

SEMINARY JOURNAL

VOLUME SIXTEEN

NUMBER ONE

SPRING 2010

Special Theme: Psychological Assessment—Part II

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Msgr. Jeremiah McCarthy

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Rev. Gerald J. McGlone, SJ

Finding Good Shepherds: A Catholic Psychologist Reports and Reflects on the Conference "A Necessary Conversation: A Gathering of Experts."
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Understanding Psychology's Contribution to Priestly Formation: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow
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Fernando A. Ortiz, Ph.D. and Rev. Gerald J. McGlone, SJ, Ph.D.

Book Review

Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies by Marilyn Chandler McEntyre
Reviewed by *Msgr. Jeremiah McCarthy*



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If you would like to submit an idea for an article or a document, please contact us as soon as possible. We prefer advance notice rather than receiving submissions without prior notification. Journal space fills up quickly.

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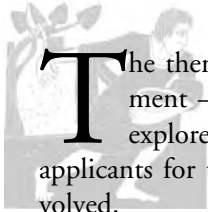
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From the Desk of the Executive Director



The theme of this issue is Psychological Assessment – Part II. In the last issue, we began to explore the topic of psychological assessment of applicants for the priesthood and the many issues involved.

This issue of the *Seminary Journal* derives its articles from an NCEA Seminary Department initiative, under the leadership of our former executive director, Brother Bernard F. Stratman, SM, to gather information about the state of psychological testing and screening of candidates for the priesthood. I was part of the group of consultants and advisors that helped to develop the research instrument that was conducted by colleagues at the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. The survey of seminary administrators, vocation directors, and psychologists was successfully completed in Spring 2010.

The report, *Psychological Assessment: The Testing and Screening of Candidates for Admission to the Priesthood in the U.S. Catholic Church* (NCEA Publications, 2010), has been well-received and continues to provide rich data for strengthening the partnership between professional psychologists, seminary leaders, and vocation directors to ensure that psychologically healthy candidates are admitted to priestly formation programs. This issue of the Journal contains an executive summary of the published report written by Rev. Mark Latcovich. It shares the key findings of the study. The NCEA initiative was the impetus for an extensive and dynamic conference, “A Necessary Conversation: A Gathering of Experts,” that was held under the generous auspices of St. John Vianney Center, Downingtown, Pennsylvania, and hosted by St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia, in June 2010.

I think that our membership will find these essays to be insightful, thought-provoking, and seminal in the best sense of the word. The articles plant a seed for much needed conversation among all of us who care deeply about a strong and healthy priesthood.

The first article by Jeffrey Feathergill provides an interesting summary of the papers and discussions at the conference. It is graciously re-printed courtesy of

the Jesuit journal, *Human Development*. Dr. Feathergill’s essay provides context for the conference papers that are published here for the first time.

Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, of Vancouver, British Columbia, provides an insider’s view of the development of the *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood* promulgated by the Vatican Congregation for Education in 2008. Archbishop Miller’s perceptive and careful analysis invites further discussion about how to interpret the Congregation’s more cautious perspective on the use of psychological testing and screening and the more expansive perspective reflected in the US Bishops’ fifth edition of the *Program for Priestly Formation (PPF)*, which requires testing for all prospective candidates.

Experts in psychology, canon law, and seminary formation have weighed in on the issue of universal or selected psychological testing. From my own perspective, I think that the two positions reflect not polar opposition, but rather, a difference in emphasis. The *Guidelines* and the *PPF* support Pope John Paul II’s affirmation of the value of the psychological sciences for assessing a candidate’s capacity for affective and sexual maturity, under the important rubric of human formation that is the signature theme of his landmark encyclical on priestly formation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. The *Guidelines* emphasize the importance of reverence and care for the free, informed consent and dignity of the individual and re-affirm a long standing concern that psychological measures should complement – but not supplant – integral, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation. The requirement for universal screening in the *PPF* reflects the shared wisdom of the U.S. Bishops that psychological testing is an essential component of the screening process and forms a crucial step in the process of admission and ongoing seminary formation. We have deep, common ground here, but, as they say, “let the discussion continue.” *Seminary Journal* welcomes further discussion.

Dr. Len Sperry contributes two essays. He provides a comprehensive and compelling history of the development of psychology and its contribution to the screening of

candidates. The importance of attending to a candidate's anthropology or worldview is an essential complement to the emphasis on addressing the individual's personal gifts, strengths, and challenges. His second essay provides helpful insights into strengthening the collaboration between psychologists and vocation directors.

The model of collaboration proposed by Gerald McGlone and Fernando Ortiz suggests a most helpful framework for integrating the specific behavioral traits emphasized in the *PPF* with widely accepted categories and psychometric instruments available to professional psychologists. The holistic paradigm that is outlined will be particularly helpful to vocation directors and seminary leaders to marshal screening strategies that more effectively serve the needs of seminarians and the wider church.

Deacon Douglas Crawford's articulation of a model to integrate psychological and theological perspectives on the developmental milestones of young men will help both vocation directors and psychologists in their work with applicants for the priesthood.

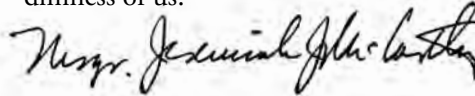
Ron Karney contributes an essay on the collaboration between the psychologist and the vocation director that provides valuable insights on the importance of this

relationship for an effective screening and admissions process. There are some fine illustrations of best practices expressed here that can assist busy vocation directors to meet the enormous responsibilities that rest on their shoulders.

Finally, I a review of a very fine book by Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies*. I think the book can be a wonderful resource for helping seminarians to see the connection between the intellectual life and the spiritual life, a connection that is essential for successful priestly ministry.

As always, I welcome contributions from you for the Journal. I leave you with the powerful and comforting words from Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem, *Wreck of the Deutschland*:

"...Let him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us."



