The Role of Psychology in Formation

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6) The Role of Psychology in Formation

1) Primary Objective/Fundamental Goal of Priestly/Religious/Monastic Formation:

- Goal/objective ⟶ Beginning with the end (St. Albert: <**In omnibus respice finem**! > "In all things, look to the end" (Focus on your goal)

1.1) THE IDENTITY OF THE PRIEST IS defined in his relationship to Jesus Christ.

The priests are *a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ*, the head and shepherd because the Holy Spirit configures *them in a new and a special way to Jesus* (PDV, 15), that is *to be* a "**living and transparent image** *of Christ the Priest*" (PDV, 12) and *to "act in the name and person of Christ"* -in persona Christi- (PDV, 20), so as "to be **configured** to **Christ"** (*PDV 15) 'in his being' (PDV, 18).* This is said to be an 'ontological bond' (PDV, 11) which affects the 'very being of the priest' (PDV, 16), i.e. in the 'thinking and acting proper to Jesus Christ' (PDV, 21) which culminates in pastoral charity of imitating 'Christ in his self-giving and service' (PDV, 23)

1.2) THE IDENTITY OF THE RELIGIOUS/MONK IS defined in his relationship to Jesus Christ.

A Religious is called to an imitation of Christ and to union with God through the profession of the evangelical counsels (Perfectae Caritatis, 2); to imitate Christ the <u>virgin</u> and the <u>poor man</u>, who by an <u>obedience</u> which carried Him even to death on the cross, redeemed men and made them holy (Perfectae Caritatis, 1). Since the very purpose of consecrated life is '**conformity** *to the Lord Jesus in His total self-giving'* (VC, 65) the religious are called **to become true signs** *of Christ* **in the world** (VC, 25). Therefore Formation is a path of "gradual identification with the attitude of Christ towards the Father" (VC, 65).

The goal of *formation* is, therefore, to enable the candidate **to develop a profound identification** with the person of Jesus Christ**. Identification?** It means 'personalizing' and 'internalizing'. It is based **not on external similitude/resemblance** (e.g. an actor who plays a part of a character) but on an internal transformation (an **inner process** of **becoming** conformed to) that is "sacramental" (configuration in the case of priesthood), spiritual and psychological.

For the Priest: internalization of Christ's <u>Priestly Ideals</u> which enables the priest to be configured to Jesus Christ which allows him to act sacramentally "*in persona Christi*".

For the Religious/Monk: internalization of Christ's <u>Evangelical Ideals/Monastic Ideals</u> which enables the consecrated person to conform to (i.e. *imitate* and become *a true sign* of) Jesus Christ.

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Goal: To develop a profound identification with JESUS (to be **configured** to **CHRIST** for the priest, *PDV 15*, and to be **conformed** to **CHRIST** for the religious, *VC 65*)

↓

Formation is to enable the candidate
to personalize and internalize the priestly ideals and/or evangelical ideals of
Jesus Chris**t**

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2) The internalization of priestly/evangelical ideals of Jesus Christ vz Dynamics fostering such attitudinal and behaviour change

-If the goal of formation is to enable the candidate to personalize and internalize the priestly/evangelical ideals of Jesus Christ then **a practical question** immediately rises: ° **How** can we do this? °**What** are the **formative processes** that need to take place during the years of seminary and religious training in order to bring about this essential goal? °What are the **means necessary** to attain this end?

This is based on *two important theological presuppositions*:

i) The priestly **vocation is a gratuitous gift of divine grace** and cannot be properly understood except within the context of revealed faith (*Pastores Dabo Vobis, nn. 35-36: AAS 84, 1992, 714-718*).

ii) That **divine grace is normally offered and mediated through the structures and dynamics of the human psyche** of which God, the Creator, is the author. Therefore it is baseless to pretend "that grace supplies for the defects of nature in such a man" (*Sacerdotalis Caelibatus of Pope Paul VI, 1967, n. 64*).

-Social Psychologist **Herbert C. Kelman** sought to uncover **the dynamics at work in attitudinal and behavior change**. He describes **3 processes** which help to explain why people adopt or change opinions, attitudes and ways of acting: *compliance, identification and internalization*.

i) Compliance (**compliant self-interest**): occurs when a person's ideas, attitudes and actions are adopted / influenced principally by **the desire to gain a reward or to avoid punishment**. These influences may be physical or psychological in character and not infrequently they are *partially or completely unconscious*.

e.g. Giving powerful incentives such as a bonus, other benefits etc, Installation of a time clock if the company wants the employees to arrive at work on time, regular monitoring & evaluation.
e.g. A priest or a religious: accepting a difficult appointment/transfer because he is afraid that he will lose the bishops/superiors favour. Obedience should be motivated by love and not fear for "*There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear*" (1 Jn 4:18)
e.g. wanting to hold on to a certain position because it serves some hidden (purely unconscious) purpose/pleasure.

Compliance, however, does not mean commitment; it usually means blind obedience and conformity.
"*I exhort you…to tend the flock of God….not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it, **nor for sordid gain** but eagerly*" (1 Pet 5: 2).

