise.

Releasing Sorrow and Joy

The fourth stage involves our somehow expressing what the review has touched in us. Because he describes the Examen within the context of the First Week, Ignatius speaks of asking pardon for sins (Exx 43.6), but we can also cite the 'cry of wonder' in the second of the First Week exercises (Exx 60), and perhaps the reflection and drawing profit of the gospel contemplations later. The review, with its insights and increased levels of awareness, may well provoke a strong affective response. Psychodynamically, what may happen is that a surge of energy accompanies the emergence of unconscious material into consciousness, for energy has been invested both in the matter stored and in the act of keeping it stored. Like a kind of childbirth, this will sometimes be messy and not entirely comfortable. The vivifying process 'offers a fuller sense of being alive from moment to moment and this is worth the frequent pain of deeper self awareness'.¹⁷ Pain, guilt and sorrow may be evoked, but always against a background of thanksgiving and hope. These feelings need to be expressed and so released. The soul or self can then appropriate the insights and fruits of the process, while waste or anything toxic will simply be dispersed. Expression becomes a form of purgation.

Orientation and Integration

At the end of the Examen, Ignatius suggests that we 'purpose amendment' with God's grace (Exx 43.7). This final step is essential as a means of grounding the whole experience. It may, as Ignatius suggests, take the form of a resolution or a commitment; it is always a matter of turning attention outwards and to the future. We come more to life through this prayer in order to help others live more fully; our reflection is in the service of our action; as we explore our identity, our choices about how to build the Kingdom in and through all of who we are will be facilitated.

¹⁷ Jerome Sayer, *Daydreaming and Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 261.

Daydreaming

Dreams have always been centrally important in the exploration of the unconscious. But Freud's 'royal road to the unconscious', as he referred to dreams, led to a dark, pessimistic place. Jung's Shadow is a much more positive concept: the 'manure pile' can also be '99% pure gold'. This positive understanding has been taken up and developed by Psychosynthesis.

Daydreams, too, are revealing. The exploration of daydreams was pioneered in the mid-twentieth century by the Frenchman, Robert Desoille, in his concept of the waking dream.¹⁸ In Desoille's approach the patient is guided through an imaginative journey of descent and ascent, itself based on Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but using the individual's own personal unconscious material. An adapted version of the approach is still used by practitioners of Psychosynthesis today, and serves as a means both of diagnosis and of therapy.

We find similar movements of descent and ascent in the Examen. We are moving back temporally over the past day (or whatever the period of time may be), only to re-emerge into the present enlightened and enriched by greater awareness and insight. We are also delving beneath the surface of thoughts, feelings and events in order to touch into the unconscious truths and treasures that are buried within. Then we bring back into consciousness the gold we have discovered. Ultimately, the movement is that of Holy Saturday and the harrowing of hell: the bringing of the gospel to the darkest corners of creation, and the bringing of that darkness into the light. The daydream and the reflections to which it gives rise can thus be both radical and redemptive.

**We are delving
beneath the
surface to touch
into the treasures
buried within**

Courageously Grasping Reality

For Dietrich Bonhoeffer the strictly ethical life needs always to be relativised; even when we have to 'grasp reality courageously' and take hard, ambiguous decisions, our life remains 'wonderfully enfolded by good powers (*von guten Mächten wunderbar geborgen*)'.¹⁹ Hence we can

¹⁸ *Le rêve éveillé en psychothérapie: Essai sur la fonction de régulation de l'inconscient collectif* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1945).

¹⁹ Both quotations come from poems written by Bonhoeffer in the last year of his life.

always move forward in trust and hope, whether in the chaos Bonhoeffer confronted in 1945, or in the ambiguous situations we face today.

There will always be believers who condemn introspection, who are therefore uneasy with the insights of psychology, and who avoid the Examen and similar prayer exercises. But introspection undertaken in faith grounds our experience in those greater good powers and can radically transform our perspective. As Harry Williams reminds us:

. . . theological enquiry is basically related to self-awareness and therefore it involves a process of self-discovery, so that, whatever else theology is, it must in some sense be a theology of the self.²⁰

Given that Christianity proclaims a God whose own self is irrevocably committed to the human, we cannot make a sharp disjunction between what is human and what is divine. What we say about God will have implications for our lives; when we reflect on how we have spent our time, we will always be saying something about God. Thus it is not surprising that there are convergences between the practice of the Ignatian Examen and contemporary transpersonal psychology. Both provide a gateway to unconscious material and an appropriate means whereby that material can be transformed. Both are open to the Spirit's surprises, perhaps coming through the imagination and through our daydreaming. Both draw on ancient spiritual practices of examining our lives in the quest for an integrated humanity, one that recognises the reality of our transpersonal or divine potential. The Examen helps us discern the good forces that are at work in the conscious and unconscious processes of our lives, and to sense how we remain, both individually and corporately, wonderfully enfolded.

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²⁰ H. A. Williams, *True Resurrection* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1983 [1972]), p. ix.



... before, during and after Mass, I felt and saw clearly that Our Lady was very propitious, pleading before the Father. Indeed, during prayers to the Father and the Son, and at His consecration, I could not but feel or see her, as though she was were part or rather portal of the great grace that I could feel in my spirit. At the consecration she showed that her own flesh was in that of her Son.

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... his mystical experiences universally have the quality of wish-fulfilments—like dream experiences reflecting unconscious desires. His visions particularly seemed to offer gratification of narcissistically determined wishes. He wants to be favoured by our Lady, and so she appears to him in an apparition.

W. W. Meissner, To the Greater Glory, p. 603

THE LIMITS OF ADAPTABILITY

The Eighteenth Annotation In Developmental Perspective

Elizabeth Liebert

IN THE CURRENT RENAISSANCE OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES,¹ a variety of adaptations have sprung up in response to varying circumstances and needs. What principles ought to guide such adaptations? Are there limits to these adaptations beyond which they should no longer be called the Spiritual Exercises? Ignatius himself suggested adaptations, particularly in his eighteenth and nineteenth Annotations. The nineteenth Annotation speaks primarily of those people, otherwise suited to the full Exercises as described in the twentieth Annotation, whose circumstances do not permit them to step aside from the ordinary rounds of life in order to devote themselves full time to the Exercises. We can easily imagine those people, and increasingly the Spiritual Exercises according to the nineteenth Annotation are springing up in major urban centres, under the auspices of parishes or universities.

But it is the people envisioned in the eighteenth Annotation that pose more radically the issue of adaptability. These people are not appropriate candidates, by virtue of intelligence, education, disposition, or some other reason, to make the Spiritual Exercises as they are described either in the nineteenth or twentieth Annotations. The eighteenth Annotation, then, points us to a range of test cases regarding the elasticity of the *Spiritual Exercises*.²

¹ This essay originated in a presentation at the 1993 Symposium on Ignatian Spirituality at Loyola House, Guelph, Ontario. It is used with permission.

² Elder Mullan's literal translation of the eighteenth Annotation runs as follows: 'The Spiritual Exercises have to be adapted to the dispositions of the persons who wish to receive them, that is, to their age, education or ability, in order not to give to one who is uneducated or of little intelligence things he cannot easily bear and profit by. Again, that should be given to each one by which, according to his wish to dispose himself, he may be better able to help himself and to profit. So, to him who wants help to be instructed and to come to a certain degree of contentment of soul, can be given

I begin by stating my own position: I have nothing sacred to preserve in the *Spiritual Exercises* and am inclined to be more rather than less free in adapting. At the same time, one ought to know what one is adapting, what its original intent was, how it was likely to have been received in its day, and what kinds of adaptations it has undergone. Is there a danger of ‘adapting’ to the point that one has lost the essence of the *Spiritual Exercises*? How radically should we interpret Ignatius’ eighteenth Annotation? Quite radically, would be my tentative answer. Let me make a few comments by way of setting a context before I turn to developmental psychology.

The Eighteenth Annotation: An Adaptation

The first thing one notices about the eighteenth Annotation is that Ignatius says the *Spiritual Exercises* should be adapted to the disposition of the people who desire to make them, that is, to their age, education and ability.³ Ignatius first makes the case negatively:

In this way someone who is uneducated or has a weak constitution will not be given things he or she cannot well bear or profit from without fatigue.

And then conversely:

Similarly exercitants should be given, each one, as much as they are willing to dispose themselves to receive, for their greater help and progress.

Ignatius goes on to suggest what such an adaptation could look like.

the Particular Examen, and then the General Examen, also, for a half hour in the morning, the Method of Prayer on the Commandments, the Deadly Sins, etc. Let him be recommended also to confess his sins every eight days, and, if he can, to receive the Blessed Sacrament every fifteen days, and better, if he be so moved, every eight. This way is more proper for illiterate or less educated persons. Let each of the Commandments be explained to them; and so of the Deadly Sins, Precepts of the Church, Five Senses and Works of Mercy. So, too, should he who is giving the Exercises observe that he who is receiving them has little ability or little natural capacity, from whom not much fruit is to be hoped, it is more expedient to give him some of these easy Exercises, until he confesses his sins. Then let him be given some Examens of Conscience and some method for going to Confession oftener than was his custom, in order to preserve what he has gained, but let him not go on into the matter of the Election, or into any other Exercises that are outside the First Week, especially when more progress can be made in other persons and there is not time for everything.’

³ In the remainder of the essay, I am following the translation by George E. Ganss in the volume he edited: *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991).

The second thing one notices is that these recommendations—take people where they are, don't give them what they can't succeed in, and do give them all they can do and all they want—are simply principles of good pedagogy. Even when the curriculum is prescribed from the outside, a creative teacher figures out ways to adapt the material for particular students. Likewise, giving students as much as they can do and want to do generates a kind of self-rewarding enthusiasm: 'I can do this; it's fun, it's a challenge to see how long it will take me to figure it out'.

Ignatius, always the pragmatist, was primarily interested in what would bring greater glory to God. It is not surprising to see this pragmatic bent at work in the Exercises. I imagine him saying: 'Don't discourage or burden people with what they are not ready for or do not want. The last state may be worse than the first, and you also have wasted precious time and energy that could be used more effectively elsewhere.'

Ignatius' pragmatism in dealing with others shows up in his maxim: 'We have to go in by our neighbour's door, but come out by our door'. Thomas Clancy claims that this characteristic—taking people where one finds them and carefully and patiently moving toward the goal—was the most distinctive element in Ignatius' whole ministry of spiritual conversation. And, for Ignatius, the ministry of spiritual conversation lies in a direct line with the ministry of the Exercises.⁴

Who were those people for whom the Exercises needed to be adapted? We have some clues in the wording of the eighteenth Annotation: 'age', 'education', 'ability', 'uneducated', 'weak constitution', 'willing to dispose themselves to receive', 'rather simple and illiterate', 'poorly qualified', and 'little natural capacity from whom much fruit is not to be expected'. This list has a negative tone, as if the people envisaged by the eighteenth Annotation were second-best candidates. Clearly such people were not the priority in taking on the highly intensive labour of the complete Exercises, guided one-to-one. But were they less entitled to the assistance of the Exercises? Ignatius did not think so, and constantly encouraged the use of a shorter, foundational form for the vast majority of people.

⁴ Thomas Clancy, *The Conversational Word of God* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978), pp. 26, 31.

How did Ignatius arrive at this option? He made it out of his experience of conversations ‘on the street’ with many, many people over the years of experimenting and refining his Exercises. Some people can benefit from Ignatius’ full programme and some are simply not developmentally able—at least not yet, even if, with appropriate nourishment, they may be later. Here the eighteenth Annotation comes into play.