Msgr. Jeremiah J. McCarthy
Executive Director
May 2011



Calendar of Events NCEA Seminary Department

2011

- ◆ **May 31 – June 3**
National Association of College Seminaries
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- ◆ **June 7-14**
10th Institute for the Preparation of Seminary Formation Staff & Advisors
St. Patrick's Seminary, Menlo Park, California
- ◆ **August 29-31**
J.S. Paluch Vocation Seminar
Chicago, Illinois
- ◆ **September 19-23**
NCDVD Convention
Marriott Renaissance Center, Detroit, Michigan
- ◆ **September 29 - October 1**
MATS
Chicago, Illinois

2012

- ◆ **April 11-13**
NCEA Convention & Expo
Boston, Massachusetts
- ◆ **June 11-13**
A Necessary Conversation: A Gathering of Experts, Part II. Cultural Competency— A focused conference for vocation directors, formation directors and psychologists
- ◆ **June 14-15**
A Necessary Conversation: A Gathering of Experts, Part I. Psychological Assessment Conference – An Introduction for vocation directors, formation directors and psychologists

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May 2011

Dear Readers:

Christ's Peace!

It is a privilege and honor to introduce you to this special edition of the *Seminary Journal*. The articles that you are about to read were the result of an amazing gathering called "A Necessary Conversation: A Gathering of Experts" held in June 2010 at Saint Charles Seminary in Philadelphia, Pa. This was the first gathering of assessing and treating psychologists of seminary and religious life candidates, diocesan and religious vocation directors, and formators from across the country and Europe. The purpose was simple and quite direct. Research from the NCEA/CARA study on psychological assessment practices, published by NCEA prior to the Philadelphia gathering, indicated that there needed to be ongoing conversation and dialogue within and among these groups. This happened at this extraordinary gathering.

The current issue highlights the morning presentations. In the afternoon of each day of the conference, the participants engaged in case discussions pertaining to each morning topic. These were memorable for the fact that they highlighted how often we use different language and different understandings of very similar concepts. This essential task of discussion did not and does not end. Your reading of these articles will hopefully further the "necessary conversation" that you and your team of psychologists, vocation directors, and formators will have. The research and the thinking in these pages might ground that task in a more directed manner.

We hope to continue this same, introductory conversation by repeating the conference. It is scheduled for June 14-15, 2012. Due to scheduling issues, we will have a more advanced special-issue conference just prior to it on psychological assessment and cultural diversity, June 11-13, 2012, both at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia. More information will be forthcoming soon.

Save the dates!

A Necessary Conversation: A Gathering of Experts, Part I

- Psychological Assessment Conference – An Introduction for vocation directors, formation directors and psychologists
- June 14-15, 2012

A Necessary Conversation: A Gathering of Experts, Part II

- Cultural Competency – An advanced conference for vocation directors, formation directors and psychologists
- June 11-13, 2012

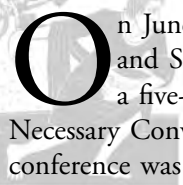
Sincerely,

Rev. Gerald McGlone, SJ

Finding Good Shepherds: A Catholic Psychologist Reports and Reflects on the Conference “A Necessary Conversation: A Gathering of Experts.”

Jeffrey T. Feathergill, Psy.D.

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On June 14, 2010, the St. John Vianney Center and St. Charles Borromeo Seminary sponsored a five-day seminar in Philadelphia entitled, “A Necessary Conversation: A Gathering of Experts.” The conference was developed in response to the Vatican’s document, *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*, (hereinafter *Guidelines*) that was released in 2008. Attendees included formation directors, vocation directors, seminary rectors, bishops, and psychologists who evaluate and provide psychological care to seminarians while they are in the process of formation.

Several years earlier, in the fall of 2007, I was asked to join a group of psychologists who provide psychological evaluations of seminary applicants for a local religious community. I was honored and intrigued at this opportunity, both as a psychologist and as a Catholic layperson who is concerned for the leadership of the church. There are unique challenges in conducting a psychological assessment of a seminary applicant. Not only does the psychological evaluation screen for mental health issues, the evaluator must address a variety of questions that have been developed in response to the crisis of clerical sexual abuse. Very personal and private realms of the lives of applicants must be examined, including issues such as their complete sexual history including masturbation habits and use of pornography. The psychologist explores the applicant’s life history in depth, assesses whether or not he has the right motives for seeking a vocation, and determines if he has the underlying abilities he will need to function successfully

There are unique challenges in conducting a psychological assessment of a seminary applicant. Not only does the psychological evaluation screen for mental health issues, the evaluator must address a variety of questions that have been developed in response to the crisis of clerical sexual abuse.

as a priest. The evaluation also seeks to identify any patterns of behavior or personality that would suggest that the candidate is not a good match for a vocation to the priesthood. Objective and projective personality tests are administered to provide clinical data used in assessing in the candidate. The process typically causes some significant concern for the applicants who wonder how they will be perceived and what might be discovered about them in the process. Some applicants also fear that psychological testing might be erroneous and make assumptions about them that simply are not true. Such psychological evaluations have been conducted for

many years in dioceses and religious communities in the United States without any official recommendations from the Vatican.

My colleagues and I received the *Guidelines* in 2008 and began to discuss its contents together with the vocation directors with whom we work. We endeavored to understand some of the assertions and positions found in the *Guidelines* and questioned the meaning intended by the authors in the use of some psychological terms and developmental concepts. We were pleased, therefore, to hear about the conference and I made arrangements to attend. Fr. Gerald McGlone, S.J., one of the conference organizers, subsequently asked me to serve on a panel that engaged attendees in discussion of the presentations.

Entering the grounds of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, I immediately focused on the grand and sprawling historic buildings. I recalled my own experience of entering the gates of St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois, as a young seminarian in 1978, and the awesome feelings that were evoked when I considered the magnitude of the church as an institution and the aesthetical sensitivity that went into church architecture. I wondered about the seminarians who entered this realm in the twenty-first century and considered how the triumphant religious edifices before me at St. Charles Borromeo were perceived by men raised in a world of modern technologies, mass media and secular dominance. I began to appreciate what an opportunity the conference would provide for psychologists to actually stay at a seminary for a week, reside in the small, undecorated rooms with single beds, dine together in the "refectory," and worship daily at the Liturgy of the Hours and Mass.

Clarifying Psychology's Role and Theoretical Orientation

The structure and format of the conference encouraged dialogue, with presentations in the morning and break-out groups in the afternoon where participants discussed the morning sessions and reviewed case studies. Day one featured two keynote addresses, one by Len Sperry, M.D., Ph.D., who described psychology's role in seminary formation, and compared prior involvement of psychologists with the recently published *Guidelines*.

Dr. Sperry introduced the topic of the kind of theoretical orientation required to adequately evaluate and provide care to seminarians. He contrasted traditional models of psychology, which tend to disregard notions

of God or transcendence, with a psychology grounded in Catholic anthropology. A Catholic anthropology, according to Sperry, views the person as created in God's image and likeness and views human nature as good.