Examples: going to prayers due to fear, rejection; saying the 'right' answer, agreeing to gain approval; not questioning to appear 'good'; saying 'yes' to avoid problems; doing an act to pacify a superior; pleasing the mother, avoiding the father's punishment.

Formation Model: The emphasis is on reward, punishment, control by the emotions; fear of not conforming; being disliked, 'kicked out'; Behavioural model: formator as approver. Dependency and insecurity are encouraged.

ii) Identification (**identificatory self-gratification**): occurs when attitudes and actions are adopted because of **the desire to be part of a group or to maintain a relationship with an important, admired or loved person**. Identification can lead to, but is not yet, commitment.

E.g. A person quits smoking not because he has considered all the reasons and finds them convincing, but because his friend, a reformed smoker, strongly encourages him to do so and he starts trying because he wants to maintain the relationship.
E.g. I obey because the superior because he happened to be my friend/classmate/ or because *I feel* that he is fond of me.
E.g. A person remaining in priesthood/religious life because of his mother, because of another priest-friend / bishop-friend or a priest leaving or joining a diocese because of a particular bishop.

Examples: Living the values of a club because of the name gained…a gang, high class school, well-respected group, social class; being a priest due to its status; a Brother as they wear special clothes, run a good school…

Formation Model: Team work, togetherness, being with; being like…; we do it this way….we are good; belonging, modeling; 'do this because he does it'; fear of being outcast; focus is on the group and the group forms the group.

iii) Internalization: occurs when attitudes, opinions and ways of acting are adopted and maintained because the person understands that this is **the right thing to do**. The person's attitudes, actions and decisions are **congruent with *his personal beliefs and value system***.

e.g. *a priest/religious obeys **not** for the sake of gaining the esteem of those who are in authority to be in the good books of (identification) or in order to gain some favour (compliance), or because the superior happened to be one's friend/class mate (identification), **but because** (of conviction that) this action is congruent with his understanding of the nature of sacerdotal/religious commitment (internalization).*

In his Constitution St. Ignatius writes "*Genuine obedience considers not the person to whom it is offered* (identification) *but Him for whose sake it is offered*" (Internalization) (The Instruction, '*Service of Authority and Obedience'*, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 2008, n. 11). St. Benedict says that obedience will be acceptable to God only if it is done "*without hesitation, delay, lukewarmness, grumbling or objection…..with a good will….not necessarily with his lips but with the heart*" (RB, 5:14-17).

-As a result (of internalization) he/she will accept the cost of discipleship, **the prize to be paid** *with Joy:* "that we must go through much tribulation and enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22),

Examples: Prayer is seen as an essential part of my life, linked to my relationship with God, my call, my vows, the meaning of my life; I work with the poor, due to the spirit of the gospels, a preferential option for the poor, my own belief that is part of my life.

Formation Model: Focus on the presentation of Values, and processes to assist their Internalization, challenging Compliance and some forms of Identification. Emphasis is on individual growth; reflection on emotions and experiences in the context of the gospel values.

What is Internalization? = **personalization of values and ideals** proposed by ones Religious Charism & the Church (the motivation is from within)

- It is a question of **right motivation**:
* **What is important for me**' *(apparent good)***:** the thing is important **in so far as it is agreeable and satisfying for me**; and if it is not, the thing ceases to be important and becomes indifferent or neutral (subjective importance)

* **What is important in itself** *(the real good)* (irrespective of whether it is agreeable or satisfying for me or not): **the thing remains important apart from any effect it may have on me.** e.g. thus it is intrinsically good that a person forgive; forgiveness is something which *should* be done: "*Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing*" (Lk 23: 34). (Objective importance)

-All these three processes are typically found in normal human life.
For example, a person may observe the road code for fear of getting caught (compliance), share certain opinions/prejudices with his sporting friends (identification), and tell the truth because he knows this is the right thing to do (internalization).

3) <u>Difficulties Encountered in Internalizing Priestly/Religious Ideals</u>

In the parable of the sower and the seed (Mt. 13) Our Lord explains that God's call bears **different degrees** of fruit because *each person responds to divine grace with different dispositions*. This parable has its application to the present discussion:

- Why is it some persevere and some quit?
- **Why is it that some** seminarians/priests/religious become **negative, bitter, wounded, criticizing, tired and frustrated**?
- Why is it that some get into a **vegetative state of existence**: no life, no zest, no sacrifices, no creativity?
- Why do some remain blind (**ignorant** of what's happening inside of themselves)?
- Why do some people become remain **rigid, head-strong and obstinate** in their decisions and glued to their own ideas?
- Why there are failures in celibacy/Chastity).
- Why is it some people **crave for recognition and become fully absorbed in once own importance ('self-importance' or grandiosity)** in ministry?

In trying to **unravel the complex web of factors** behind these questions, I believe **the Church can be assisted by some of the findings of psychology** (and in particular of depth psychology). **The process of transformation through internalization** seems prone to **different kind of resistance**: "*I cannot understand my own behaviour. I fail to carry out the things that I want to do, and finally myself doing the very things that I hate*" (Rom 7:15).