There appear to be two groups of people whom Ignatius is envisaging here: those who have little natural ability, and those who do have the natural ability but do not have the need or desire for the full process. The evidence from the early directories seems to bear out this assessment. According to Michael Ivens, the Directories envision the ‘*rudis*’, a person lacking in intellectual subtlety, in reflective capacity and possibly even in literacy; the ‘slightly more gifted’; the ‘gifted who seek only to purge their consciences’; and ‘people with both the mental and spiritual aptitude for the full Exercises but who have neither the time nor the compelling need’.⁵

A Developmental Perspective

A little theory will be necessary in order to set the context.⁶ When most of us think of human development, we automatically refer to the view of development that takes its inspiration from Erik Erikson, what I call the maturational paradigm of development. In this perspective, development is linked in some way to the maturing of the biological organism. Each period of one’s life bring its particular challenge or crisis. One’s own history of decisions and personality (ego) and the expectations of society converge with biological maturing to generate predictable life crises. Familiar examples include adolescence and mid-life. ‘Good enough’ mastery of the challenge of one era prepares the person for the challenge of the next stage. But inadequate mastery leaves a person’s psychosocial strength at risk as the next task approaches. Whether or not one has successfully resolved the crisis of the present or past eras, life continues to bring subsequent

⁵ Michael Ivens, ‘The Eighteenth Annotation and the Early Directories’, *The Way Supplement*, 46 (Spring 1983), pp. 3-10, here p. 4, citing the Directory of Paul Hoffaeus (*Dir* 17, especially nn. 2-20).

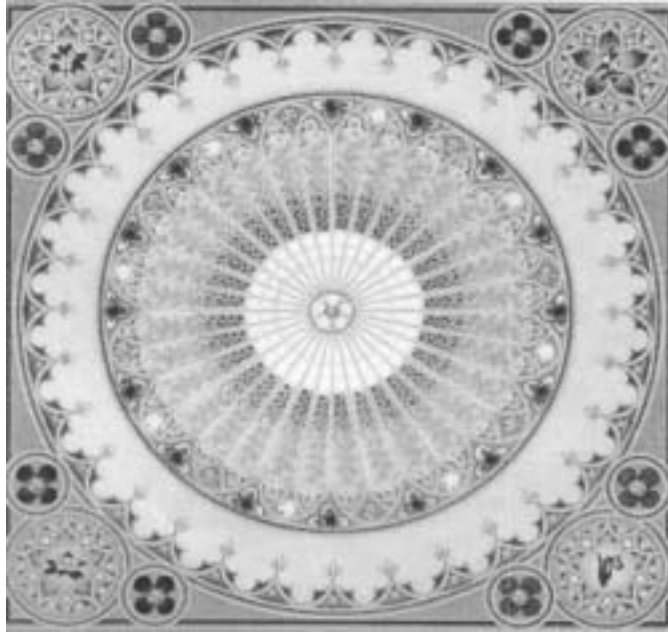
⁶ I have developed this material more extensively in *Changing Life Patterns: Adult Development in Spiritual Direction* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2000 [1992]).

developmental tasks. It is possible, though more difficult, to resolve a psychosocial crisis at a later time. To do so requires that one rework the unresolved issues from the past in terms of life's present contingencies.

A clue suggests that development may be more complex than the maturational paradigm can explain, though at first the issue does not appear to be linked to development at all. Different people approach the same developmental tasks in vastly different ways, so different, in fact, that they assign importance to quite dissimilar aspects of their common task. Imagine the arrival of a first child. According to Erikson, this event would usher in an era in which generativity is the key developmental task. But notice that there are different ways of dealing with generativity. One person might be preoccupied with survival in the welfare system, or with continuing her education while juggling vastly increased responsibilities with inadequate supports. For her, a good mother 'keeps her kids clean and dry and doesn't let them mouth off'. Another person might be primarily concerned with being an ideal parent in the traditional or stereotypical sense characteristic of her socioeconomic, religious or cultural spheres. She might envision a good mother as one 'who stays at home with her children while they are small because raising a family is the most important thing in any woman's life'. A third person might delight in the self-fulfilment and enhanced self-understanding that the presence of this new human life has precipitated. She might claim, 'a good mother learns lots about life from her own children'. Yet another person might be preoccupied with a sense of responsibility for this new life, and a hope that the world's systems can welcome and sustain it. For her, a good mother 'wants to make life good for other women's children' as well as her own. These varying perceptions about mothering constitute qualitatively different contexts in which to work out generativity.

Jean Piaget first provided the conceptual tools to grasp that such differences in worldview could have a developmental basis. Piaget carefully observed how small children approach and solve problems. Eventually he recognised that certain conceptual abilities were required to solve certain problems, and that these abilities were acquired in a predictable order. Piaget's scheme describes a progression from sensorimotor thinking in infancy, to preoperational or intuitive thinking in early childhood, to concrete operational thinking during

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elementary school, and finally to formal operational thinking, which, if it develops at all, will take place after the age of thirteen or even later. Each kind of thinking involves a qualitatively more complex logic system, which Piaget called a stage. Successive stages cannot be achieved simply by repeating again and again the earlier set of operations. This can only occur through applying to the problem a whole new principle of logic, a more complex hermeneutic. Since development, viewed this way, deals with the formal structure of the cognitive processes, theories which take their root in Piaget can be called 'structural theories' of development. This discussion explores the implications that this kind of theory raises for giving the Exercises.

Let me illustrate the structural theories from my own experience. As a fourteen-year-old, I had great difficulty with algebra. Substituting letters where before I had used numbers created a level of abstraction that confounded me. I could do the operations with numbers, but as soon as the letters appeared, I was stymied. Formal operational thinking, the ability to think about the process of thinking, requires a person to step outside the literal one-to-one correspondence between a number and an object. Since I could not yet do this more complex process, I was reduced to memorising the ways the operations worked and repeating the pattern every time I wanted to solve a problem. I

now recognise that, at fourteen, my ability for formal operational thinking was insufficiently developed to accommodate the level of abstraction that algebra required.

Structural developmental theories differ greatly from maturational theories of development in their assumptions about how and when change occurs—and this difference is the important issue here, particularly the way structural theories deal with change.

First, structural theories employ the concept of ‘stage’, which is a convention used to describe the global, largely unconscious way of organizing one’s perception of reality, which operates relatively consistently in ordinary life. A stage is a coherent outlook on the world and describes the patterns, styles and principles out of which the person acts. By contrast, maturational theories tend to describe the actions themselves.

Second, stages describe qualitatively different ways of viewing reality. These stages cannot be created by simply summing up prior stages. Each new stage is, in fact, a new way of organizing reality; it starts with an entirely new organizing principle. By itself, more and more arithmetic did not produce algebra in my fourteen-year-old mind. Instead, I needed a qualitatively new ability for abstract thinking that could account for both the arithmetic and the algebraic operations at the same time.

Third, the movement to a subsequent stage requires a ‘higher order of ordering’ to account for the increased complexity. That is why the stages become increasingly complex. Stages cannot be skipped but people can understand and use any of the simpler ordering systems they have already transcended; indeed in some situations, the simpler systems provide the most elegant and common sense solution. For example, a child who thinks in concrete operational categories cannot understand the theory of relativity, even though they could perhaps recite it. But a physicist presumably has the ability both to understand the theory of relativity and to explain how it is that two plus three equal five. Research shows that people begin to deal with a level of complexity characteristic of a certain distance ahead of their own development (perhaps half a stage or a whole stage); but they will reframe any greater degree of complexity in terms of their present stage. Teachers and preachers and spiritual directors can thus expect some listeners to hear something different from what they said!

**Stage change
does not
inevitably
result from
advancing age**

Fourth, stages are remarkably stable, since they represent entire systems of meaning-construction. Change takes place in such a stable structure only when the stage no longer accommodates the contrary data that it must absorb. Significantly, structural theories with their stable stages can account for the remarkable consistency within the human personality. In a structural system, there is no theoretical necessity for change. Without sufficient dissonance to require a new structure, the person will not change. It follows that stage change does not inevitably result from advancing age. In fact, there is substantial empirical data suggesting that many adults do not change structural stages after their early twenties. When stage change does occur, it is likely to be a protracted process; many forays into the more complex worldview occur before it becomes more or less habitual.

Thus we uncover a critical point for the matter at hand: structural stage change takes time, perhaps a long time, and it is not at all inevitable without an appropriate developmental context. The good news is that, with such a developmental context, many people do continue to develop, even according to this very stable way of viewing human development.

We are now in a position to think developmentally about the eighteenth Annotation. How might one know if a person is a good candidate for the full Exercises? This question is the reverse of one about the people appropriate for the 'eighteenth Annotation retreat'. In terms of the Exercises, there is a watershed between two developmental stages, with the person on the far side of this watershed a potential candidate for the full Exercises, and the person on the near side developmentally unready for them but potentially a wonderful candidate for some of the adaptations Ignatius suggests under the eighteenth Annotation.

The Crucial Transition

The watershed occurs between the stages I call Conformist and Conscientious respectively. Let us look at the Conformist stage first. Here the key reality is the group: one defines one's welfare with reference to a group, normally by conforming to its values, but occasionally through some kind of counter-dependence, or even studied neutrality. Groups, however, will be face to face, related to

directly and personally: one's family, one's peer group, one's church or denomination. Within the group(s), unanimity prevails, fostering group cohesion, but not really respecting individuality. Consistent niceness, genuine reciprocity prevails within the group, but not towards others outside the group. The person 'is' what the group defines; in a different group they will 'be' a different person. The personality is defined from outside, by the company it keeps. There is no firm self apart from these surrounding groups. Teenage conformity (and anti-conformity as a form of conformity) is the most obvious example of meaning being constructed in this kind of way.

The following characteristics also apply to Conformist people. They will:

- appeal to rules and external signs to set parameters for behaviour;
- experience disapproval by peers or valued authorities as a sanction;
- be preoccupied with appearances, reputation, doing things 'right', belonging;
- exhibit stereotypical thinking, using clichés and all-or-nothing statements;
- allow right and wrong to have few exceptions or nuances: behaviour is rule-governed;
- act concretely rather than reflect inwardly, experiencing only relatively simple and generalised feelings;
- repress sexuality or 'negative' emotions such as anger because such feelings will rupture the group cohesion (and note that what is 'negative' is concretely defined by the norms of the group).

The strength of the Conformist stage comes from its investment in people and institutions outside oneself. Socialisation into groups readily occurs. But the strength of one stage is also its weakness with respect to subsequent constructions. At the Conformist stage, individuals remain submerged within the various groups to which they belong. The lack of an inner, self-chosen identity allows Conformist people to take on various identities—to be different people as dictated by membership in those groups.

The virtues of the Conformist stage include generosity, consistency, niceness, helpfulness. Conformist people will actively promote the goals of the groups with which they identify. They have moved beyond the self-protectiveness characteristic of very early stages of human development and are capable of a new level of trust and interpersonal relations, including a personal relationship with God. Prayer will be action-oriented and concrete (but with so-called affective prayer still largely beyond their developmental range). Temptations include an outright return to impulsive behaviour, resisted by limiting one's negative feelings; literal and concrete interpretations of rules, texts and relationships (including the relationship with God); prejudice against others perceived as different; authoritarianism; rigidity; harsh judgments for infractions of rules; and succumbing to shame for personal failures.

If and when the transition to the Conscientious stage occurs, we see a quite different person. The key issue now is self-identity. The central developmental attainment is the critical appropriation of one's value system, which formerly was tacit. Now the person operates out of a new awareness of the self as an internally organized, consistent identity. The self-as-organization can judge relations; it *has* relationships rather than being determined by them. This stage receives its name from the word 'conscience', because the major elements of adult conscience become developmentally ascendant at this stage.

Listing more characteristics of the Conscientious person helps reveal the watershed between the Conformist and Conscientious stages. Generally, Conscientious people will:

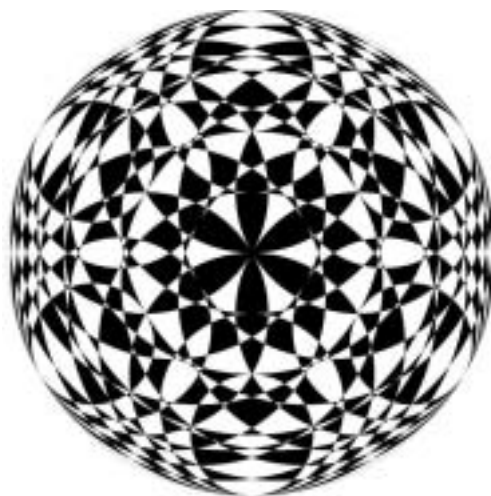
- recognise traits and motives in themselves and others;
- internalise rules, choosing and evaluating them for themselves;
- listen to themselves as their most potent critic;
- located authority within themselves rather in some outside agency;
- reason about their options in relatively complex ways, showing awareness of the consequences of alternatives, and of contingencies, thinking in and about whole systems, and seeing themselves as agents within systems;

- see themselves as at once within their communities and society, but also as distinct from them;
- manifest a deeper mutuality, a deeper understanding of others' personalities and desires;
- take a longer view of time, with long-term goals, ideals and values coexisting alongside short-term goals.