"The human person is not simply material, but is substantially one, bodily, interpersonally relational, rational and volitional with free choice. The person is redeemed and has a transcendent purpose, which is to increase the kingdom of God in the world." Sperry emphasized the importance of these views for psychologists who conduct psychological assessments for seminary applicants or provide care to seminarians.

Sperry also articulated that the role of the psychologist in assessment is more descriptive, not predictive. The typical psychological assessments conducted for screening seminary candidates are not capable of predicting future behavior, for example, the likelihood that an individual will become a pedophile at some point later in life. This assertion is essential to psychologists who evaluate seminarians. In the 1970s, psychologists and other mental health professionals assured church leaders that after receiving "successful" treatment, priests who had committed acts of sexual abuse could safely return to active ministry. Tragically, such predictions did not hold up and many priests went back into ministry and to commit further acts of sexual abuse. The early detection of potential sexual offenders is not possible with current assessment techniques used to evaluate seminarians. Sperry suggested that psychological evaluators might consider the use of Robert D. Hare's Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R). The use of this instrument requires specialized training.

Sperry's presentation included important information for providing psychological care to seminarians in formation. In my work with seminarians who seek counseling or psychotherapy I typically inquire about their relationships with seminary administrators, faculty, and classmates. I find that problems experienced in these relationships sometimes reveal a need for intervention beyond just the individual client. I was pleased, therefore, that Sperry highlighted organizational dynamics present in seminaries, which psychologists should consider when providing assessment and treatment to seminarians. Sperry stated that to fully comprehend and explain behavior in a seminary, religious order, or diocese, the psychologist must consider problems at the organizational level. Organizational dynamics within the Catholic Church either increase or reduce the likelihood of unhealthy/abusive behavior. Stated in the vernacular, Sperry quipped, "Sometimes it's not just a bad apple—

The pendulum swing between conservative and liberal Catholicism will no doubt continue and reflects, perhaps, the Holy Spirit's efforts to lead the Catholic Church to truth.

it's a bad barrel." Sperry indicated that insights from organizational psychology can help understand and identify the cultural realities of a seminary such as "strategy, vision, core values, structure and leadership styles."

Sperry also discussed the role of clerical culture, which can contain a sense of privilege, entitlement, separateness and status. He identified "clericalism" as the downside of clerical culture, which fosters narcissistic entitlement, emotional immaturity, an authoritarian style of ministerial leadership, a rigid hierarchical worldview and identification of holiness and grace in the church with the clerical state. Several psychologists I spoke with expressed concern with the increase in seminary applicants who seem to identify with an authoritarian, hierarchical view of priesthood, and deem the vocation of priesthood as holier than the vocation of married life within the Catholic Church. The psychologists I spoke with expressed their concern based upon their understanding of the role of such attitudes in the church's sexual abuse scandals. Some priests also spoke of their concern about conservative "trends" within the church that seem to promote a return to pre-Vatican II attitudes and practices that fit Sperry's description of clericalism. The pendulum swing between conservative and liberal Catholicism will no doubt continue and reflects, perhaps, the Holy Spirit's efforts to lead the Catholic Church to truth. Where there is a link between practices and attitudes, liberal or conservative, associated with any kind of undesirable behavior by priests, it remains imperative that psychologists and clergy work together to prevent further scandals and abuse.

An Historical Perspective on Development of the *Guidelines*

The second keynote address was given by Archbishop J. Michael Miller, C.S.B., of Vancouver and one of the authors of the *Guidelines*. He spoke on the

church's view of the role of psychology in seminary formation and compared current practices to previous ones. In explaining the *Guidelines* Archbishop Miller provided important background information on the development of the *Guidelines* for psychologists. He addressed the reasons that the document had been in development for over twenty years. These included suspicion of the discipline of psychology and the work of psychologists in Rome, as well as in many European cultures. He also provided some fascinating and affirming background information that encouraged the involvement of the field of psychology in the work of the church. The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* at the Second Vatican Council endorsed the concept that a profound knowledge of the human person relies not only on theology, but also on the human sciences. He also shared that in 1967 Pope Paul VI affirmed that psychologists could assist priests who struggled with the commitment to celibacy and chastity. At that time there was a sense of urgency because of the significant number of individuals leaving religious life and the priesthood. There was developing awareness of the need for psychologists who understood the issues facing seminarians and priests. Subsequent popes and Vatican documents have emphasized that Catholic anthropology must undergird any use of psychology in the assessment and formation of seminarians. The document on psychologists' role goes so far as to indicate that the psychologists who provide these services should be "believers" within the Catholic Church.

As psychologists who function under the Ethical Principles of the American Psychological Association, my colleagues and I tend to think first and foremost about the rights of our clients. We closely adhere to ethical principles and relevant laws regarding informed consent, confidentiality and access to and maintenance of records when conducting assessments or providing care to seminarians. Equivalently, Archbishop Miller underscored that the authors of the *Guidelines* wanted to establish unequivocally the rights of those being evaluated. He pointed out the parts of the document that addressed issues of confidentiality, informed consent and access to records.

When my colleagues and I reviewed the *Guidelines* we noted an assertion that psychological assessment should only take place in some cases. In the United States, however, it had become a standard practice of most dioceses and religious communities to screen all applicants. Archbishop Miller revealed the thinking behind the *Guidelines'* position that an applicant should

only be referred for a psychological assessment “*si cassus ferrat*” (if the case merits it). He directed our attention to the document’s insistence that while there are clear definitions for the role of a psychologist in conducting the assessment, the ultimate decision of a candidate’s acceptance resides in the hands of responsible individuals within the seminary, diocese or religious community. Archbishop Miller also noted the differences in reliance on psychologists based upon various countries’ own attitudes and history. He shared that among the writers of the *Guidelines* there was pastoral sensitivity for individuals considering a vocation to the priesthood because psychological testing can be intrusive. The priests and psychologists with whom I discussed the issue at the conference agreed that psychological testing in the United States should remain a requirement of all candidates. By making it a standard part of the admissions process, applicants can be made aware that they have not been singled out. With adequate informed consent processes and skilled and sensitive evaluators, the discomfort of the assessment process can be ameliorated to a significant degree.