Traditionally, seminary educators and formators have recognized *2 kinds of struggle* in the lives of candidates (*Linee comuni per la vita dei nostri seminari, nota della Commissione Episcopale per il clero della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, Roma;* pubblicata il 25 aprile 1999, *n. 13*) who wish to grow in their vocation:

- **Lack of desire**
- **Lack of capacity**

(i) Lack of desire: the first difficulty is **a form of resistance**, is the **spiritual struggle** in **those who know and understand priestly/religious virtues and ideals** but who find themselves – **inexplicably- pulled in another direction: an inner restlessness and distraction**. Given that **this tension is conscious**, and the person remains **essentially free**, the person finds himself engaged in the **age-old** *struggle between virtue and sin*. This is *the realm of the confessor and spiritual director.*

Virtue ⬅➡ Sin

Failure → here the person has the *knowledge and freedom to choose between virtue and sin*.
So it is **refusal**: "I won't"

(ii) Lack of capacity: ability to pursue freely chosen goals based on personal ideals is significantly diminished or even destroyed by **limitations in the psychic structure**. Such limitation **may be the result of** some kind of **blockage during the early years of development**, or some **psychological disorder** that emerged later in life. These persons are clearly **unsuitable** for priesthood/religious life **because of their restricted capacity to assume the responsibilities** of priestly/religious life and ministry. This tension, born of the *struggle between normality and psychopathology*, is *the realm of the psychiatrist and the psychologist*.

- "**Errors in discerning vocations are not rare, and in all too many cases psychological defects, sometimes of a pathological kind, reveal themselves only after ordination to the priesthood….**detecting defects earlier would help avoid many tragic experiences" ('A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy', Congregation for Catholic Education, *No. 4*). Therefore it is important to keep in mind of the **"need to pick up on any psychopathic disturbances present in the candidate"** (Guidelines for the use of Psychology in the admission and formation of the candidates for the priesthood, *No. 4*).

Normality ⬅➡ Psychopathology

Failure → is not a refusal but an **incapacity**: "I can't"

(iii) A third kind of struggle: *LACK OF AWARENESS*

Studies in modern 'depth psychology' has revealed an existential state where it is possible for a basically normal person to consciously profess certain religious beliefs and ideals (such as celibacy for the sake of the kingdom) while, without being aware of it, being moved by unconscious forces which may be contrary to those same ideals. Like a revolving door with several compartments, the person is effectively saying *a conscious 'yes'* *and a hidden 'no'* *at one and the same time* without awareness of what is taking place. It's **a conflict/struggle between consciously desired ideals and values (in the ideal self) vs unconscious driven forces (in the actual self)**.

3 KINDS OF STRUGGL: *A tool for Psycho-spiritual diagnosis*

Lack of desire I Dimension	Lack of awareness II Dimension	Lack of capacity III Dimension

"Do I make my plans like a worldly man, ready to say Yes and No at once? As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No…..but in Him it is always Yes" (**1Cor 1: 17-19**).

"..It seems that it would be impossible to understand and explain the human being, his dynamism as well as his conscious acting and actions, if we were to base our considerations on consciousness alone. In this respect, as it seems, potentiality of *the subconscious comes first*; it is primary and more indispensable than consciousness for the interpretation of the human dynamism as well as for the interpretation of conscious acting" (Wojtyla, Karol Józef, Card. *The Acting Person*. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publ. Co. 1979a, P. 93).

In his 1987 **address to the Apostolic Tribunal of the Roman Rota**, **Pope John Paul II** makes **three significant references** to the unconscious:
> -in (n.2) recognizing the progress made by contemporary psychology and psychiatry, he speaks of "**the psychic processes of the person, both conscious and unconscious**";
> -in (n.5) addressing the question of factors that can limit human freedom, he speaks of "**the influence of the unconscious on ordinary psychic life**":
> -in (n.7) listing the possible causes of **marriage breakdown**, he mentions "blocks of an **unconscious nature**" (G. Versaldi, "Momentum et consectaria Allocutionis Ioanis Pauli II ad Auditors Romanae Rotae diei 5 februarii 1987" in *Periodica* 77, 1988, pp. 119-120)

Therefore psychology can "*furnish the candidate with a deeper knowledge of his personality, and can contribute to overcoming, or rendering less rigid, **his psychic resistances** to what his formation is proposing*" (Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of the Candidates for the Priesthood, Congregation for Catholic Education, no.9)

Failure → Characterized by puzzling and paradoxical behaviours → sometimes partially free and partially responsible: "**I want to .. but don't know how**"

This creates a state of **internal tension, a dichotomy** within the psyche, leaving the person in a **situation of frustration** called '**Vocational Inconsistency**'. The person is inconsistent in the sense of being **moved/pulled by two sets of opposing forces,** one being *the ideals that are consciously desired and chosen; the other being **the underlying needs by which the person feels unconsciously driven**.*

In short: a possibility exists, then, of an inconsistency (opposition/dichotomy/ disharmony/incompatibility/contradiction/disagreement) between the Ideal Self and the Actual Self, and this inconsistency may be conscious or unconscious.

Consciously desired **Ideals/Values**	⬅➡	**Unconsciously** driven **Needs**

"*The dichotomy affecting the modern world is a symptom of **a deeper dichotomy** that is within the human person. We are the meeting point of **many conflicting forces…... we are compelled to choose between them** and reject some possibilities. Worse still, feeble and sinful as we are, **we often do the very things we hate and fail to do the things we want to do**. And so we feel ourselves divided*" (Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, #10).