The strengths of the Conscientious stage include the ability to grasp long-term, self-evaluated, self-chosen goals, and the reflexivity and psychological-mindedness that accompany a developed and differentiated inner life. Its limitations include idiosyncratic, self-centred and subjective judgements about self and others, and excessive confidence in one's own assessments and critical reflections.

The characteristic virtues of Conscientious people include internal moral standards; integrity; truthfulness; understanding; empathy; altruism; even a kind of humour which persists through successive developmental transformations. Its characteristic temptations include avoidance of responsibility; hyper-critical self-examination; excluding oneself from the scope of care; getting side-tracked into a search for inner religious experiences or ideological formulations; and seeking to control others by one's own norms.

It is now possible to see Ignatius' genius with respect to those who were developmentally ready for the full Spiritual Exercises in contrast should be given some other version adapted to their needs.



Stages of Development and the Spiritual Exercises

Readiness for the Exercises

I assume that people who make the full Exercises must have certain abilities. They should, at the very least, be able to ‘work inside’, a shorthand phrase for the ability to notice and name inner movements; without this ability, discernment of spirits is impossible. They should be able to deal directly with God, and not be unduly influenced by the person of the director; otherwise the director becomes a ‘guru’, no matter how skilled they are at staying out of the way (and, of course it is the director’s responsibility to stay out of the way of God’s work with this particular retreatant [Exx 15]). The retreatant must be able to envision long-term goals and marshal resources towards those goals, else the Election makes no sense. I am speaking here of purely human abilities which form a necessary but not sufficient basis for the call and desire to make the Exercises, and for the dispositions of generosity they require. These human abilities exist in a person at the Conscientious developmental stage, but do not exist (or only barely exist) in the person at the Conformist stage.

Ignatius suggests adapting according to the ‘disposition’ of the people who desire to make the Exercises, that is, to their ‘age, education and ability’. Each of these can be linked to the idea of stages of development. Though, as I have already noted, there is no inevitable correlation between advance in age and structural development, there are indirect connections: a certain amount of time must pass before a person has accumulated enough life experience to move through the stages up to the Conscientious. Only when a person experiences perspectives clashing, and the consequent disruption of the assumptions shaping their world, can they shift out of Conformity into a self-grounded Conscientiousness. Experiences which often foster this developmental transition for contemporary people in the developed world include leaving home for military service, for higher education, or for extended periods of living in other cultures; and such traumas as divorce or the death of a spouse or child. At the same time, one cannot presume that educated people, or people well into their middle years, are automatically good candidates for the full course of the Exercises. Nor, given that the full Exercises have been successfully given at home to people in a very deprived area of Glasgow, can one

presume that lack of education precludes the necessary developmental foundation.⁷

I can only speculate as to whether the same proportion of the population of Ignatius' world made the transition from Conformity to Conscientiousness as in our culture. A smaller percentage of people had access to education; fewer people had the luxury of extended travel and of living in other cultures; certainly a far smaller percentage of women had these experiences. Yet people then, as now, were subject to the blows of life as well as its blessings. If the average level of adults in North America is half way between the Conformist and the Conscientious stages (that is, half the adults exhibit a developmental level less complex than this mid-point and half are more complex), then a majority of adults even now are either developmentally unready or only marginally ready to undertake the full course of the Exercises—and this is not yet to consider the other conditions of call and generosity. I think it safe to say that in Ignatius' time the percentage that had the necessary developmental prerequisites for profiting from the full Exercises was no higher and may very well have been lower.

Although Ignatius frequently stresses that the Spiritual Exercises are for a select group, one should not thereby conclude that Ignatius was unconcerned with the large numbers of people for whom the full Exercises were not appropriate. On the contrary, he includes them among the ministries in which Jesuits were to engage,⁸ speaks of them as the main means available to help people, and encourages Jesuits to make use of 'this weapon, which is so much a familiar part of our Society'.⁹ He also encourages scholastics to learn to give the Exercises, especially the Exercises of the First Week.¹⁰ It was not unknown for people who had only made the Exercises once themselves to be encouraged to offer them to others.¹¹

⁷ Martha Skinnader, 'Who is the Nineteenth Annotation For?' *The Way Supplement*, 49 (Spring 1984), pp. 59-69.

⁸ Ignatius to Giovanni Pelletari, 13 June 1551, in *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, selected and translated by William J. Young (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959), pp. 244-249, here pp. 247-248.

⁹ Ignatius to Fulvio Androzzi, 18 July 1556, in *Letters*, translated by Young, pp. 433-434, here p. 434.

¹⁰ *Constitutions* IV.8.5, E [408-409].

¹¹ Ivens, 'The Eighteenth Annotation', pp. 8-9.

People unfamiliar with developmental theories often assume that higher is better. In one sense it is: more developed people have more tools to deal with what life brings them. But it does not follow that higher is holier. Holiness is about singleness of purpose, generosity and integrity regardless of one's developmental stage. I believe there is an appropriate kind of holiness among Conformist people just as there is among Conscientious people. Each developmental stage has its strengths and weaknesses, its virtues and temptations. Likewise, people at each developmental stage need pastoral care. Ignatius makes a point of asking us to prioritise our time according to our call, and he suggests that Jesuits of his time were called to search out for the labour-intensive experience of the complete Exercises those who would make the most difference in Church and society. We need not conclude that others are less important, but just that other pastoral options will be more suited to them. The Formula of the Institute specifically mentions the Spiritual Exercises as one ministry among others—including preaching, lecturing, educating children and the illiterate, and administering sacraments.¹² When we understand that the eighteenth Annotation forms of the Spiritual Exercises *are* the Spiritual Exercises as much as the twentieth Annotation version, Ignatius' pastoral concern becomes very clearly linked to the ministry of the Exercises.

Ignatius, was, I believe, an astute observer of human nature. I also believe he gleaned sufficient pastoral experience to understand what sorts of things would help a variety of people. His suggestions for those who chiefly want instruction and a certain level of peace of soul—most of us—included the Particular and General Examen; the variety of ways of praying included in Exx 238-260; weekly confession of sins; and fortnightly reception of the Eucharist. These are all within the range of Conformist people and of sufficient concreteness to be of benefit to them, but they can also be adapted for Conscientious people. These exercises performed regularly may provide a context for developmental stage change, and may allow a deepening of the inner life to the point that the full Exercises might become appropriate later.

There can also arise the temptation to move people on prematurely to the next stage or to some 'highest stage'. This strategy

¹² *Formula of the Institute* [1550], n. 3.

simply does not work, and can very easily be experienced as violence by the recipient; directors who do this are inserting themselves where God belongs. There are things we can appropriately do, however, to help create a developmentally favourable environment.

Developmental Images of Change and the Exercises

At this point, we need to introduce two further ideas from developmental theory that provide ways of understanding change. The first is the concept of the 'pacer'. This is a term introduced by William Dember, in the context of his suggestion that people grow when they are somehow attracted by styles of behaviour roughly a half stage more complex than their present stage (what he calls 'pacers'). Anything less complex keeps them where they are; anything more complex they simply block out.¹³ The second idea, put forward by Robert Kegan at Harvard, is that of the 'naturally therapeutic environment'.¹⁴ Kegan articulates the dynamics of situations where development seems to happen of its own accord. In such situations, three things happen. Firstly, the people involved are *confirmed*: they experience themselves as noticed, valued, worthwhile, and competent. Secondly, something is nevertheless *disconfirmed*: something (the pacer) in the environment 'upsets the apple cart' and disarranges the order of the person's universe. When this upset happens at a deep enough level, one's way of understanding the world will need to change in order to accommodate the more complex universe. One is launched into a stage change. Thirdly, other elements in the environment *remain constant*: something must remain stable, providing a context for the integration of the new, more complex view of the universe.

The director's first task is always to listen to the person, finding out where they are, what concerns them, who God seems to be to them, how God has been working and is inviting them. This in many ways corresponds to what Kegan says about *confirming*. The process of relationship building may be lengthy or short; much depends on the people and the situation; but the director can be of little assistance

¹³ William Dember, 'The New Look in Motivation', *American Scientist*, 53 (December 1965), pp. 409-427.

¹⁴ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1982).

until the relationship of trust and confirmation has been established. *Disconfirmation* may come later; combining the notion of pacer with the notion of disconfirmation suggests that the director must be very astute in the amount and timing of disconfirmation. As spiritual guides, we seldom introduce disconfirmation; that is, I believe, largely God's prerogative. Instead, we help the person recognise and work with the disconfirmation that God provides, whether directly or through the exigencies of life. And we *remain faithful and constant presences*, representing God's faithfulness, during the inevitable upheavals and re-working that accompany any major transition.

These ideas are helpful for understanding pastoral care in general and the Exercises in particular. Spiritually and developmentally, it makes great

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individual
needs***

sense simply to help some people form habits of prayer and of a consistent sacramental life. For those more proficient in the inner life, a particular aspect of their call may be opening up, or an aspect of the person of Christ, or a new way of praying, or a transition that will involve discernment—all possible contexts for some more extensive form of the Exercises. The common factor here is the focus on particular people: the Exercises are always modified according to individual needs.

Ignatius' genius for spiritual conversation is closely related to the adaptations called for in the eighteenth Annotation. Through a careful ministry of conversation, Ignatius cultivated in others the necessary personal gifts and generosity that paid off richly as time went on. The first step in spiritual conversation, according to Ignatius, took place in the heart of the conversationalist: they were to concentrate their heart and soul on loving the person they were conversing with. Then they were to find out everything possible about that person through patient and careful listening: their present and past station in life, their intelligence, their physical makeup, their temperament, their present and past deeds. The next step was to 'enter through their door' by accommodating oneself to them: persuade without seeming to argue, be slow to speak, back up anything said with deeds, never promise what cannot be delivered. Finally, bring the conversation around, little by little, to things of the Spirit; and head with great patience toward the 'more' to which the person is being called.¹⁵ Here

¹⁵ Jerónimo Nadal, 'Sixth Exhortation' (MHSJ MN 5, pp. 820-865, especially pp. 842-846), cited in Clancy, *The Conversational Word of God*, pp. 52-54.

we have a picture of Ignatius and his colleagues carefully accommodating themselves to others for the good of the Kingdom, a picture which contemporary spiritual directors might do well to emulate. This account from the sources indicates that the early Jesuits' method fitted admirably with what we now recognise as the principles of developmental change. No wonder that such ministry occupied Ignatius throughout his life, as his preferred way of preparing people for the full Spiritual Exercises.

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He had resolved to remain a year, once he became a priest, without saying Mass, preparing himself and praying Our Lady to be pleased to place him with her Son.

Reminiscences, n. 96

Mary as Mother of God is the second Eve, mother of all the living, a safe and powerful anima-force leading and encouraging us forward in the arduous transformation we must undergo to empty our ego and become our selves. She is the mother of our living and of our dying, of our becoming conscious and of our transcending that consciousness, of the birth, crucifixion and transformation of the self, symbolized in the divine-human wholeness of her son, in whom we live and grow and who lives and grows in us.