Designing an Effective Evaluation Format

The conference provided a thorough and well developed body of information to assist psychologists, vocation directors and formation staff with the development of acceptable psychological assessment procedures. Ronald J. Karney, Ph.D., and Fr. Gerard Francik, M.Div., offered a presentation entitled, “Issues in the Psychological Assessment of Seminary Candidates.” Dr. Karney described guidelines for vocation directors to use in selecting a psychologist to conduct assessments. He explained the purposes of a psychological evaluation and provided excellent recommendations on the components of an effective evaluation. A standard psychological evaluation typically involves a referral question. Dr. Karney stressed that the vocation directors should develop specific referral questions after careful review of the application materials and any other concerns that develop during the application process. Specific questions allow the evaluating psychologist to target the assessment in ways that do not overlook essential areas for inquiry. Dr. Karney also developed a “best practice” recommendation that involved ongoing communication and dialogue between the vocation director and psychologist. I was impressed by the extent that Dr. Karney refined and clarified the process of evaluation. If his recommendations are followed and other necessary conditions are met, the vocation director should receive a valid, reliable and helpful psychological report.

Fr. Francik offered a perspective on the evaluation process from the viewpoint of a vocation director. He emphasized the sacredness of the psychological assessment and the importance of respect for what the church is asking of those who apply for entrance into the seminary. He recommended that all psychologists who perform assessments read the document, “*Pastores Dabo Vobis*” (I Will Give You Shepherds) by Pope John Paul II. He also introduced the role of issues in human development that must be considered in the evaluation of seminary applicants.

Developmental Milestones

In evaluating candidates for the seminary, how does one assess for an applicant’s achievement of developmental milestones and the quality of their development? Does an applicant possess the capacity to be flexible and accommodating so that he can work collaboratively with others? Does he show interest and involvement with interpersonal relationships? Has he attained the capacity for intimacy in which one confides easily to another person and is comfortable with emotionally close relationships? At the conference Deacon Douglas Crawford presented Erik Erickson’s theories on developmental stages and reviewed their applicability to the evaluation and formation processes for seminarians. His presentation stressed the importance of considering developmental processes thoroughly in conducting assessments and in evaluating a seminarian’s progress while in seminary. He also referred to the insights of Attachment Theory in considering a seminarian’s attitudes toward self and others.

For the seminarian bound for a life committed to chastity and celibacy, this component of the evaluation takes on a particular focus. Priests, while remaining chaste and celibate, still have a need for intimacy and must have the capacity to engage in intimate relationships of a non-sexual nature with those to whom they minister. In a Catholic anthropology, God calls a person to serve as a priest in order to demonstrate his love for his people. When I ask a seminary applicant to describe what celibacy means to him, he will invariably say something like, “giving up marriage to one person so that you can be available to love all of God’s people.” For a psychologist evaluating a seminary applicant, a sense that one is called to a life of celibacy might be confused with rejection of intimacy. Psychologists, therefore, must also incorporate and consider developmental milestones from the perspective of Catholic anthropology.

The behavioral and developmental matters explored by a psychologist in the assessment should include the concept of Christian living.

Incorporating Insights from a Catholic Anthropology in Assessment

On day four of the conference Fr. Gerald McGlone and others provided a presentation solely for the psychologists in attendance. In it they sought to demonstrate the convergence of psychological assessment principles and Catholic anthropology. McGlone's presentation suggested that the scientific aspirations of psychology need not be sacrificed by incorporating a Catholic worldview in an assessment of seminary applicants.

The behavioral and developmental matters explored by a psychologist in the assessment should include the concept of Christian living. The psychologist should explore whether or not the seminary applicant, as a follower of Christ, has put what he knows of God and Christ into action behaviorally. Similarly, the psychologist must consider developmental issues that pertain to the candidate's growth as a Christian. The assessment of seminarians need not discount contributions from psychological theories about human development such as genetic encoding, cultural or societal programming or inherent drives. Optimally, however, human development proceeds along Christian lines only through a response to the call to live our lives in the service of others. Grace from God infuses a person who is willing to accept this call and fosters his development into fullness as a Christian being. The psychologist's task includes the determination as to how this dimension of development is proceeding for the candidate.

McGlone also referenced the four pillars of priestly formation that Pope John Paul identified in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* as helpful to psychologists in evaluating seminarians. The four pillars are human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. While the human and intellectual pillars might be more comfortable for most psychologists, incorporating spiritual and pastoral domains in the

assessment process is essential. In order to be thorough, an assessment report must, according to McGlone, address each of these areas. In his understanding, a best practice model would "use the best of science and theology" rather than only one or the other.

Controversy over Sexuality

Perhaps the most charged moment of the conference occurred on day four following Bishop Gerald T. Walsh's reflection on issues in the determination of a candidate's appropriateness for admission to the seminary. The *Guidelines* state that men who "actively practice homosexuality" should be barred. The *Guidelines* remain somewhat obscure, however, when they instruct that candidates should be rejected who "show profoundly deep-rooted homosexual tendencies." Bishop Walsh indicated that homosexual tendencies may not require the rejection of a person as a candidate to the seminary. He noted that some priests who may struggle with their sexual orientation are also capable of living chaste, devout and celibate lives. One of the attendees responded to these statements with a question that highlights the deep divide in Catholicism on the issue of homosexuality. The attendee asked how the bishop could possibly sanction the ordination of a person who is likely to engage in homosexual activity since homosexuality is the "sin that cries to heaven."

The bishop responded to this question with sensitivity to the plight of those who might admit to homosexual feelings, but are committed to lives of celibacy. He also made it clear that he considered homosexual activity to be a moral evil. Rev. Michael Spitzer, another presenter, responded saying that "If a man has struggled with same-sex attraction it doesn't mean that he is incapable of living a chaste, celibate life and re-directing his sexual feelings toward service in love for God and his neighbor." He also highlighted a pamphlet produced by the United States Catholic Bishop's Conference entitled "Ministry to Persons with Homosexual Orientation," which makes the distinction between homosexual tendencies and homosexual activity quite clear. In follow-up discussions one member expressed worry that Church leaders incorrectly equate homosexuality with a propensity to commit sexual abuse. Fr. McGlone, however, had advised that it is a major mistake to confuse homosexual orientation with sexual abuse, and noted that the vast number of priests who sexually abused young males

identified themselves as heterosexual.