Such a person, **is rarely able to perceive its root causes which remains hidden** (*L. M. Rulla SJ, Anthropology of Christian Vocation, Vol I, Gregorian University Press, Rome, 1986, pp.170-203*).

-"**Formation should involve the whole person, in every aspect of the personality, in *behaviour and intention*** " (Vita Consecrata, 65) and the need "***to perceive the candidate's true motivations***" is of prime importance (*Guidelines for the use of Psychology in the admission and formation of the candidates for the priesthood*, Congregation for Catholic Education, No 4).

4) Classification of Inconsistencies

Contents of Structures

Values – are abstract and enduring ideals which are regarded as ideal end states (terminal values) or ideals ways of behaving. There are 'three classes of values'.

(i) Natural values: the values proper to human nature – which dispose the person to transcend himself in an ego-centric or social-philanthropic self-transcendence; i.e. values which have no direct bearing on Christian vocation. These values do not directly engage the person's freedom (i.e. bodily health, intelligence, strength of will – as far as these are natural endowments, and also success or prosperity). In ego-centric self-transcendence the primary goal is the perfection of the subject who transcends himself. The goal of the human person is self-actualization in areas such as knowledge, possessions, power, love or being whatever one desires. Social-philanthropic self-transcendence is concerned with the perfection of the human community or of humanity in general (i.e. communist revolution) and seeks the progressive self-transcendence of humanity until a point when all its requirements are perfectly fulfilled (*third and second dimensions*)

(ii) Self-transcendent values are objective values which the human person tends towards if their horizon is sufficiently open. We are naturally orientated towards these values due to our inherent *conscious intentionality* which seeks to know and love in an unrestricted manner. This desire to know means we are free to go beyond natural values to transcend ourselves towards theo-centric love; one aspires to God or the Absolute. Being able to receive the gift of divine grace is an anthropological *capacity*, this capacity can favour or oppose the subject's vocational response to God depending on it's openness towards growth. This capacity to respond to objective self-transcendent values is possible because of the exercise of our *freedom* and *responsibility* which engages the whole person and defines who they are (*first dimension*). These **objective self-transcendent values** include *moral and religious values* which engage the *whole* person by the absolute character of their demand and so engage his freedom to act towards self-transcendence. The more a person is free, the more he can transcend himself in living moral and religious values; while the more a person is limited in his inner freedom the less he can be open to self-transcendent values.

(iii) Objective self-transcendent values and natural values *in combination* form the basic dialectic on the second dimension as the motivating factors influencing these two types of values may be in contradiction – self-transcendent values favouring theo-centric self-transcendence and natural values favouring self-transcendence which is only an ego-centric or social-philanthropic self-transcendence (second dimension).

Attitudes – are defined as a mental state of readiness to respond organised through experience and exerting a dynamic or directive influence on the mental and physical activities. Attitudes may spring from needs or values or both contemporarily.

Needs – are tendencies arising from a deficit of the organism or from inherent natural potentialities which seek actuation or exercise. Needs are either vocationally dissonant or neutral.

Values: V, Attitudes: A, Needs: N

Social consistency (SC):

It is present when **a need** (conscious or subconscious) **is in harmony (in agreement/consonant) with vocational values** (interiorly) and with also **in harmony (in agreement/consonant) with its corresponding attitude,** the action tendency (outwardly).

A+ V+ N+

For example a religious proclaims **poverty as a value (V+) (interiorly adapted)**. His **need to acquire (N+) is low**. Therefore the person lives **a simple life using with whatever is necessary for him to survive (A+)** and not being driven to acquire things and hence **(socially adapted)**. He will experience integration and wholeness because his values, needs, and attitudes are in the same direction. Here the individual is socially well adapted and is called social consistency.

Social Inconsistency (SoI):

It is present when a subconscious **need is not in harmony** (*in disagreement* /dissonant) **with the values** and of vocation while t**he attitude obeys the need more than the values** (i.e. the attitudes are also in disagreement with the Values).

(A- V+ N-)
Psychologically and interiorly = unadapted,
Socially and outwardly = unadapted,

For example a priest who has promised **celibacy (V+)** is driven/pulled by a strong need for **affective dependence (N-)** which is not in harmony with values proclaimed (so interiorly unadapted); and is also in continuous search to distract himself by engaging in various types of relationships/friendships and as a result **neglects his prayer life (A-)** (socially unadapted).

Psychological Consistency (PsC):

It is present when a subconscious **need is consonant/in harmony** (compatible/in agreement/consonant) with **vocational values** but **not in harmony** (in disagreement/**dissonant) with its corresponding attitude** (action tendency).