Kenneth L. Becker, Unlikely Companions, p. 603

BEYOND SURVIVAL

The Two Standards and the Way of Love

Kenneth L. Becker

POVERTY IS NOT POPULAR. INSULTS NEVER WERE. Poverty as solidarity with the poor—supporting them, meeting them where they are, and amplifying their voices—has as its goal ultimately to help them become less poor. The poor don't want to be poor. We who are less poor are orbited by a multitude of 'necessary' things. And one nods in agreement with Shakespeare's Iago that 'good name in man and woman' is 'the immediate jewel of their souls'. So what can be said for the strategy Ignatius of Loyola attributes to Christ in the Two Standards meditation: that of encouraging people to desire first poverty, then insults and finally humility?

Has the ideal of poverty been outlived? Is it a name for a set of behaviour patterns we would do better to analyze and get rid of? For under the name poverty have developed lifestyles of dependency, immaturity, irresponsibility, coddled trust in providence, and self-punishing insecurity and deprivation. These are hardly positive values. The question then arises: are there really any such values left to be found and discussed or lived out in terms of poverty? And can we see anything in Ignatius' 'insults' other than a pathological self-denial, the grovelling 'Lord, I am not worthy!' of a perverse asceticism?

The following reflections are based rather on the premise, 'I am worthy'. They look at what our worthiness consists in, at the role played by our needs, and at what poverty and insults have to do with all this. Let us organize our reflections by using Abraham Maslow's 'pyramid' of the fivefold basic human needs: physical life-support; safety and security; belonging, acceptance and affection; respect and self-respect; and self-actualisation.¹

¹Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1982 [1962]), p. 3.

Survival and Personal Identity

The first goal of any organism, including us humans, is to survive. Survival involves the first four levels of need. Though for us with our human potential this is not enough (hence the fifth level of need), I must nonetheless first survive physically (the first two levels of need) and socially (the third and fourth levels). I must be and continue to be *me*—through satisfying my physical needs, protecting *myself*, finding my place and role in relation to others, and having my value in my world.

This is what C. G. Jung referred to in describing the development of the ego-personality and its often anxious and excessive need to be. In the course of this process, he emphasizes, other needs and issues of human living are neglected. They are consigned to the unconscious psyche, where they can fester and cause problems because they are not integrated into our everyday life. The development of the individual identity is not in itself bad; indeed, it is essential to human living. My effort to be and to survive as 'I', however, can become a consuming concern, and drive me into an individualistic blind alley. I am then preoccupied with who I am, how I am, what I am—my things, connections, talents, power, friends, whatever else makes up my world—and I live only according to my survival needs. That means I need power to ensure my security: physically, I must be the biggest, toughest bully on the block; or intellectually, I must be right, I must have the truth; or materially, I must have enough or more than enough land, food, or money; or in my relationships I must manipulate people and make myself agreeable or indispensable.

At its best this individualistic egoism ends up in a social contract, since I cannot survive alone. We agree on such values as honesty, mutual respect and protection, and justice, so that each of us can fulfil our needs and thus survive as the people we are. 'You scratch my back and I scratch yours.' Rarely does such a contract work, however, as we can see from all the violence we do to each other, whether in our individual lives, in our communities, or in our national and international interests and operations. Instead, it is a case of 'dog eat dog and may the strongest dog win'—we satisfy our own needs and survive at the expense of others. Moreover, contracts can be broken

and thus require enforcement, which can result in legalised violence, and often serves to disguise the exploitative violence of survival needs.

A Need for More than Survival

More importantly, however, such a contract is just not enough for truly human living and actualisation. We can see this in the case of infants: the love they receive must indeed be real love, unconditional and initiatory in the relationship, not based on reciprocity (I will love you as much as you love me). If the child does not receive this love, it learns to be a manipulative, savage survivor. Thus the social contract is self-defeating—as our experience demonstrates so abundantly. But as a person becomes spiritually aware—aware of the need for human living—it becomes even painfully clear that just surviving, even amid all the back-scratching and merely contractual relations, is not enough. We are made for something more, for greater, higher things, whatever they are. We need to find, grow in, and live that ‘more’ in order to be actualised, to become what we are equipped or destined to be as human beings. Here we move beyond Maslow’s first four needs, centred as they are on survival, to the fifth: the need for self-actualisation and meaningful living.

***Just
surviving
is not
enough***

This ‘more’ process in which one seeks self-actualisation can take three forms. One is a kind of regression, to an infantile identification with something greater that dissolves one’s own identity. The second is that put forward by Jung: the pursuit of individuation, of equilibrium within the self. The third is closer to the Gospel: a process of growth beyond one’s own need into an authentic human love. All three strategies can involve versions of Ignatius’ Two Standards with its invitation to desire poverty and insults as a way of arriving at humility. In all of them we can apply the gospel dictum, ‘those who want to save their life will lose it, while those who lose their life will find it’ (Matthew 16:25). What does this mean in each case, however, and what does the process lead to?

Collective or Cosmic Self-actualisation

First of all, I can identify myself with something greater than myself, abdicating my own identity and autonomous responsibility. I overcome the need to survive by being taken up into, or perhaps swallowed up by,

a unifying project or process of greater life, or truth, or power, or identity, or nonentity. This constitutes a lapse into an unconscious mode of living. In such a condition I have no real personal identity, but identify instead with the greater-than-myself. Structures and movements which foster such identification—ideologies, traditions, sectarian groups and organisations, the state or the party, social trends and ideals, and so on—are in a sense wombs for the weak, swaddling clothes for the soul. It is as though infantile unconsciousness is retained or regained.

In a context of such dependency, 'poverty' would mean that I personally have nothing—everything belongs to what I belong to or live in, or is simply meaningless, *maya*;² survival needs are simply denied. People caught up in such a pattern may well feel as 'insults' the negative reactions of others to their beliefs, and may even welcome their humiliating effect. Often more subtle, and more devastating, is the damage inflicted on a person's self-image and self-esteem through the organization's indoctrination and physical and psychological treatment of its members. The result is a sort of humility: a conviction that I am personally nothing at all, worthless, a drop lost in the sea of whatever greater meaning I believe in. In this sense I find my life by losing it.

Jungian Self-actualisation

The second possibility is what Jung proposes. Through the process of individuation, one becomes a truly human and integrated individual by relating consciously and responsibly to the whole psychic life, both the individual psyche and what Jung calls the collective or objective psyche. The fragments of our psychic reality that we have projected or rejected and repressed in the course of developing and defending our personal identity need to be recovered, recognised, integrated and realised in some way; and the movements of the greater psychic reality of which we are a part, the collective psyche, need to be recognised and discerned and lived with. All the while, however, we are to remain, or rather become, the conscious, responsible persons we are meant to be in collaboration with the whole psychic reality in which

² In Vedantic philosophy, *maya* is the physical world of the senses, considered illusory and unimportant, that conceals the unity of absolute being.

we live, which Jung often also calls the Self. Self-actualisation is the actualisation both of my own personality and of the Self in which and in relation to which I live truly as a human person. This means that we have to look at, revise, or even break down the structures and strategies according to which we have established ourselves and survived as the persons we have been so far. (In practice, of course, this psycho-spiritual process is by no means as linear as the following presentation suggests, but meanders with the course of a person's problems and progress.)

In coming to consciousness we emerge from an unconscious identification with the world and assimilate that world, or parts of it, to ourselves, according to our needs. For I can be me only by using things to survive. But if we identify ourselves according to the things we have and think we need, our true identity as human persons remains unconsciously projected onto the things. We are not ourselves but our things. In so far as we have defined our existence, meaning, and value through things, we are faced with our poverty—our possessions are not enough and ultimately leave us profoundly unsatisfied. Accumulating more and more is no solution. I need to find my own human reality, to withdraw my projections of myself from all my survival means and strategies: from my possessions, from all that I call 'mine' and that I use to secure my survival, including my ideas and even 'my God'. Then I can start to see myself, who I really am, without them. I stand there poor, even fearful, for the process not only dismantles long-cherished psychological mechanisms and the identity I have worked out for myself, but also touches real basic survival needs.

***Accumulating
more and more
is no solution***

Poverty is about *what* I am; insults are about *who* I am. Moving along in this psycho-spiritual process, therefore, we come to the next two levels of survival need: belonging and respect, my need to be somebody with and for other people. This lays me open to insults whether true or false, and involves what Jung calls the *persona*. This is the constellation of images and roles that we have assumed and cultivated in our relations with other people. If I have projected my real worth and identity into my *persona*, it is insulting to discover how ultimately worthless that is, no matter how valuable I have been or think I have been for society. I am not my role—my office, power, talent, influence—nor the sum of my roles. The unconscious sneers at

my pretensions and efforts, and says ‘So what? Who are you, anyway—really?’ The ultimate insult is death, which is no respecter of persons.

Deeper psychic dynamics are also involved here. My shadow, everything I have neglected or repressed in growing into my social identity, persists in producing problematic behaviour that gives the lie to whom I pretend to be. My self-image, my sexual identity, and all my life-structures and orientations are questioned through the Anima or Animus figures (archetypes representing the opposite sex of a person) and through other archetypal configurations. These are psychic images arising from the unconscious psyche and representing or acting out (as we experience, for example, in dreams) our psychic life and its problems and challenges. If my life is unbalanced, and if psychic elements have been neglected or frustrated, these archetypal figures may be bloated with repressed or derailed psychic energy. Each step in the individuation process can be threatening, and indeed felt as insulting. By living and working with these archetypal contents and dynamics, one is led deep below and far beyond one’s ego-self. This ego-self can no longer be the answer to the question ‘Who am I?’

Slowly I learn that I in my ego-sovereignty am not master of my destiny. Individuation is a sort of dying, through which one loses the absoluteness of one’s individual conscious existence to live a new life as an active and passive participant in harmony with the greater life of the objective psyche or Self. That, according to Jung, is the humility of a true human individual self.

Self-actualisation as Living Love

The third approach to self-actualisation beyond the struggle for mere survival is that advocated by Jesus of Nazareth and Ignatius of Loyola: I need to grow beyond my concern about myself, my own survival and self-establishment, to the greater, freer consciousness and responsibility of a truly human, loving person. ‘Loving’ here means that the person’s attitude is active, inviting, relational, life-sharing. Dynamically but respectfully, one who loves desires and hopes for the self-actualisation of others as autonomous loving persons, each in his or her individual way. Indeed, it is in our self-actualisation as loving human persons that the pursuit of our other needs becomes humanised. Then, for example, we can not only eat, but make our meal a thankful celebration of shared life and love. Likewise with the other needs: our quest for

security is balanced by openness and concern for others; our group-belonging becomes loving community; our achievements become gifts.

Understood in this kind of context, Ignatius' talk of poverty and insults is therefore pointing out how we need to get beyond our survival needs in order to be able truly to love in a free, conscious, individual and responsible way. Thus the question is not merely, 'What do I really need to survive?' but rather, 'Is survival all that human life is about?' How do my needs and my things fit in with real living, that is, my actualisation through loving others? Simple survival becomes secondary: what matters is that we live fully as human beings. Our survival needs must be relativised and transcended so that we can love. This love can take heroic forms. Usually, however, we are challenged to live love beyond our self-interest in the multifarious jobs, exchanges, sharings and concerns that fill our everyday life. Even in the simplest dimensions of life we are to be stretched beyond ourselves, our own ego-interests, to a greater way of living.

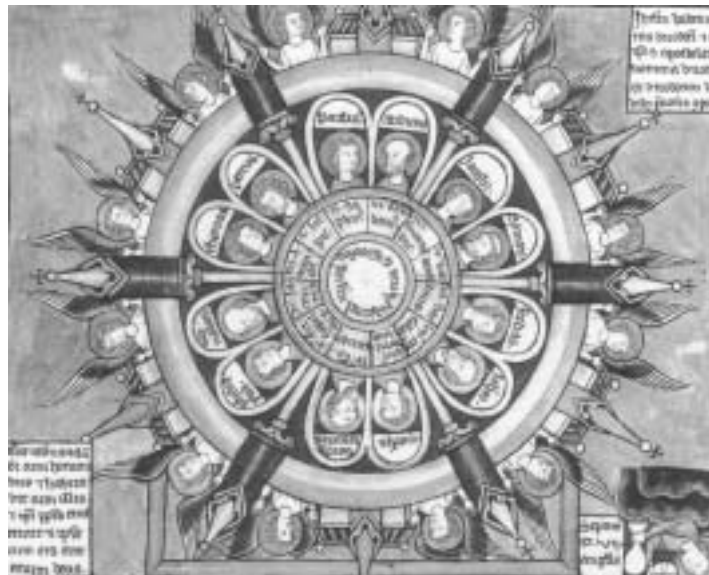
However, our survival needs—as Jung points out in his own approach—can stand in the way of our achieving actualisation as loving human beings. If I have projected myself, my reality and my actualisation, onto the things I need (or feel I need) for surviving and being me, or onto my roles, onto how others recognise and value me, I am not within myself but lodged externally, and I cannot be free to love as I should and need to. In my effort to be 'I', I have become 'not-I'. But to love, one must be an autonomous, responsible individual. I must withdraw my projections if I am to shift my perspective from survival to self-actualisation through love.