Clearly, the issue of sexual orientation remains a complex and unresolved issue in relation to vocations to the priesthood. Those involved in the assessment and formation of seminarians must find a way to work through two divergent views regarding homosexuality depending on the source. “Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, [140] tradition has always declared that ‘homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2357). The American Psychological Association, however, takes quite another view: “The research on homosexuality is very clear. Homosexuality is neither mental illness nor moral depravity. It is simply the way a minority of our population expresses human love and sexuality. Study after study documents the mental health of gay men and lesbians. Studies of judgment, stability, reliability, and social and vocational adaptation all show that gay men and lesbians function every bit as well as heterosexuals” (*The American Psychological Association’s Statement on Homosexuality*, 1994-JUL).

Fr. McGlone indicated in his presentation that there could be a whole conference on the topic of sexuality and the priesthood. In the meantime, psychologists and those responsible for the selection and formation of seminarians will continue to wrestle with this issue. It is hoped that the church leaders responsible for the Guidelines will provide clarification on their intention in restricting those with “deep-seated homosexual tendencies” from admission to the seminary.

Ongoing Collaboration

The conference closed with a presentation entitled, “Ongoing Collaboration: Challenges and Opportunities” by Fr. Gerald McGlone and Fernando Ortiz, Ph.D. This presentation began the process of summarizing the conference’s accomplishments and set out a format for further dialogue. McGlone encouraged psychologists to “borrow the heart and vision” of the vocation director and formation staff in conducting assessments and providing care. He and Dr. Ortiz presented an excellent synthesis and developmental model for those called to priesthood.

From my perspective, the conference accomplished many positive goals. It provided attendees with a number of recommended policies, practices and principles

that should result in improved outcomes in this work. The ample time for informal discussions between psychologists and those involved in vocation and formation work helped us develop a deeper appreciation for one another that will improve our working relationships. Many of the priests in attendance also held doctoral degrees in psychology and their wisdom and breadth of knowledge contributed extensively to the conference. Psychologists gained skills to more fully integrate a Catholic anthropology into psychological evaluation and treatment. Priests gained a greater understanding of psychological principles and procedures used in conducting assessments and providing treatment. A group of psychologists and clergy formed a committee to examine the possible creation of a certification process for those who provide psychological evaluations for seminary applicants. In the meantime, those who conduct assessments and provide treatment to seminarians can now access a wealth of information created at the conference.

The door has been open for a better understanding and improved dialogue between those involved in the discernment of new vocations to the Roman Catholic priesthood. The men and women who attended this conference represented a significant number of those involved in determination of future vocations to the priesthood in the United States. The “necessary conversation” has begun and will no doubt continue and expand. Several issues remain unresolved and in need of further exploration. Conference organizers stated that they plan to hold a future conference to explore cross-cultural dimensions in the assessment and formations process. The psychological and formational resources available from this conference will further guide all those working to find and assist men in becoming the kind of priests identified by Pope John Paul II in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*: “I will give you shepherds after my own heart” (Jeremiah 3:15).



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In Fulfillment of Their Mission: *The Duties and Tasks of a Roman Catholic Priest*

By Joseph Ippolito, M.A., Rev. Mark A. Latcovich, Ph.D. and Joyce Malyn-Smith, Ed.D.

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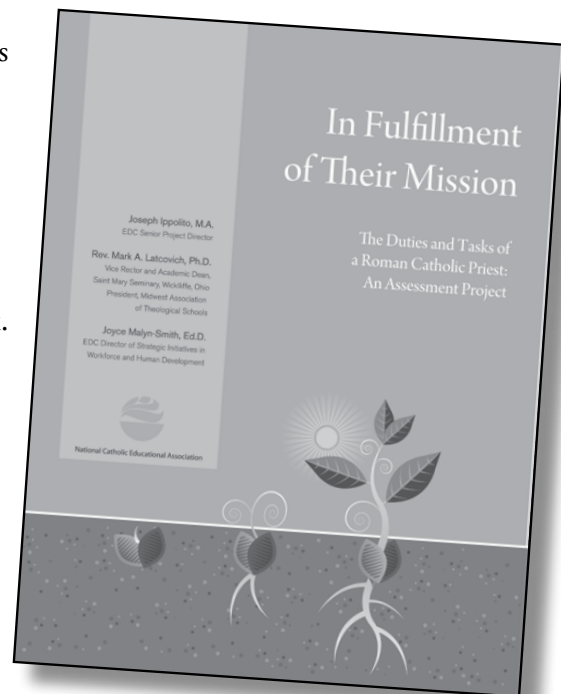
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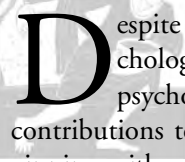
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Understanding Psychology's Contribution to Priestly Formation: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Len Sperry, M.D., Ph.D.



Despite suspicion and ambivalence about psychology among some, most would agree that psychology has made a number of significant contributions to seminary admission and formation. Beginning with an overview of contextual factors that have influenced the formation of priests in the past century, the article describes the current and potential contributions of philosophical psychology, clinical psychology, vocational psychology, social psychology, and organizational psychology to priestly formation.

The recent promulgation of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education's (2008) "Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood" has evoked a range of responses (McGlone, Ortiz, & Viglione, 2009). In fact, psychology's influence on priestly formation has been controversial for a long time. While some believe its influence and contributions have been significant and positive, others insist that the influence has been largely negative. Over the years, wariness and suspicion about psychology have been expressed by some Vatican officials, seminary administrators and faculty, seminarians, and even seminary candidates. In order to better understand and appreciate psychology's influence and contributions over the past century, it is essential to understand the contextual factors which have influenced the seminary, as well as how psychology has changed and evolved during this period.

This article endeavors to provide a broad context for understanding psychology's contributions in light of the various factors that have influenced priestly formation, particularly the history of psychology's involvement in and contributions to American seminaries.

In order to better understand and appreciate psychology's influence and contributions over the past century, it is essential to understand the contextual factors which have influenced the seminary.

In emphasizing the past century the reader can better appreciate both this optimism and wariness. Past and current contributions have been primarily from clinical psychology, focused largely on assessment of seminary candidates. The reality is that clinical psychology is broader than assessment and, as a result, can make significant contributions to the formation process as well. The article briefly describes the potential contributions of fields of psychology to priestly formation. Accordingly, selected contributions from philosophical psychology, social psychology, vocational psychology, and organizational psychology will be briefly discussed.