Psychologically and interiorly = adapted,
Socially and outwardly = unadapted/ maladjusted

N+ V+ A-

For example a religious holds high the value of vow of **chastity (V+)** and wishes to be unattached to anyone. This seems to be leading her for a wanting **autonomy (N+)**. In the meantime she is reluctant to participate in programmes where **involvement with members of the opposite sex** is needed **(A-)**.
-a priest who likes **to serve the poor and help others (V+)** driven by a need for **nurturance (N+)** but **gets angry** when things not done according to his ways **(A-)**.
-a religious called to be in the **ministry of shepherding** and she likes it **(V+).** She has followed many **programmes on 'management'** and is also ready to **work hard and organize functions well** even without taking rest **(Achievement N+)**. But she also shows signs of being so **hard, demanding and so rigid towards her members (A-)** to the extent that they get fed-up with her and no longer wants to associate with her.

It is present when a *subconscious need is not in harmony (in disagreement/dissonant) with both the values* and with its corresponding *attitude*. (But the attitude is in harmony with the value).

   N- V+ A+

   Socially and outwardly = appear to be adapted

   Psychologically and interiorly = not adapted

For example

-Someone who wants to follow Jesus by washing the feet of others in perfect **service (V+)** as a result she always goes out **vising families and enjoying meals with them (A+)**. But she is led by a subconscious need for **Succorance** which is *to be helped by, to be taken care of and to be served by others* **(N-). Here** the need is **incompatible**/not in harmony/not in agreement with the **values** professed in religious life. This need is also **incompatible**/not in harmony with his **attitudes** (action tendencies), because as religious they should be directed more in the opposite direction of forgetting ones comforts). This individual, exteriorly a good religious, is psychologically inconsistent. She manifests **a tendency to help others**, **but in fact** has a need of a defensive nature, since in the last analysis; **she wants to give in order to receive**.

-*"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Mt 20:28).

     Conscious Yes = I want to give; to help; I became a religious to serve

     Subconscious No = but in reality I want to receive acceptance & affection;

          e.g. Therefore I like visiting families because it is a way to be served by them.

          e.g. I like preaching because I receive praise & recognition

- **Value** (service/charity)

-the hidden (real) motive/subconscious **need** → *to be helped by, to be served by (and to depend on) others*

-**Attitude**: outwardly he manifests the opposite: a tendency to help the poor

     Attitude (to give) is incompatible with the need (to get)

     Attitude (to give) is compatible outwardly with the Value (service = a form of giving)

Socially this person <u>may appear</u> well adapted because attitudes go in harmony with the proclaimed values. But Attitudes may be the **expressions of the defence of the unconscious and contradictory needs**. In some cases individuals seem very available and charitable, but in sub-conscious level it may be out of the desire to receive care from others.

V+ (service), A+ (helping), N- (to get)

Another example

Value = Prayer
Need = To be away from developing relationships, to avoid facing problems

Attitude = most of the time inside the chapel
   N- V+ A+
This is an unconscious ulterior motive.

5) A Research conducted by Fr. *L. M. Rulla SJ*, the founding father of the Institute of Psychology at the Gregorian University, Rome and his colleagues show that <mark>**most candidates** entering seminaries and religious life, <u>though psychologically normal</u>, are influenced by underlying inconsistencies</mark> (second dimension: lack of awareness). After four years of seminary formation only a very small percentage of candidates had come to a greater awareness of the presence of the hidden obstacles having negative influence on their vocational growth and especially their growth in affective maturity. This leaves **60-80% of seminary candidates with underlying tensions that can have a profound effect on their motivation** which, in turn, **limits their capacity to internalize and personalize priestly ideals**. The conclusions of the research are startling. The prolonged effect of this state of **unrecognized internal tension** leads to,

   -a reduced desire for the spiritual life,
   -a lack of enthusiasm for priestly ministry,
   -frustration and projecting it to others around the person
   -the presence of psychosomatic and sexual tensions,
   -ambiguity in living priestly celibacy,
   -and a compromised capacity to witness to the person of Jesus Christ
   -perseverance and effectiveness in priestly vocation was seen to be significantly related to the <u>absence</u> of vocational inconsistencies,
   -while the abandonment of priestly vocation, both before and after ordination, was seen to be highly related to the <u>presence</u> of such inconsistencies

Therefore these studies have shown **that conscience motivation is not the entire motivation why individuals choose religious life and priesthood**. There could be also an **unconscious/subconscious motivation.**

The conscience motivation for entrance: *personal and institutional ideals*
Candidates choose the religious institution/seminary on the basis of ***personal ideals that is* at the level of proclaimed values** (i.e. Ideal Self = *what they would like to become* than on the basis of *what they consciously are).* This remains a quite idealized conceptualization of the institution they have chosen. They *attribute to the institution the qualities of their ideal self*. E.g. I join to work in the Lords vineyard or to serve the Lord or to serve the poor or to work for the kingdom or to preach the Good News.

However **man is not motivated solely by his ideals.**

The subconscious motivation for entrance:

There is a strong tendency in candidates **to idealize either their own personality or the religious institution**, therefore there is **a lack of realism in the choice** (to enter). The lack of realism is related to the presence of **unconscious needs dissonant with proclaimed vocational values** (unconscious inconsistencies). Therefore the choice of a vocation and a decision to enter may not only be the fruit of a freely chosen ideal but also the result of unconscious needs. Some individuals without knowing it choose a religious vocation **with the aim of gratifying their needs, or in a defensive effort to resolve their conflicts or inconsistencies**. The vocational motivation of a great no. of candidates (60-80%) was marked by attitudes at the service of subconscious needs: attitudes maintained either to defend the self against these needs or to satisfy them.