In so far as I am not living my life, but letting my projections live it for me, my inner forces and frustrations, my feelings and needs as well as the pain and fear holding me back from my own living and loving, may well be dramatized in the bloated, energized archetypal forms Jung describes. For my own life is disordered, askew, and chaotic, and yet it is somehow ordered to be human, to be what I ultimately need to be: a loving person. The archetypes reflect and express my neglected and painfully unfulfilled needs, including my need for self-actualisation through self-transcendence.

Under the rubric of poverty I need to examine the things I need, or think I need, to survive, in order to see what is really needed, and to balance my survival with the need and call to love. Where am I so

wrapped up in and identified with things that I cannot stand open before others, ready also with 'my' things to foster their living as human persons? Is the meaning of 'my' things located simply in me, or are they here for you and for us as we seek lovingly to share our lives? Poverty means living in a way not simply determined by our need for a secure world. It involves the freedom to be insecure, to doubt, to listen to other views and other truths. For our dogmas, too, can be a means of satisfying our ideological survival needs—a defence against the threats of doubt and error; against the fear of what might happen to me if I think or believe what is wrong; against the fear of doing the wrong thing, of being in the wrong place or of going there someday. So my concern for my survival may take the guise of concern for 'the truth', for an institution or organization, for a 'power', including 'my God', for anything in terms of which I see my life and salvation defined or assured. The full *kenosis* of love disentangles me from these safety lines, leaving me free for the challenge of meeting others, and inviting and fostering them to live out their lives in their own human forms.

Again, Ignatius' talk of 'insults' implies a shift of focus from 'Who am I?' and 'How can I survive and be somebody?' to 'Who are you?' For my survival needs move me to develop relations and social networks in which **I** know who **I** am, what roles I have, what I have to do and to expect, how I have to perform and what I have to achieve. I also pin others down to their roles and to my expectations. In all this I



seek the acceptance and approval of others, or power over them, and the security of social patterns. Love, however, asks first of all not 'Who are you for me and my needs?' but 'Who are you? And what can I do to enable you to become more fully you?' The situation opens wide. It now includes include unplanned and unfamiliar options, and the 'wrong' people as well as the 'right' people. My roles become secondary. I am nothing and have nothing that I need you to have, be that truth, healing, support, consolation, power, wisdom, guidance, or whatever. Whether you like or accept me is not paramount, but rather that you live and love in your own life. This attitude, however, hits me squarely in my social survival needs, especially if I have defined myself firmly in terms of their satisfaction. The unsettling and threatening effects work as insults to who I think I am.

To relinquish my cramped hold on my existence and identity, to let go of the things, structures and mechanisms with which I have tried to assure 'my' survival—this is scary. Survival has to do with fear. Self-fulfilment has to do with love. 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.' (1 John 4:18) Survival asks: 'What is going to happen to me if . . . ?' Love asks: 'What can happen to you if I open to you, share life with you, and invite you to be you, a loving person?'

This implies, of course, that one has been loved and invited to live and grow as an open, loving individual. For if one has not been loved, one learns to survive at all costs—life's first law. One concentrates on one's survival needs, and the need truly to live gets lost. Whereas philosophers speak of proofs for God's existence, Ignatius' Contemplation to Attain Love invites us to realise and share the life of a God active in love. If one can be convinced that one is loved, one can dare to love, to live as a truly human person. This is the goal of the Exercises and the invitation of the gospel. We need to be loved in order to love, and our greatest calling is to love others so that they can live. Love invites love.

But can this freedom to love be attained through spiritual or ascetical practices and structures alone? In many cases, I think, it can only be the result of a long healing and growing process that may require psychotherapeutic support and guidance. To try to realise it in other ways, or to establish it as a system, may lead to the false forms or aberrations of poverty and self-denial mentioned above. 'Poverty'—

'religious' or not—can be a means of survival at all costs, just as wealth and power can. If love has not given me permission to live, then I may make sure that I need as little as possible—both of things and of esteem or love—to ensure that I have enough to survive. Or I may keep myself poor because through unlove I have been convinced that I do not deserve anything: I am not worth anything; I have no right to anything; and if I assert my right to live by taking or having something, 'they' will punish me. I may need to work through, feel, and thus relativise, much of the unlove in my life in order to become free enough of its dictates to grow as a loving individual. This also means releasing my desperate grip on things and roles, of course; and no miser holds onto his money more tightly than neurotics treasure the survival strategies that have saved and served them. In dismantling my structures of 'necessary' things and roles, the 'poverty' and 'insults' are inevitable, and quite threatening, aspects of the process.

Loving may mean relativising my survival needs, but it does not mean denying or ignoring them. On the contrary, my legitimate needs, both physical and social, are a framework for the other person's love. If I love others, I want them in their turn to be loving people who respect others' needs, including my own. Love invites and challenges to love. So not only my strength but also my weakness, not only what I can give but what I need, are part of my invitation to the other to be a loving person. This presupposes, of course, that I am clear and honest about my own legitimate needs. Ideas of justice try to set guidelines for the shape and direction of our loving where the needs of various people are in conflict. Intending the survival (on all four levels) of others, so that their life can be more human, is the minimum of love. It is well and good that I love and care for myself and my family—provided I do not let my workers and their families starve, or leave them stranded with health problems. Through just taxes the needs of children for education, of the poorly-off for health care, or of the impoverished for food and shelter may limit the amount of roast beef I have on my table or the size of my car.

Yet love always remains a living, shifting, creative challenge, ambiguously incarnate in individuals, entangled in their needs. And it persists; it insists on loving and hoping, whether others respect my needs or not. You may take my bread, calumniate or ignore me, sneer at my good intentions—but love is, or tries to be, independent of my survival needs. I am willing to suffer their denial, to some extent at

least, for love of you. At the same time, I am not truly loving you if I let you do anything you want to me or to others—my love may even require that I call in the police.

My fulfilment of my survival needs can also masquerade perniciously as love. I need you to need me, to feel my love and care; I need to save and help you; I need you to be loved, to know the truth, to be saved, to be freed from your problems, and so on. I need my child to be smart, safe, successful, well-behaved. The exercise and efficacy of my 'loving' then become my means of identity and value, and you become the focus and instrument for my psychosocial survival. Hardly a self-transcendence, my 'love' goes no farther than myself. This is the tricky paradox of love. For we do truly need to love—this is our ultimate self-actualisation as human persons. But we can attain this only by transcending our needs, including this very need to love. It is the paradox of Jesus' way: 'those who lose their life for my sake will find it' (Matthew 16:25).

***Fulfilment of
survival needs
can masquerade
as love***

When Ignatius commends 'poverty', therefore, he is confronting the survival need for things, including abstract things such as intellectual and psychological security. I need them, but they do not determine who I really am. Survival is keeping what I am. The poverty that is the freedom to love is giving what I am, to the point of risking loss.

By commending 'insults' Ignatius is confronting social survival needs—my accomplishments, reputation, relations and connections, roles. I need them, but they do not constitute my personal identity and value. Love's free invitation risks your rejecting me, my ideas, and even my best wishes and hopes for you. All that I have and all that I am become ways that I am living love: my true human self-fulfilment as an individual, conscious, autonomous and responsible loving person.

This 'self of love' does not posit a greater Self nor the loss of my individual responsibility in a greater All. Far from extinguishing my individual identity and conscious responsibility, the self-transcendence of love requires them. Love is and must be concrete, incarnate and specific. Only as a real individual person can I love; and only as a real person can you be loved. But my ego-stance is relativised and transcended. If I love, I cannot control my own survival and success so anxiously, and I must let you deal with yours—I cannot know or do it better for you. Love is humbling. It can only invite you to be you, a particular incarnation of love, without knowing how that will be or

should be, or what its consequences may be for me. I can only challenge you to live in love through my existence and my needs and those of others. So the final humility of self-actualisation in love is simply that I am I, with my history, needs, possibilities, trying to be free to live and to give what I am and have; similarly you are you. This humility sees each of us as an individual incarnation of love. It avoids comparing people; rather, it lets each person be, inviting them to grow in living love.

When I let a desire for poverty and insults relativise survival needs, my goal is not a spiritual attitude of 'God is all' in the sense of 'having only God' or of 'only God having me' or of 'trusting God to provide' or 'trusting God to know what's best when God doesn't provide'. That is still a survival perspective. True freedom of spirit means believing and trusting that love is more important than survival, that love constitutes my true life. This is to believe in God-who-is-love, the essential and the ultimate in our living and our meaning as human beings.

Through the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius leads us to the Contemplation to Attain Love. Attaining love is what following Christ, taking up the cross, dying and rising are all about. Above all and through all we are to love. Ignatian spirituality is a spirituality of love; Ignatian mysticism is a vision and experience of the love-energy that can unite us in one Body, one Anointed—a body of Christ in which the individual is not lost, but rather an indispensable member, fully realised in conscious and responsible self-transcending love. It is Augustine who has perhaps expressed this vision most sharply and beautifully: 'there will be one Christ loving himself'.³

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³ Augustine, *Homilies on 1 John*, 10 (on 1 John 5: 1-3), n. 3.

GRACED GRATITUDE

Charles M. Shelton

PEOPLE ALWAYS PRAISE GRATITUDE. Consider what some noted writers have said: 'Gratitude is the moral memory of mankind' (George Simmel); or 'Gratitude is the most exquisite form of courtesy' (Jacques Maritain). Equally striking are the comments on ingratitude: 'Ingratitude . . . is the essence of vileness' (Immanuel Kant) and 'Ingratitude . . . is an abomination' (Seneca).¹ Ignatius' denunciation is particularly vehement:

In His divine goodness, I consider (although others may think differently) ingratitude among the most abominable of all imaginable evils and sins in the eyes of our Creator and Lord and of the creatures made open for the divine glory which is His. For it is the disregard of the benefits, graces, and gifts that we have received; it is the cause, principle and origin of all evils and sins.

'On the contrary', Ignatius continues, 'awareness and gratitude of the benefits and gifts received—how much it is to be loved and esteemed!'² This article explores, both from a philosophical and from a psychological point of view, the concept of gratitude, particularly as we find it in the Ignatian Exercises. It also brings out the links between gratitude and the theological virtue of love. And lastly, it sets forth a kind of irony in gratitude, an irony which might even apply to the Lord's mission.

There are at least two reasons why it is difficult for a psychologist to write about gratitude and spirituality. Firstly, psychologists, like other scientists, can fall victim to what we might term the *empirical*

¹ For a compendium including these and other quotations, see Robert A. Emmons and Charles M. Shelton, 'Gratitude and the Science of Positive Psychology', in *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 463.

² Ignatius to Simão Rodrigues, 18 March 1542, MHSJ EI 1, pp. 192-196, here p. 192. An English version is given in *Letters of St Ignatius of Loyola*, translated by William J. Young (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1959), p. 55. The reference is taken from the beginning of Gerald M. Fagin, 'Stirred to Profound Gratitude', *Review for Religious*, 54 (1995), pp. 237-252.

fallacy. They dismiss the humanities in general, and theology or spirituality in particular, because the methods these disciplines use are not statistically rigorous. What theologians say is at worst quite illegitimate, at best interesting but incomplete. Admittedly, extreme versions of such thinking are no longer fashionable. For some of the intriguing concepts used in spirituality, such as spiritual well-being and spiritual experiences, measurement tools have been proposed.³ One psychologist has even put forward the concept of 'spiritual intelligence'.⁴ Nevertheless, many of the ideas central to Christian spirituality are not empirically measurable. No statistical method will clarify what is going on when a person enters the 'dark night of the soul', or embarks on a spiritual journey; nor will it ever explain what is meant by depths of gratitude.