Contextual Influences

Understanding context is useful in evaluating any phenomenon and this section reviews some of the major social, cultural, political, and theological-psychological considerations that have influenced seminaries and priestly formation as well as psychology itself. These

considerations include shifts in seminary enrollment, changes in Catholic identity, educational achievement, economic prosperity, Vietnam, equality, Vatican II, and the American Catholic Psychological Association. To complicate matters, these changes occurred while psychology was undergoing its own evolution from a branch of philosophy to a science.

According to data from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), seminary enrollment rose every year from World War II to the mid-1960s, peaking at 48,000 seminarians in 1965 and decreasing afterwards. From the 1940s through the 1960s, there were often more candidates than seminaries and houses of formation could accept. Reflecting on this spike in applicants to the priesthood and religious life, Thomas Merton noted in his autobiography, the *Seven Storey Mountain*, that a constant stream of men sought admission to the contemplative life at the Abbey of Gethsemani following World War II and the Korean conflict. In contrast, seminary enrollment today is less than 10 percent of that peak. It is ironical that during the period of unlimited numbers of seminary applicants, there were very limited tools for effective assessment. Today, however, there are extraordinarily sophisticated assessment methods and considerable experience using them, but there are fewer candidates to assess.

An explanation of the precipitous drop in seminary enrollment is arguably multifactorial. Among the many factors are the changes in Catholic identity and the meaning of a priestly vocation among Catholic families. During the 1950s and 1960s American Catholics emerged from the fortress or ghetto mentality that had forged the American Catholic identity for 70 or more years. This fortress identity provided a safe subculture and supported and assisted generations of Catholics in their parishes. Because many Catholics had been immigrants who experienced religious discrimination, it is not surprising that the Catholic parish and a Catholic identity became the center of their lives. Having a unique set of religious beliefs, practices, and forms of piety made Catholics different from other Christians. This long-standing identity would change dramatically in the 1960s.

Economically, Catholics moved from the bottom among the major religious groups in America to first place among all Christian denominations in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The reason is that educational achievement among Catholics increased dramatically and with it came increased income. In the years following World War II, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, bet-

ter known as the G.I. Bill, had a significant influence in expanding the middle class by increasing education levels. Particularly for Catholics, the G.I. Bill made a college education a reality for an entire generation of returning Catholic servicemen. Access to and attainment of a college education, previously inaccessible for many Catholics, led to managerial jobs and professional positions. This resulted in a dramatic shift upward in socioeconomic status for a large segment of the Catholic community. It involved a shift from being laborers and craftsmen to becoming executives, physicians, lawyers, and academics, in numbers that were previously unimaginable.

As Catholics were transitioning into the middle class, major changes in American core values were occurring. During the late 1960s America shifted from a nation characterized by duty, a high work ethic, and the capacity to delay gratification, to a nation of individuals characterized by pleasure, a reduced work ethic, and immediate gratification. These changes occurred as the Vietnam War continued and the war-protest movement intensified. A number of social movements that championed the causes of social equality and equity were also prominent in those days. These included the civil rights movement, various human rights movements, the woman's movement, and the so-called sexual revolution. Because "doing your own thing" and equality were associated with the sexual revolution and humanistic psychology, those who were wary of psychology had even more reason to be skeptical.

Vatican II occurred in the midst of these changes. The first Vatican document, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), radically redefined the Catholic identity and the priesthood. The role of the laity shifted from its previous role of "pray, pay, and obey" to sharers in the "royal priesthood." As the "priesthood of the baptized," laity were now charged with transforming the world, an equal but different role from ordained priests. It is noteworthy that this changed role for laity occurred simultaneously with the steep decline in seminary enrollment.

Finally, the emergence of the baby boom generation is noted. Made up of the sons and daughters of returning service men, approximately 70 million people, these individuals greatly influenced most aspects of American life. For instance, some communities witnessed a 50% increase in the number of schools, social agencies, and new hospitals. Occurring almost simultaneously, American Catholics experienced a new Catholic identity because of Vatican II changes, gains

Occurring almost simultaneously, American Catholics experienced a new Catholic identity because of Vatican II changes, gains in educational achievement, and economic prosperity.

in educational achievement, and economic prosperity. Of interest is that David Leege, director of an ongoing national study on Catholic family life in America, noted that while Vatican II had a significant influence on the changes in the church, the GI Bill was even more influential.

Taken together, higher education and a shift in understanding of Catholic identity and vocation combined to significantly change American Catholicism. Prior to the 1960s, it was not uncommon for a working class family with five or six children to send a child to the seminary or religious life. Often, such a family vocational "sacrifice" would result in the family being recognized and esteemed by the Catholic community while their priest-to-be received a college education. But as families moved into the middle class and the laity's sense of unity and common vision began to fade, Catholics became increasingly heterogeneous and college educations could be acquired without entering a seminary. This heterogeneity is reflected in all indicators of religiosity ranging from theological beliefs, level of parish involvement and participation, and views of the priesthood. It also led to the demise of the "fortress" mentality that had provided a subculture that had supported and assisted generations of Catholics.

American Catholic Psychological Association

To more fully appreciate psychology's role in American Catholic seminaries, as well as the ambivalence and wariness of Catholics toward psychology, it is necessary to understand the history and impact of the American Catholic Psychological Association (ACPA). During its existence, from 1948 to 1968, this professional organization left an indelible imprint on psychology in seminary admissions and seminary formations. It also had a role in reducing the ambivalence, wariness, and suspicion of Catholics toward psychology

It is important to understand that ACPA was founded during the time psychology underwent a transition from being a branch of philosophy—specifically moral philosophy—to becoming a natural science. Gordon Allport, the legendary Harvard University psychologist, was considerably instrumental in this transition. He understood that for psychology to become a science, it had to formally and decisively divorce itself from philosophy. To accomplish this psychology had to stop equating personality (in its scientific sense) with character (in its moral sense) and relinquish its claim to being value-based. Allport and others endeavored to make psychology a value-free science that studied personality empirically. With the rise of scientific psychology came the expected death of virtue as a focus of psychology. Fortunately, virtue has recently been rediscovered by the positive psychology researchers (Seligman, et al., 2005).