Therefore the *ideals formed consciously may be a result of subconscious forces.*

Some examples:
✓ "*I join the Religious life/seminary to serve the Lord (conscious) – Because it is a haven of security which I didn't experience at home and a way of taking care of my needs and future; I hated my father/home environment and so my vocation is another type of escapism from the home environment*" (unconscious/subconscious = Avoid censure or failure).

✓ "*I join the seminary to serve the poor, to serve God's people, I am a people-oriented priest (conscious) – I want to be close to people, to be affectionately loved and cared by them; I get upset when I don't receive a wish or greeting or a card for my birthday*" (unconscious/subconscious = affective dependence/fulfills dependency needs).

✓ "*I love to remain single; not to marry; and dedicate my life to the Lord and to work in the Youth Apostolate" (conscious) - "I have some attachment issues*" (unconscious/subconscious = sexual gratification).

Therefore "Formation should involve the whole person, in every aspect of the personality, in behaviour and **intention**" (VC 65)

Some figures from the research

The prevalence of subconscious motivation: between 60% and 80% influenced by subconscious needs and dynamics.

The persistence of vocational inconsistencies: At the moment of entrance 86% of the male religious and 87% of the female religious were ignorant, totally or in part, of their central conflict/s and after 4 years of formation, 83% if the men, and 82% of the women were still ignorant of such conflicts.

Regressive repetition: **The subject in his current relation** *with authority, or with his peers or with his subjects* **relives a relationship he had with members of his family during infancy or adolescence**. The results show that **69% of the male religious and 67% of female religious** seem to establish some **transferential relationship** in the course of their formation (and even later as grown-ups). **Some formators/superiors/priest/religious, due to their own subconscious dynamics at work, can encourage the perpetuation of a 'tranferential relationship'.**

e.g.1. -"*I loved my mother and so did she; and I was the mama's boy; I got all the attention the world can give from her - now I am a priest of 45 years and still needs a 'pat on the shoulder' from everyone and specially from my superiors at every turn*
-Ah! I don't get that from the superiorrrr and so here I am eternally fighting with him; I don't know why I hate my superiors but what I know is that I do hate them".
e.g.2. – "*I have bad memories of my mother/father/teacher who used to punish me. My present superiors reminds me of her (may be because the superior has got some psychological and/or physical features of this particular person). I don't know why but I hate my superior and all ways speak ill of the superior*".
e.g. 3. A formator/superior: "*I was always angry over my father's domineering attitudes towards me. This candidate with his assertive character reminds me of my father. I could not react to my father, then. But now I can react to him by showing resentment towards this candidate*".

The motivation for persevering in Religious Life

It has been seen that the ideals (especially as self-transcendent values), and not the dimensions, are the psycho-social mediators which prevail in the process of **entering** while for **perseverance**, it is not the ideals but the influence of the first two dimensions (and **especially the second dimension**) which are factors exercising a prevalent and predisposing influence. As a disposition the second dimension seems to be at the root of vocational crisis because it makes the balance/imbalance between the first and second dimensions very fragile and so can undermine some of the values which are basic to vocation.

Examples:

✓ "I have become an erudite preacher and an exotic healer so much so day and night I am surrounded by people coming for healing (conscious). I want to receive good comments about my sermon or recognition for my education qualifications as I am led by **need for exhibition** (Subconscious).

✓ "I have become the voice of the voiceless. I hate injustice and so I am **working for justice**. I participate at all protest marches on human rights in the town. I am a bit **boisterous**. I want to study law (conscious). Since then I have become 'bossy' and my subjects doesn't seem to like me for my need to control and dominate. It is because without my knowing I am led by the need for '**aggression**' (subconscious). My inner-self will tell me joining religious life is the best way to survive.

The motivation for leaving Religious Life: the characteristics of the individual personality i.e. influence of the individual psychodynamics (prevalence of vocational inconsistencies); there is a *correlation between the prevalence of vocational inconsistencies and subsequent leaving of vocation*.

↑ Inconsistencies ↓ consistencies → compliance or identification→ defecting ↑

↑ Consistencies ↓ inconsistencies → internalization → Perseverance ↑

Therefore, the greater of lesser capacity for internalization of values, determined by the consistencies and inconsistencies, seems to be one of the decisive elements for perseverance in a person's vocation.

The more the unconscious inconsistencies predominate → unrealistic personal ideals and expectations with regard to the future vocational roles → the discrepancy between the ideal self and the actual self. ↑ → would still remain but with dissatisfaction and frustration ↑ → Or would leave RL.

Example:

✓ "I am fed up with my Congregation and the Superiors for **the way I'm be treated** (conscious). I am leaving the Convent. But behind my decision to leave is a psychological dynamic of **Abasement** which is an **'inferiority complex'** (subconscious).

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The inconsistencies remains **unconscious**;
Because the realistic perception of his real conflictual needs presents
a too **serious threat to his/her self-esteem; repression**

↓

The dissatisfaction is defended and **projected**

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on to the structures of the institution or of the Church.