Secondly, spiritual writers can easily over-idealise gratitude. One manifestation of such *idealisation* might be described as pollyannism. Gratitude is so attractive and popular that critical scrutiny seems out of place. Another manifestation is an inflexible rigour: the idealisation of gratitude leads writers into imperatives that fail to recognise other human realities which might well be morally or spiritually relevant, such as personal weakness or stress.

What is Gratitude?

Few people could give a definition of weather, even though they could easily describe a rainy, windy, or cloudy day. Similarly, few people can define an emotion, and there is no consensus on the topic among philosophers and psychologists who address the topic professionally. Yet everyone knows what a grateful heart is.

I surveyed more than a hundred people, investigating what happened when they experienced gratitude. I asked them questions like: 'what is gratitude?', 'how would you describe a personal experience of gratitude?', 'what did your experience of gratitude lead to?' The individuals I spoke with ranged in age from 18 to 75, and they all described rich, inspiring experiences of gratitude. The fact that the questions were open-ended removed any temptation to use simplistic

³ See *Measures of Religiosity*, edited by Peter C. Hill and Ralph W. Hood (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1999).

⁴ Robert A. Emmons, *The Psychology of Ultimate Concerns* (New York: Guildford Press, 1999).

*Gift better than himself God doth not know;
 Gift better than his God no man can see.
 This gift doth here the giver given bestow;
 Gift to this gift let each receiver be.
 God is my gift, himself he freely gave me;
 God's gift am I, and none but God shall have me.*

Robert Southwell SJ (1562-1595)

categories of measurement; the request that the claims be illustrated from everyday life did at least something to counter any tendency towards idealisation—although it is worth noting that not one of them found the experience of gratitude in any way negative.

There seem to be three elements generally present in any experience of gratitude:

- someone offers a *gift*; the recipient may be under some obligation or duty, but the sense of gift goes somehow beyond this;
- the one who receives the gift interprets the giver's altruistic motives correctly;
- the gift triggers positive feelings in the one receiving, and often leads them, in their turn, to offer a further gift—either back to the giver or onward to some third party.

Gratitude seems thus to involve a permanent, self-renewing dynamic of gift and goodness. We might say that gratitude is the giving away of goodness.

Gratitude brings joy and contentment; it builds positive relationships of trust, and builds up the self-esteem of the one receiving the gift. It also encourages the recipient to pass the gift on. These effects fit nicely with what psychology has come to identify as a 'broad and build' theory of emotion. Positive emotions empower us to consider others' viewpoints; they expand our creativity, they reveal new avenues of hope, they foster self-awareness and extend our

sensitivity.⁵ These claims in the literature were well confirmed by how the people in my survey spoke about gratitude. Negative emotions, by contrast, draw us inward: they narrow our focus down to distressing problems and painful hurts. Feeling negatively leads us to be stuck, mired in tunnel vision. Gratitude is an energizing force: it draws us beyond a narcissistic focus on our own selves, and encourages us to become more and more selfless by continuing the dynamic of gift.

One response in the survey, from a middle-aged professional man, is typical:

One image I have for gratitude is that of a window, beyond which is a view—sometimes obscured—of loving-kindness practised by human beings I've known, sometimes taking me completely by surprise. Or better than a window: a full length glass door, beckoning me to pass through. It's not that I've got to repay anything—rather I need to engage in, contribute to, the practice of loving-kindness as unselfconsciously as I can.

He then described what it was like to pass through this 'glass door'. His developing gratitude challenged his first, negative impressions of reality, and thereby aroused his hitherto dormant moral vision. He ended by saying, 'I have been able to express my appreciation more, and to find opportunities for caring I previously would have overlooked'. As we dwell in reflective gratitude on what we have received, we turn outwards, and focus on ways to give back and to give on.

Some other points are worth noting at this stage. Firstly, the attention of the grateful person typically moves from the gift itself to the giver. If a friend helps us move some heavy furniture, we may begin by dwelling happily on how much easier the job has been, but our attention will soon shift, if we are truly grateful, from the favour done to the person of our friend.

Secondly, gratitude has different levels of depth. There is a vast difference between a common 'thank you' to someone holding open a door for us, and making a long journey or buying a carefully chosen

⁵ Barbara L. Fredrickson, 'Gratitude and Other Positive Emotions Broaden and Build', invited address at a symposium entitled 'Kindling the Science of Gratitude', sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation and held at Dallas in October 2000.

present to express gratitude to someone who has done us a great favour—a neighbour of our aged parents, for example, who has selflessly looked after them in their illnesses when our other commitments would not permit us to do so. Gratitude can range from a simple ‘thanks’ for a daily courtesy to a permanent, life-transforming attitude rooted in our hearts.

Thirdly, and more importantly, there are dark sides to gratitude. Consider examples like the following:

- Felix is grateful for winning at a slot-machine, when the payout is a matter of random luck.
- Sheila receives an award which she does not much care for. She says thank you, but knows all the time that her gesture is hollow.
- Jim is walking to the shops after a major snow storm, and waves to Peter, his friendly elderly neighbour, on the opposite side of the street. Without warning, Peter slips and falls. Jim goes to help—Peter is shaken, but assures Jim that he can make it home. Jim continues his journey, and is concerned about Peter—but is also secretly grateful that the fall was Peter’s, not his own.
- At a family gathering Eustace gives an expensive gift to his nephew as a way of embarrassing his sister and the boy’s mother, Jane, who could never afford such an expense. Jane feels trapped by the need to thank her brother and make her son do the same.
- Ron, a serial killer, is grateful to Mary for the road directions she has given him, since he now knows his escape route and can more easily escape detection.
- Hitler feels grateful toward his mother, perhaps the only person he truly ever loved.

The uncertainties raised by these cases do not occur because gratitude itself is somehow ambiguous or questionable. Rather, they arise because of some kind of mistake associated with the gratitude, or else because of some weakness in human nature. This point may be particularly important in the context of retreat direction. Many people, and sometimes their directors as well, misinterpret or overvalue

experiences of gratitude they may have during the time of retreat. Only later do they discover how short-lived these states can be: they do nothing to help the person negotiate the interpersonal tensions of their daily life; these remain troubling, even threatening. A first-fervour experience of gratitude might obscure sobering, difficult challenges that lie ahead. An emotionally disturbed retreatant uses the retreat to reinforce their denial of the situation, and unconsciously manufactures a sense of gratitude. But after the retreat, the same patterns continue: the person stirs up conflicts between their colleagues, while denying any responsibility for these actions that so effectively provoke their peers' anger. If we accept the principle that grace builds on or perfects nature, then we must recognise that the theological graces of gratitude, actively prayed for and perhaps in some sense received on retreat, will not change human 'nature'. They will not, of themselves, transform the limitations or impairments in human personalities.

We need also to note that the connections that can arise between gift, gratitude and envy. 'Gifts bring pride, and also envy, hatred, greed, jealousy. People are literally the creative product of the gifts they receive.'⁶ When we note the gifts possessed by another, for example an exemplary moral character, we might find our own sense of integrity threatened, and our feelings of gratitude for our own existence waning.

Gratitude and Love

The temptation towards the idealisation of gratitude is real, and we will always need to be cautious when faced with extravagant claims. Nevertheless, the central reality of gratitude is a positive one. I have already invoked the Catholic axiom about grace building on nature. I would now like to go further. I would like to suggest that our natural capacity for gratitude is the central point at which God's grace touches us, drawing us into the loving union which is the theological virtue of charity, and making that love fruitful in action.

In ways which are real—even if no statistical method will ever be able to measure them—grace reorientates human empathy. Jesus' message of the gift of the kingdom is a gift freely given. It is only

⁶ Karl E. Scheibe, *The Drama of Everyday Life* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 209.

through gratitude for this gift that the transformation of heart and of action which the Gospel demands can take place. The boundless love of God, to which the New Testament bears witness, draws us into its dynamic by touching us with gratitude. No wonder, then, that gratitude is so central a category in Ignatian spirituality.

Gratitude in Ignatian Spirituality

There is no one Ignatian text that can serve as a definitive, comprehensive source for his spiritual teaching. Much could be said about Ignatius' view of gratitude from his letters. Hugo Rahner notes that these give the impression of a man filled with 'imperishable gratitude' if not 'helpless gratitude'.⁷ Here, however, we will concentrate on the *Spiritual Exercises*, and on the connections in Ignatius' vision between gratitude, insight, generosity, and the broadening of the mind and heart—connections also attested by the participants in my survey.

**Ignatius was
a man of
helpless gratitude**

The first point of the Examen invites us 'to give thanks to God our Lord for the benefits received' (Exx 43.2). Formal psychology was unknown in Ignatius' age, and he was probably unaware of how important and significant this beginning is. The emphasis here on God's blessings given daily can lead us to a sense of security, warmth and appreciation, broadening our awareness of life's richness. On this basis we can constructively begin a process of examination, of redemptive self-scrutiny. If a healthy sense of gratitude is absent, reflection on one's own behaviour may well be threatening, a matter of anxiety, shame, or self-hatred. With a sense of gratitude, the Examen's consideration of who I have been is an expression of openness for discovering who I might become.

The notion of gratitude is also present in the exercises of the First Week proper. The second exercise concludes with a colloquy about mercy, and includes the significant phrase, 'giving thanks to God our Lord that He has given me life up to now' (Exx 61). The colloquy in the Hell meditation makes the point even more strongly. After considering three categories of people who are damned,

⁷ Quoted in Fagin, 'Stirred to Profound Gratitude' on p. 247 from the section on benefactresses in Hugo Rahner's editorial material for *Saint Ignatius Loyola Letters to Women*, translated by Kathleen Pond and S. A. H. Weetman (London: Nelson, 1960 [1956]), p. 170.

. . . I will give Him thanks that He has not let me fall into any of these categories, ending my life, and likewise for how up to now He has always had such great pity and mercy on me. . . . (Exx 71.3-4)

The contrasts between God's wisdom and my ignorance, between God's power and my weakness (Exx 59) are not meant to heighten our sense of guilt, but rather to deepen our gratitude: 'an exclamation of wonder, with increased feeling' (Exx 60.1—*crecido afecto*).

Research has shown that human beings are naturally more prone to negative than positive states. Joy and contentment generally last a few hours, while anxiety or sadness might linger for years, or indeed be the focus of a lifelong struggle.⁸ The First Week goes wrong if it is allowed to reinforce this tendency. Negative states can be successfully counteracted, given a conscious and focused effort. The daily Examen and the First Week can, when the note of gratitude is neglected, undermine our efforts. When we recognise the centrality of gratitude to the texts, the Ignatian First Week becomes a powerful instrument of both spiritual and psychological health. We are encouraged to imagine ourselves as grateful disciples, daily reminding ourselves of the love of a benefactor, intimately involved with our past, our present, and our future. We are drawn into the question: 'what might I do for Christ?' (Exx 53.2). Once again, we see the emotion of gratitude broadening our lives, leading us forward, changing our sense of ourselves, drawing us into the flexible, creative and motivated actions that mark the coming of God's reign.

At the beginning of the Second Week, we contemplate the Incarnation. Like Mary, we freely enlist in the service of her Son; having gratefully received the gift of forgiveness, we become gift-givers. At this time of the retreat, many people begin to imagine how they might undertake a life of service, or how the service they are already giving might be renewed or transformed. This experience itself deepens the sense of gratitude yet further, even if Ignatius does not make the point explicitly. We are drawn into a gracious, ever-continuing spiral of gratitude and service.