William Bier, S.J., was a pioneer in several areas of psychology. These included clinical psychology, the psychology of religion, and particularly, the psychological assessment of seminary candidates (Bier, 1970). Bier is noted for his efforts in establishing clinical psychology doctoral programs and clinical psychology internship sites. He was also the founder of ACPA. Before he finished a doctorate at Catholic University in 1948, Bier exerted considerable leadership as a graduate student, leading to the founding of ACPA. At the 1946 American Psychological Association meeting he met with about 15 professors and other psychologists affiliated with the three main Catholic institutions offering doctorates at the time, which were Loyola University of Chicago, Catholic University of America, and Fordham University. Subsequently, Bier sent out a letter to about 400 psychologists connected to Catholicism or a Catholic institution and invited them to meet at the 1947 APA meeting to discuss the formation of an organization of Catholic psychologists. In 1948 ACPA became a reality. It began with 220 members and at its peak in 1965 had 840 members.

The organization had two specific purposes or goals. The first was to increase participation of Catholics in scientific psychology, not philosophical psychology. Achieving this goal resulted in the expansion of undergraduate and graduate psychology programs in Catholic colleges and universities. It also meant the development of placement services. Equally important was the development and advocacy of psychological assessment in seminary and religious life. This would become ACPA's most important legacy. The second purpose or goal was to bring the Catholic perspective to bear on the emerg-

ing field of scientific psychology.

In 1968 ACPA concluded that its primary purpose had been achieved and that ACPA should reconfigure itself into an organization that was open to other denominations and other world religions. Accordingly, in 1970 ACPA became known as Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues (PIRI). Later, in 1975, PIRI evolved into the Division of Psychology and Religion of the American Psychological Association, also known as Division 36 of the American Psychological Association. At the first meeting of Division 36, Eugene Kennedy, Ph.D., was elected president of the organization. In his inaugural address, he reviewed the historical roots of the new Division and jubilantly announced that ACPA had achieved its goals. In actuality, it had met its first goal. In hindsight, it may have been somewhat grandiose to expect that any organization could actually bring a lasting Catholic perspective to psychology in a mere 20 years. The dream of achieving this second goal has never really died.

Philosophical Psychology

Philosophical psychology studies the philosophical issues and underlying assumptions about the nature of the human person. Neoscholastic psychology was a form of philosophical psychology derived from neoscholasticism that influenced Catholicism and priestly formation for nearly a century.

Neoscholastic Psychology. For decades, neoscholastic psychology became the intellectual substrate for priestly formation. In 1879 Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical "Aeternis Patris" that introduced neoscholasticism and neoscholastic psychology into seminary formation. The Pope appointed Désiré-Joseph Mercier, who would soon become a cardinal, to spearhead the shift in the way psychology was to be viewed. Cardinal Mercier proclaimed that psychology was in fact a science and was no longer a branch of philosophy. Neoscholastic psychology would be the science of the soul. The plan was for experimental psychology to interact with neoscholasticism and that was the mission for the next 70 years. Of historical note is that William Wundt opened his first psychology laboratory that same year, and within a few years William James opened another psychology laboratory at Harvard University. The goals of these and other labs were to operationalize psychology as a scientific endeavor.

The Pope's hope was that a Catholic anthropology would emanate from this new focus on neo-scholastic psychology. Unfortunately, defining psychology as the

science of the soul was not well received by many non-Catholics. The emphasis on the soul as the basis for empirical research was the stumbling block. In fact, efforts to achieve this goal failed even among Catholic psychologists. In fact, ACPA as an organization did not support the introduction of neoscholastic psychology in newly formed psychology programs at Catholic colleges and universities.

Because ACPA members and other humanistically-oriented and spiritually-oriented psychologists were sensitive to self-actualization and the spiritual domain, there was support for a broadened view of psychology. Accordingly, in the late 1950s through the 1970s, there was considerable support for humanistic psychology, existentialism, and, later, transpersonal psychology and positive psychology. Instead of using religious constructs like soul, these approaches emphasized constructs like self, person, existence. This strategy seemed to work and as a result neoscholastic psychology slowly disappeared. About the same time, neoscholasticism ceased to be the official philosophy of Catholicism. These developments were greeted with hopefulness by some Catholics and wariness by other Catholics.

Catholic Anthropology

Many associate the term anthropology with the study of human persons from sociological, cultural, or even natural science perspectives. Others, including vocation directors and seminary formators, think of anthropology in broader terms, including philosophical and theological perspectives. Philosophical anthropology refers to conceptions of the human person derived from philosophical reasoning, while theological anthropology is derived principally from Christian revelation, particularly scripture. Catholic anthropology is a combination of both philosophical and theological anthropology, addressing the emotional, mental, moral, relational, and spiritual health of the human person (Sperry, 2009). It specifies the origins and purpose of human persons as well as the place of sin, suffering, personal effort, grace, and healing.

One's anthropology is important because it significantly influences one's thinking and actions. What vocation directors, seminary formators, spiritual directors, and consulting psychologists believe about human nature can and does influence how they conduct their personal as well as their professional lives. For example, a seminary formator who is influenced by the Freudian view that human nature is basically bad, and that personal and spiritual transformation are merely illusions,

One's anthropology is important because it significantly influences one's thinking and actions.

can only expect to achieve some measure of adjustment to life circumstances. This sense of spiritual futility is inconsistent with a Catholic anthropology, and will negatively influence the formator's homilies, teaching, counseling, and advisement of seminarians.

Catholic anthropology is, of course, an area of philosophical philosophy. There are some current efforts to articulate a Catholic anthropology in an updated neoscholastic framework (Brugger, 2009). Recently, there has also been a resurgence of interest in Catholic anthropology in the clinical training of psychologists (Brugger, 2008).

Clinical Psychology

Clinical psychology involves the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of emotional and behavioral disorders. Clinical psychologists have largely served as consultants in the assessment of candidates for seminaries and religious orders, and to a lesser extent with psychological treatment of seminarians. Fortunately for seminaries and religious orders, clinical psychology's contributions can be much greater than assessment and treatment.

Historically, seminaries and religious orders profited from the publication of a two-part article by Dom Vernon Moore, the Benedictine psychiatrist. These articles, particularly the second (Moore, 1936), report on his 1935 study of hospitalized priests. The study is important because of its high response rate (about 90%) and its implication for the assessment of candidates to seminaries and religious life. Moore actually misinterpreted his data and concluded that high percentages of priests were psychotic, manic-depressive or alcoholic. The publication of this article mobilized support for the psychological assessment of seminary candidates. In a re-analysis of Moore's data it was found that he confused proportions with incidence rates (Bier, 1970) which accounted for the inflated and false impression that major psychopathology was higher in priests than in the general population.