<Perceptive Distortion>

**As a result the authentic significance of vocational values and attitudes
will be reinterpreted according to one's own peculiar way**

(i.e. personal interpretation of Sacred Scriptures/Church's teachings/Constitutions)

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The religious/priest will discover himself irremediably **isolated and alienated** from his own self/within his group/community (both physically and psychologically);
Stubbornness creeps in and with it disobedience.

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The logical conclusion is to Leave

(62%)

These are those who have left the vocation but are '**driven**' *(1)* out of it because of their immaturity/inconsistency

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However, it is not necessary to conclude that all who are inconsistent leave the religious life after some time.

The mature who leave (the changed) *(2)*: If, for example, a more profound knowledge of the institution shows them that it does not respond to the ideal that they were proposed, they are able to make the mature and objective decision to seek another way. **(18%)**

The immature who remain: on the other hand, inconsistent candidates will remain in the religious life despite their unconscious conflicts. Such people are called *(3)* **'Nesters'**. **(14%)**

The mature who remain/persevere: they are called *(4)* **'Non-Nesters'**: **(6%)** those who persevere and who are favourably disposed to internalisation by their maturity in the 2nd dimension.

-**Those candidates affected by a possibility of serious, or moderate, or slight pathology** (20%).

6) The Role of Psychology in Formation

What is needed to improve this situation? The real challenge is to find forms of personal accompaniment which are able **to help each seminarian/candidate identify the ambiguities of motivation** which, of themselves, denote neither lack of faith or lack of psychological capacity but rather blindness to the division within human heart that effectively **blocks the ability to respond to the grace given by God. It is a matter not of abandoning but supplementing traditional methods of priestly & religious formation** with approaches which will able the seminary/religious formation to be more effective in helping students to realize the goals proposed by the Church. The key lies in **the formation of seminary educators and religious fomators who themselves have been helped to be vocationally consistent** and whose **formal training gives them the competence** to help the seminarian/candidate identify and overcome the hidden blocks *(the reality of resistance and motivational ambiguities)* to the working of divine grace. This is what is meant by the term "integration" and the transformation of the personality under grace.

The Church's duty to discern vocations

-"God calls all to holiness, but not all to a religious vocation. Someone who might make a good Trappist would not make a good foreign missionary, and vice versa. If one could use appropriate testing to determine reasonably that an individual is not suited for a particular vocation – or for religious life at all – that

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individual may avoid much suffering while the institute or diocese saves considerable expense and complications for the other candidates entering at the same time" (Fr. Benedict Groeschel CFR)

°"The desire alone to become a priest is not sufficient, and **there does not exist a right to receive sacred ordination. It belongs to the Church -** in her responsibility to define the necessary requirements for receiving the sacraments instituted by Christ - **to discern the suitability** of him who desires to enter the seminary, to accompany him during his years of formation, and to call him to holy orders if he is judged to possess the necessary qualities….. In order to admit a candidate to ordination to the diaconate, the Church must **verify**, among other things, that the candidate **has reached affective maturity** (*Congregation for Catholic Education, Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders, No. 3*).

° "The Church, "begetter and formator of vocations", has **the duty of discerning a vocation and the suitability of candidates** for the priestly ministry" (*Congregation for Catholic Education, Guidelines for the use of psychology in the admission and formation of candidates for the Priesthood, No. 1*)

° "It is possible that the candidate – notwithstanding his own commitment and the support of the psychologist, or psychotherapy – **could continue to show himself unable to face realistically his areas of grave immaturity** – even given the gradual nature of all human growth. Such areas of immaturity would include *strong affective dependencies; notable lack of freedom in relations; excessive rigidity of character; lack of loyalty; uncertain sexual identity; deep-seated homosexual tendencies*; etc. If this should be the case, **the path of formation will have to be interrupted**" (*Congregation for Catholic Education, Guidelines for the use of psychology in the admission and formation of candidates for the Priesthood, No. 10*).

° "Those who are discovered **to be unfit** for physical, psychological or moral reasons should **be quickly removed** from the path to the priesthood" (*Sacerdotalis Caelibatus, Encyclical of Pope Paul VI, no. 64*).

° In the spring of 2002, amid revelations of child molestation by priests in the Archdiocese of Boston, pope John Paul II met in Rome with a dozen U.S. cardinals. Hundreds of priests across the country had resigned amid renewed criminal investigations of decades-old abuse cases. Seeking to restore confidence in the church, the pope declared that "**people need to know that there is no place in the priesthood and religious life for those who would harm the young**."

-**The call to Holy Orders or Consecrated Life implies a discernment of the presence of divine grace**. The responsibility for discernment finally rests with the candidate and either the Ordinary of the Diocese (C. 241, 1025) or the Major Superior of the Religious Congregation (C. 641) whose judgment should be based on all the available evidence.