⁸Nico H. Frijda, 'The Law of Emotion', *American Psychologist*, 43 (1985), pp. 349-358.

There I was—a hunk of brown drab clay.
No shape, no form, of no use.
Many came and tried to mould me
Into a useful shape so that
I could be used and enjoyed by all.
None were able to accomplish the task!
But then came one who knew what to do.
He worked, kneaded and trimmed and added too.
Slowly, oh ever so slowly, the brown drab clay
Developed into a grace-filled vessel
From which living nature waters could flow . . .

From 'Gratitude', by June Shelton Harris (Charles's mother), 1983.

At the end of the *Spiritual Exercises* we find the Contemplation to Attain Love (Exx 230-237), and once again gratitude is a central theme. Ignatius begins with the two famous sayings about love being shown in deeds rather than words, and about love consisting in mutual interchange, in the sharing of goods, in what we might call gift-giving. Already here, gratitude is an implicit theme. The mutual gift-giving expresses a foundational gratitude in the relationship. Moreover, this gratitude leads us to desire more and more to be drawn into the very being, the love, of God—a desire expressed most eloquently in the 'Take, Lord, receive'. The generative force that draws this love forward is gratitude. Gradually, this gratitude embeds itself ever more naturally and effortlessly in our personalities. We move from simply responding to God with 'thank you' to a sense of God's gracious presence in all things.

One striking point about the responses to my survey was the range of everyday human experiences that sparked gratitude: cherishing interactions with others ('I felt deeply grateful that I was blessed with a close circle of friends'); receiving personal kindnesses; overcoming adversities; encountering surprise; relishing nature; losing oneself in wonder; solving a complex problem; marvelling at someone's inventiveness; coming through seemingly impossible situations. Virtually any experience could elicit a sense of gratitude, if not

immediately then at some later point in time. Even painful experiences could become a source for redemptive insight, and hence something people were grateful for; overwhelming though they might have been at the time, people were later glad to have had them.

Ignatius was convinced that God gifted us through everything imaginable, and thus called us, in our turn, to share forward the many gifts showered upon us. The central Ignatian theme of finding God in all things is dependent on the nearly limitless possibilities for gratitude in everyday life. We can react with awe to the haunting melodies of Mozart's great D minor piano concerto just as we can be transfixed by the soothing gurgle of a flowing stream. Likewise, we can struggle with the intricacies of quantum mechanics or watch intently as a spider methodically weaves its web. We might be humbled by the love another person offers us, or find a place so serene that we enjoy the deepest serenity and peace. Ignatius reminds us that all these things are channels through which grace can flow. If we make time for contemplation, our focus can sharpen, and we can grow to become instinctive seekers of gratitude. Contemplation will help us lose the take-it-for-granted attitude that is blind to God's gifting. At deep levels, we will constantly be asking 'why me?'—not as an expression of existential curiosity, but rather of gratefully embraced humility. Ultimately we will move beyond the gifts to the giver. We will recognise God's presence manifesting itself not only through the world's endless gifts but also within our very selves: the most important gift is the very presence of God that we have become, a gift we are now called to, or even impelled to share.

Gratitude, Paradox, and the Cross

One striking example of a life of gratitude and gift-giving was Mother Teresa. Her attitude to the poor, to the people whom she sought to serve, manifests a striking paradox: she was acutely aware of how the poorest of the poor were in fact gift-givers *to her*, much more abundantly than she was to them:

Do not underestimate our practical means, the work for the poor, no matter how small and humble; they make our life something

beautiful for God. . . . (The poor) . . . are God's most precious gift to our Society—Jesus' hidden presence, so near, so able to touch.⁹

The giver became the gifted; she was the true beneficiary.

This example brings out a further fundamental characteristic of gratitude beyond the three we identified earlier, and perhaps pointing to something more profound: the people whom we gift always do more for us than we can ever do for them. Ask any parent. A parent may lovingly care for a child, at times in heroic ways; but they will also sense that what they receive from the child is somehow far more.

Selfless love When true friends help us in time of need, they see such
brings its actions as gift-receiving rather than gift-giving. A good
own reward teacher knows that what they teach their pupils is far less significant than what they learn from them. It is because selfless love brings its own reward in this way that we can maintain energy for recurring acts of selflessness. There is a paradox of gratitude that defies and turns upside down the common expectations of the world—a paradox not unrelated to the folly and wisdom of the cross.

This connection with the cross might be developed further. The Contemplation to Attain Love follows contemplations on the Lord's resurrection and death. And the links it makes between love and gratitude provoke a question. If Jesus' death was an act of love, was he *grateful* to die, *grateful* to take up the cross?

The standard Gospel sources for Jesus' attitude to the cross are the accounts of the Agony in the Garden preserved in the synoptics. In Mark, Jesus tells his disciples, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death', and prays to the Father:

Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.¹⁰

This latter tradition is unlikely to be historical—after all it refers to a prayer uttered when Jesus' companions were asleep. It is significant that John's gospel preserves the tradition in a significantly different

⁹ Mother Teresa to her Sisters, 25 March 1993, quoted in Josef Neuner, 'Mother Teresa's Charism', *Review for Religious*, 60 (2001), pp. 479-493, here p. 481.

¹⁰ Mark 14: 32-42—compare Matthew 26: 36-46; Luke 22: 39-46.

form.¹¹ But the questions they raise about Jesus' attitude to his own death are real ones.

Standardly, we imagine Jesus' fearful premonition of the horror confronting him. Not even those who hold strong positions about Jesus' awareness of his divinity would deny that the human Jesus felt such fear. But perhaps more needs to be said. Jesus' loving behaviour attests to his profound gratitude—a gratitude extending to his power to give his life away. Perhaps the true source of his distress was not simply his fear of the cross, but rather the confusion between that fear and his growing sense of gratitude for what he was to accomplish. It is his initial inability to reconcile these two impulses that causes his distress; it is the recognition that the gratitude, which is of course a central element in the turmoil, is more profound that resolves it. He comes to be grateful for what he feared.

In Jesus, gratitude pierced through any benumbing fear he may have felt, eradicating the interior confusion and turmoil that he found so incapacitating. Through the reassurance which this gratitude gave him, he could move with all the more clarity and integrity towards the ultimate act of love that was his death, confident that he was giving away the gift which he in person had become.

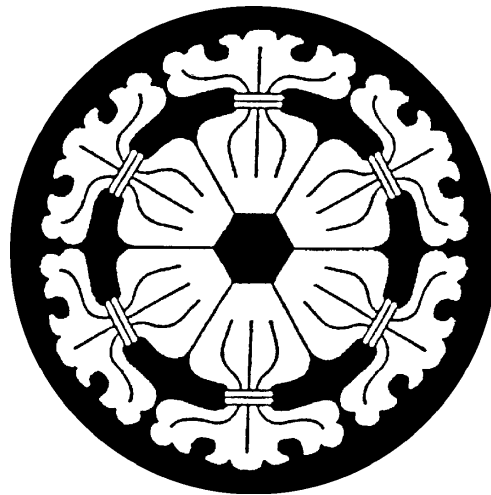
We might also speculate that he began to feel grateful for the very circumstances that were bringing about his death. He could become grateful that through his suffering he was giving himself away and ensuring our salvation. As his judicial murder played itself out, he came to realise that there was a liberating gift in this horror. He came to recognise that, in one sense, what we were doing for him was more than he could ever do for us. As he was establishing salvation as his gift to us, he was receiving—paradoxical as it may seem—our rejection as our gift to him, and was even grateful for it. Thereby he was confirming God's power to transform anything whatever. Grace can be found anywhere, for all is gift.

¹¹ John 12:27-28: "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say?—'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again".

Gratitude, Wellbeing and Mission

We can conclude, then, by recalling that gratitude is vital for human wellbeing. It encourages acts of kindness; it protects us from negative feelings; it sustains our sense of purpose. Most importantly, it reinforces love: it enables us to act generatively out of the love we receive. Human beings are by nature gratitude-seekers; without gratitude our lives are diminished. Ignatius never offered a developed theory of gratitude, but his writings show a keen awareness of gratitude's integral role in fostering spiritual growth, in developing our capacity to appropriate Jesus' mission in our own lives. Gratitude is central to any desire to love as Jesus did, grateful as he was for the opportunity to lay down his life.

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PSYCHODRAMA AND THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Eckhard Frick

PSYCHODRAMA WAS DEVELOPED by the Jewish doctor Jacob Levy Moreno (1884-1974), who was born in Romania and eventually settled in the USA. In the various forms of bibliodrama—a term used to denote psychodrama involving some reference to the Bible—those participating improvise sketches on biblical themes. They are seeking new religious insight by identifying themselves with biblical figures and situations. Bibliodrama may be understood as an open-ended process of interaction between a group and a biblical text.¹ At least for the moment, it seems to be meeting a need. It complements historical and critical approaches to the Bible with something more existential and something involving the body. Its approach to the biblical text may seem pre-modern, but it answers concerns that are post-modern, or even anti-modern.

What happens when an Ignatian retreat includes psychodrama sessions? We once began a psychodrama session during the Exercises, by inviting the group to take up attitudes and gestures. Then we asked them to freeze, to become like statues, and to see what was emerging from the whole group. The group eventually decided to form something like Rodin's sculpture, 'The Burghers of Calais'—six men offering themselves as hostages during the Hundred Years War in return for the siege of Calais being lifted. The central point was the gestures of giving up, the sense of resignation as the keys were to be handed over to the enemy.

All the participants took up the opportunity to adopt various roles within the sculpture, and also to look at the whole from outside. Following this phase of creative statue work, we asked the group what biblical story came into their minds as they were doing the exercise and

¹ The phrase is Karl Frielingsdorf's: 'Bibliodrama' (1994), in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, third edition, vol. 2, p. 415.



physically acting out the roles. The group chose the story of Abraham setting out to sacrifice Isaac. Several variations on the biblical story were then played out, in sketches following one after the other. Quite striking differences became apparent in people's images of God, in their understandings of the father-son relationship, and also between how men and women typically interpreted the story.

There are various kinds of psychodrama and bibliodrama. For the sake of clarity, I shall confine myself to the approach developed by Moreno himself. This form of psychodrama, even when undertaken during an Ignatian retreat, does not necessarily start from a biblical text; it can also begin from what emerges during the group session, or from some personal biographical material presented by one of the participants, such as a dream.²

² See Wilma Scategni, *Psychodrama, Group Processes and Dreams: Archetypal Images of Individuation*, translated by Vincent Marsicano (Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2002 [1996]). For general information in English, see the website www.dryw.freeseerve.co.uk/mainindex.html, notably the glossary of terms.

Psychodrama and Moreno

For Moreno, humanity is primordially relational, interactive: ‘Role playing is prior to the emergence of the self. Roles do not emerge from the self, but the self may emerge from roles.’³ Here ‘role’ denotes all the different structured ways in which we can have experiences or relate to people—not just those which we adopt consciously, but also ‘psychosomatic’ roles, roles which are not so much chosen as inflicted on us by sickness or disability. The different techniques of psychodrama help us to understand the roles we adopt, to work through them, and if need be to grow beyond them. As we become in a new way aware of an all too familiar role we have been playing, we can experiment with abandoning or replacing it—either from our range of other roles or with something quite new.

Psychodrama aims to deepen our relationships. Its approach centres not on the diagnosis of pathologies, but rather on how the stimulus of interpersonal communication can bring to light the healthy parts of the personality. It uses the imagination to let inner images surface. Through the use of such exercises as that of the empty chair—on which the person making the exercise imagines another person sitting—these inner images can then be externalised in the psychodrama.

Psychodrama during Retreats

When the Ignatian Exercises are enriched with bibliodrama or psychodrama, the inner images which arise during the prayer exercises are taken up and, with the group’s help, expressed externally. The levels of vividness may vary from simple gestures or poses to elaborately worked out sketches. From time to time, it might be helpful if the leader gives some content—perhaps, for example, a gospel passage that seems to fit with where most of the exercitants are. But in general, both Ignatian and psychodramatic considerations suggest it is better to let the group make its own choice. Leaders have no special knowledge as to what is appropriate, and it is not their role to pass on some wisdom already processed elsewhere. It is much more the case that they are part of the very process: they take their lead from the

³J. L. Moreno, *Psychodrama* (Beacon, NY: Beacon House, 1977 [1946]), vol. 1, p. 177.

network of relationships and spiritual movements, with Moreno's ideas as a useful resource. What the group actually needs to talk about may be very different from the official, conventional theme, and the discovery of this may well be the result of a genuine discernment in common.

Anything in life can be incorporated into the drama. From the Bible, it is mostly narrative passages that are chosen, because they lead easily to an exploration of how people behave. Similarly, key ideas in the Ignatian Exercises (the Call of the King, Hell, the Incarnation, the Two Standards, and so on) are often re-expressed narratively. Moreover, psychodramatic sessions during retreats need not always use explicitly spiritual material. It can often be the most immediate—and therefore, in the end, the most spiritual—option to dramatize the everyday reality through which the members of the group are currently living. After all, Ignatius wants them to be 'finding God in all things'.

The Magic Shop

It is the fourth day of a ten-day directed retreat. The group has come together for its regular two-hour afternoon session of bibliodrama. Today the leaders are standing behind the counter of an imaginary shop, in which everyone's deepest wishes can be fulfilled. The payment is made not with pounds, dollars or euros, but with Something Important (or also Superfluous, something that I have long wanted to get rid of). One of the participants begins. She wants to get rid of her fear of large groups, and instead begin to enjoy sharing herself with others. Another person wants to come to terms with the conflicts at his work-place, and is prepared in exchange to give up some of his pet ideas. A third person is seeking the courage to carry through her plans—she pays by singing a song, with everyone joining in.

Gradually the whole group, which is observing the interactions, warms to the action. The wishes become more personal and intimate. Above all, those who play the role of customers come to see that they only really gain when they commit something important—a maxim that applies both in the Exercises and in psychodrama. The ultimate 'currency' in this shop consists of human desires: the desire for a full life, expressed through the wishes in the role-play, and emerging gradually in the process of the Exercises through the patient discrimination of spirits.

Jonah in the Belly of the Whale

Before this session, the group had already warmed up with some movement exercises. It became clear that there were two people wanting to act out a drama, in both cases drawing on biblical materials. Karen wanted 'to spend five minutes being Peter so as to ask Jesus something'. Irene wanted to be Jonah thrown into the sea.

The group decided that Karen's wish would not take long, and hence to take up both wishes. Karen asked Tony to take on the role of Jesus, and indicated that he should be distant, with little eye contact. Then she complained to Jesus about his caring for people like the woman who was a sinner, while almost ignoring his disciples. Then she and Tony exchanged roles: now Karen took on the role of Jesus. 'That's true', she found herself saying, 'but I've still got big plans for you lot'. Tony then gave his feedback about how he had experienced the two roles, and the group proceeded to reflect together on the theme of rivalry among the disciples. It became clear that the role was tapping in to something left over from the previous day for Karen. She expressed this, and briefly acted it out, before the group turned to Irene's wish to enact the Jonah story.

Using some furniture, one of the men in the group represents the ship: other participants chosen by Irene are sailors, waving brightly coloured cloths as sails. Edward is the steersman and Paul the captain. Irene tells them both how she understands their role.

Inanimate objects too can be represented by people. Irene chooses Karen to be a bottle of red wine. Her idea is that this should be drunk during the drawing of lots to discover the guilty person—but during the role-play this gets forgotten. Two of the women represent the rising storm.

The final scene-setting and the beginning of the play itself are high-spirited, reminiscent of a farce: the captain leads Jonah to the cabin where he is to sleep. When the storm comes, one of the sailors becomes sick. Water is pumped out, and the captain shouts orders all over the place. Tony takes on the role of the one who says, 'it's the foreigner's fault', and later, 'we need to throw the foreigner overboard'. The captain fetches Jonah, and there then develops a long dialogue, with Irene and Paul exchanging roles several times.

'I don't want to jump in myself; I want to be thrown', says Irene, playing nervously with a piece of thread in a way that expresses not

only fear and despair, but also a hope for survival. It is when Paul is Jonah that the actual throwing overboard first takes place. Irene (as the Captain) blindfolds him, drags him to the railing with two of the sailors, and throw him gently into the sea. All cry out: 'we've got rid of *him*, but the ship is still in danger'. But then the storm calms down (in truth it had not been very active for some minutes), and the whole assembly cries: 'what a great God is the God of Jonah!'

Then this part of the story is played out again, with the roles reversed. When Irene falls into the sea, her face expresses relief. She remains there, crouched down, playing with the thread that represents her whole life. 'I'm going to fall into a deep sleep, perhaps into a coma. I know the whale is coming. But somehow it will all carry on . . . '

The group discussion is marked by rich sharing: many of the participants talk about their own experiences of fear and anxiety. Irene herself begins to come to terms with her own childhood, that had been marked by serious sickness and the threat of death, and also with how the fear she had suffered, and her long hospitalisation, had affected her whole life.

Helpfulness and Unhelpfulness

A group who made this sort of retreat were asked for their reactions. Some found the novelty disturbing; others found it both stimulating and challenging. People regularly criticized the failure to make a sufficiently clear distinction between drama based on the Bible and psychodrama in general—the input that had been given had clearly not met the concern. These people were looking for straight biblical material without reference to personal biographies; they found the role-plays irritating (though what they wrote made it clear that this was not always the case). Some found that the Exercises and the psychodrama did not fit together, and to some extent got in each other's way—though others found the relationship more integrated. It is clear that any retreat of this kind needs to be very clearly explained beforehand. On this occasion, much had been said on the subject during the conversations with prospective participants, but it had not been fully heard by many of them. Nevertheless, despite the reservations, all took part fully. Both in individual sessions and in group discussions, the similarities and differences between the Exercises and psychodrama were thoroughly explored.

Moreno and Ignatius

Heike Radeck, a Protestant theologian, has studied the theme of psychodrama and the Exercises very thoroughly, both theoretically and practically.⁴ She draws on the literary theory of Wolfgang Iser (reader-response theory) and on the work of Gerhard Martin, the leading authority on bibliodrama in the German Protestant churches.

According to Iser, fictive texts do not depict reality directly. The text is a collection of empty spaces that only become complete when a person reads it, and lets their inner imaginary world be stimulated by what they read. The written text provides a perspective and a stimulus, but the whole reality that is meaning occurs only when the reader enters into relationship with the text. Signs may refer to something beyond themselves, but this principle must not be understood simply in terms of denotation. In fictive texts, the sign serves not to describe or depict, but rather to begin a process of opening us to something new.

**Meaning occurs
when the reader
enters into
relationship
with the text**

Radeck understands both bibliodrama and the Exercises in these terms, as ways in which people appropriate what are fictive—as opposed to doctrinal or factual—texts:

Against this background, what we are encouraged to receive by bibliodrama and by the Exercises can be understood as the presentation of 'empty spaces'. The Ignatian *contemplaciones* encourage a carrying over of the biblical scenes into the symbolic world of each person, which will always be different and personal. They pass on what the biblical figures intend to do . . . as an 'empty space' of the text, which the exercitant can then play out on their own inner stage. Perhaps, too, the other imaginative procedures are to be understood not so much in terms of filling out the scenic details that are not there in the text, but rather as a stimulus towards the construction of meaning.⁵

⁴ Heike Radeck, *Ignatianische Exerzitien und Bibliodrama: Ein hermeneutischer Strukturvergleich* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1998). See Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (London: Routledge, 1978 [1976]); Gerhard L. Martin, *Sachbuch Bibliodrama: Praxis und Theorie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001 [1995]).

⁵ Radeck, *Ignatianische Exerzitien und Bibliodrama*, p. 139.

Radeck's understanding of the Protestant *sola scriptura* principle leads her to distinguish the style of bibliodrama developed by Martin that she favours both from Moreno's psychodrama and from the Ignatian Exercises. For Radeck, Moreno's psychodrama is fundamentally determined by biography, even if its content contains biblical elements. It is simply a 'springboard into biography'. By contrast, bibliodrama involves an 'interactive play between the text and the subjective experience of the participants'. She sees Martin's stress on the text itself as marking a fundamental difference between bibliodrama and psychodrama.

This Protestant preoccupation with the biblical text also conditions Radeck's understanding of the Ignatian Exercises. She can fall into the clichés of cheap controversy, although her writing is in general hermeneutically sophisticated and ecumenical in spirit. Radeck is worried that this approach leads to arbitrary and individualistic interpretations, to readings arising simply from people's whims and subjectivity. For Radeck:

In true bibliodrama, the text is not 'exploited' in this kind of way or—to put the matter differently—reduced to the scope of individual life-projects. Gerhard Marcel Martin puts forward a style of 'dramatization' which is not pursuing any agenda of this kind, any interest which somehow governs the interaction between the biblical text and the participants.

Radeck's criticisms, however, need qualifying. Neither in classical psychodrama nor in the Exercises is the biblical text 'exploited'. Nor does the kind of personal meaning sought emerge from the use of only some methods and the avoidance of others. Practitioners both of classical psychodrama and of the Exercises can agree with how Radeck, following Martin who supervised her doctorate, names as the goal 'the interaction between the biblical text and the participants'. When, however, she elaborates the point about the avoidance of a particular agenda, it is clear that Radeck's commitments to Reformed Christianity have run away with her:

There are at least two aspects of the Exercises which seem problematic for modern Protestants. Firstly, the fact that Ignatius has quite openly made piety a set of techniques, something you can learn and teach, something divided up into steps and encompassed

in methods. Secondly, the way in which the Catholic magisterium strictly regulates existential decision-making.⁶

The author, for all her care and courtesy, is being influenced here by the image of the Exercises as an instrument of power and indoctrination. Perhaps some Jesuits have used the Exercises in that way in the past, but this kind of polemic is impeding serious discussion of the issues. It clearly is the case that any sort of bibliodramatic work, of whatever psychological school or confessional origin, is in danger of becoming ideological. The best ways of countering this danger are a clear awareness of one's methods and their limits, and a careful process of reflection.

There are, as we have noted, questions about the congruence between psychodramatic activity and the silence, the contemplative process, of the Exercises. Radeck has some useful points to make here. She lists various elements that she takes from the Exercises tradition, and suggests that they could indeed enrich her version of bibliodrama. The change in focus that comes with First Week conversion might deepen the way in which bibliodrama works with the body, 'providing an access to the fundamental dynamic for each person through their spontaneous bodily reactions'.⁷ The Ignatian prayer of desire can enhance the vitality of those taking part in bibliodramatic exercises. The conversation with a director helps foster the process of discernment.

Role-Play and Role-Reversal

We can end by highlighting two points that are central not only to Moreno's method but also to his understanding of the human person as both creative and spiritual. When *role-play* is used during the retreat, exercitants get in touch with resources from their unconscious. These resources deepen people's reading of the text in a way that is then brought into the group. It is their inner world of images that comes into contact with the text's 'empty spaces', filling the text out in the way appropriate to the moment, presenting the result for objective checking by the group, and finally—as Martin would have it—

⁶ Radeck, *Ignatianische Exerzitien und Bibliodrama*, p. 154.

⁷ Radeck, *Ignatianische Exerzitien und Bibliodrama*, p. 160.

returning to the text. It is the person's own creativity and spontaneity, open as it is to transcendence, that leads them forward, not the leaders' pedagogical purpose or their sober reflective theology.

For its part, Moreno's *role-reversal* is not just a technique, but rather a form of expression utterly basic to Christianity. In our very flesh, the mystery of an incarnate God is being expressed—a God who, in a 'wonderful exchange' became, as the Philippians hymn has it, like a slave. The exchange of roles in bibliodrama is a way of putting oneself in the very place of the other, and as such is a profoundly Christian exercise. Not everyone who gives Ignatian Exercises needs to offer psychodrama sessions. But Moreno's version of bibliodrama is certainly a form of mystagogy. Like the Ignatian Exercises, it leads people into the mystery of God.

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