-"The strain of your regular evaluation of students is worth all your efforts…Be just and understanding. You are able to help the student mature as a human person, of course, but for the purpose of serving the church as a priest. When uncertainty about a candidate's suitability to serve the People of God persists, **the church always gets the benefit of the doubt**". (Archbishop Jean Jadot, Apostolic delegate to the USA, from 1973-1980)

Use of psychology:
Until now: *DIAGNOSTIC (SELECTIVE)* **AND THE** *THERAPEUTIC***.**
Now the Positive use of Psychology in order to **increase/enhance the capacity to internalize vocational values** by means of progressive growth in developmental and spiritual maturity. The most dynamic use of psychology in formation is ***PEDAGOGICAL AND INTEGRATIVE***. i.e. helping the candidates <mark>**to recognize and overcome the inconsistencies that hinder human and spiritual growth** than to wait for such difficulties to develop to the point where they become almost irreversible.</mark>

-"During the period of formation, recourse to experts in the psychological sciences can respond to the needs born of any crises; but it can also be useful in **supporting** the candidate on his journey towards a more sure possession of the moral virtues. It can furnish the candidate with a **deeper knowledge of his personality**, and can **contribute to overcoming, or rendering less rigid, his psychic resistances to what his formation is proposing**…."(*Congregation for Catholic Education, Guidelines for the use of psychology in the admission and formation of candidates for the Priesthood, No. 9*).

The contribution of psychology should aim, first of all, to develop in the religious/priests **the capacity to internalize** vocational values and attitudes; that is, it has more to do with **preventing** than with healing. In fact, it is already possible to discover at the time of entrance the sources of the future difficulties that the priests & religious will meet in their vocational commitment.

Therefore one should not make a dichotomy between psychology and spirituality. **Formation** has to present to the candidate **the necessary spiritual nourishment,** but it has to **also assure him** the capacity **to assimilate and to internalize this nourishment.** Without this integration between the human and the spiritual, the ideals proposed, instead of favouring growth, may become a source of frustration and alienation.

-According to the mind of the church the "*human formation is the **basis** of all priestly formation*": "The whole work of priestly Formation would be deprived of its **necessary foundation** if it lacked a suitable human formation". (PDV, 43)

Tasks of the formator:
i)   **To** *immerse themselves deeply in the mind and heart of the Church*, since the training of priests & religious is a ministry undertaken in the name of the Church. Candidates have a right to know that superiors and formators will **faithfully implement the Church's vision, laws, and formation procedures.** Therefore the future formators should be given the systematic preparation, required by the Church, necessary to undertake this ministry.
ii)   **To operationalize** *the goals of priestly and religious formation*, that is, to devise pedagogical, formative and if necessary, therapeutic strategies capable of **helping the candidates to internalize the core values of his vocational calling.** These **educational strategies must be capable of addressing both the conscious and unconscious** dimensions of the candidate's life, if they are to attain the desired goal.
iii)   **To coordinate** *three basic formative activities* which are common to each of the components of formation, though with different emphasis, methods and modalities. These basic formative activities are *proposing, understanding and internalizing* he core vocational values of priesthood and consecrated life.

- **Proposing** core vocational values presupposes a common understanding among formators about what these ideals are since they are objective and normative. The formator will use a range of pedagogical methods to propose vocational ideals to the candidate: liturgy, retreats and spiritual exercises, teaching systematic themes, talks, community celebrations and especially the personal witness of the formators.

- **Understanding** what has been proposed requires a personalized response which takes into account the capacities of each individual. An accurate and ongoing assessment of the candidate's understanding will help the formator choose the most suitable pedagogical and formative methods, which might include: propaedeutic/preparatory studies, guided reading, written assignments, questions and answers, class presentations, careful selection of visiting speakers, and encouraging the candidate to bring the material to personal prayer and reflection.

- **Internalizing** the values which have been proposed and understood is the 3rd formative activity. These human and reveals values will transform a person's life only to the extent that they have been personally **assimilated and internalized**. No doubt' this is the *most difficult, delicate and elusive phase of the formation process*. The testimony of seminary educators finds scientific confirmation in the theory and research of Rulla, Ridick and Imoda who also propose **a formative instrument – vocational growth sessions (VGS)**– as a means of helping candidates address the resistance and blocks which can limit the person's capacity to live fully his vocation.

How does the formator help the formee to arrive at the objective goal (internalisation of the process and content of formation)
- By having the right qualification for a formator (desire, capacity and skill)
- Help the Formee clarify and purify his motivations (explain the general objective of formation in the religious life and specifically in the particular congregation
- Help the person become responsibility of his own formation, by helping him keep the 'magis'[1] alive. The formee should be actively involved in his journey of formation, by keeping the tension of the magis alive, so that he may never be content of who he is but always such to become better grow towards self-transcendence in love.
- Help the person discover the riches in him, 1st through some **insight work** (VGS) and then eventually when he is more aware of what are his riches, SP in order to see to put the discovered energies into the service of the kingdom.
- Be a testimony of the capacity to transform what is negative energy to positive energy.

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[1] Magis (pronounced "màh-gis") is a Latin word that means "more" or "better." It is related to 'Ad majorem Dei gloriam', a Latin phrase meaning "for the greater glory of God." Magis refers to the philosophy of doing more, for Christ, and therefore doing more for others. It is referred to as "the more universal good." Other definitions include "magnanimity," "greater efficiency," "creative fidelity," "choosing the harder option," "greater devotion", "total service" and even "choosing that which no one else will do." It is also mentioned as "the ever more and more giving" spirit.