Moore's study set into motion a series of changes in the evaluation of priests and religious, not the least

of which was a psychological study commissioned by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (the forerunner of today's United States Conference of Catholic Bishops). In the study conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s, an alternative assessment protocol for candidates for seminaries and religious life was implemented. In contrast to the then current pathology-based assessment protocols that typically included the MMPI and Rorschach, this protocol involved growth-based assessments, and included the "Personal Orientation Inventory," a measure of self-actualization (Kennedy & Heckler, 1972).

The early 2000s witnessed the rediscovery of virtue in psychology (Seligman, et al., 2005). A number of new therapeutic approaches, including spiritually-integrated psychotherapies, were developed as alternatives to conventional psychotherapy which focused primarily on symptoms and impairment (Sperry, 2002; Sperry & Shafranske, 2005). Alternative therapies focus on virtues or values-in-action as they are called by some researchers. Among these is "well-being therapy." Well-being therapy is an intervention compatible with a positive view of human nature which focuses on increasing virtue and well-being in seven domains of life including purpose in life, self-acceptance, and positive relations with others (Fava, 1999). This positive and focused approach with its emphasis on activating client development lends itself to use in counseling and psychotherapy, in personal coaching, and as an adjunct in spiritual direction (Sperry, 2010). Presumably, it can have considerable value in priestly formation.

Research on God image, also called God representations, suggest these representations have considerable potential for both clinical and formation purposes. Beyond identifying God image as part of the assessment of seminary candidates, such data can be quite useful in the process of seminary formation, including spiritual direction. For example, God image has been found to change over the course of conventional psychotherapy even when the therapy did not address spiritual matters. In one study God images changed from a harsh, negative view of God at the outset to images of God as loving and caring at the completion of treatment (Cheston, et al., 2003). From the perspective of a Catholic anthropology this result is not unexpected.

These are just two examples of exciting developments that increase the potential contributions clinical psychology can and will make to priestly formation. As noted earlier, these contributions extend well beyond its traditional use in the assessment of candidates. Seminar-

ies can further benefit from such contributions to the extent that they are open to them.

Social Psychology

Social psychology studies the influence of others on the individual, particularly in groups and social situations. Since the bludgeoning death of Kitty Genovese in 1965, which was witnessed by bystanders who did nothing to help the victim, social psychology has focused largely on studying why individuals help and don't help others. Thus, it is not surprising that social psychologists have been fascinated by the Good Samaritan parable.

Interestingly, this parable has significantly influenced everyday life in America. We have Good Samaritan laws. In medicine, specifically in oncology, there is considerable research on what are called Good Samaritan cells, i.e., helper cells that activate when immunity is compromised and limit the proliferation of cancerous cells. In business, the "Good Samaritan effect" involves the intrinsic motivation of workers in corporations in North America, Europe, and Asia. All these suggest that helping others is a core value for some but not others (Tang, et al., 2008).

With regard to seminarians, a famous social psychological study of the "Good Samaritan effect" was conducted in 1970 at Princeton Theological Seminary. In the study seminarians were invited to participate as research subjects. They were given a questionnaire to measure religiosity and then given a task to give one of two talks: either on vocational careers of seminarians or on the Good Samaritan story (Darley & Batson, 1973). These 3 to 5 minute talks were to be given that same day under different time conditions, but on route to giving their talks, each seminarian encountered a "victim," a shabbily dressed man on the side of the alley who coughed, groaned, and slumped down when they passed by. The victim also had bruises on his face. The time conditions ranged from hurry ("you're almost late so get over there quickly"), to no hurry ("your talk is in 20 minutes so you have time to prepare"). Overall, only 40% of seminarians helped the victim.

When the *New York Times* reported the findings of this study, a public outcry followed. Various explanations were offered for why so many seminarians—who presumably should have acted like the Good Samaritan—did not offer to help the victim. Some suggested the study results reflected that Princeton was an ultra-liberal seminary where many seminarians and faculty were Godless and that is why they did not offer help to the victim! Others suggested that if the seminary rector had

been observing the situation, all or most seminarians would have helped the victim.

Perhaps the most compelling explanation is that for many people, including the seminarians in the study, not helping reflects their core values. Subsequent research demonstrated that core values predicted the "Good Samaritan effect" and whether individuals would help or not help others in need (Tang, et al., 2008). In short, like the priest and Levite in the parable, ministry personnel may not help because other core values are operative, e.g., impressing superiors, being on time, career advancement, etc. The insight and contribution of social psychology to priestly formation is that these core values can be measured, and perhaps should be in candidates for the priesthood and religious life. Interestingly, such core values are reflected in an individual's work orientation (Bellah, et al., 1985). It is noteworthy that the Lord's final words of the Good Samaritan parable, "Go and do likewise," (Luke 10: 37) are consistent with only one of the three orientations.

Vocational Psychology

Vocational psychology studies factors that influence a person's choice of an occupation, motivation for work, and work orientation. Work orientations is a leading area of research today in sociology and in vocational psychology (Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997). There are three job orientations. In the "job" orientation, the focus is on making money and benefits so that workers can engage in activities consistent with core values of hobbies and entertainment. Their motto is "I work so I can play." In priestly ministry this orientation is not uncommon in those who are psychopaths and sexual predators (Sperry, 2005). In the "career" orientation the focus is on fostering career advancement. The motto of this orientation is: "I work so I can get ahead." This orientation is not uncommon among those whose lives and ministry are characterized by clericalism (Conference of Major Superiors of Men, 1983). In the "vocation" orientation, the focus is on finding meaning in life and/or making a difference in the world. The core value is fulfillment in terms of wholeness and increased well-being. Here the motto is something like: "My work is my play."

Recently, a distinction has been made in the research between a vocation orientation and a calling orientation. The core values operative in the calling orientation have been identified as having a "transcended summons" or "self-transcending reasons" for working whereas the operative value in the vocation orientation is finding personal meaning in one's work

In the organizational psychology perspective, it is not individual, situational, or organizational dynamics that best explain behavior. Rather, it is a combination of all three.

(Dik, Duffy & Eldgridge, 2009). Because the operative values of the calling orientation are most compatible with priestly ministry, it may well have been that the Princeton seminarians who helped the victim internalized this orientation. It is also likely that if the seminary rector was observing the scenario that those with a career orientation would also have assisted the victim since the rector's positive evaluation of their helping behavior might be perceived as enhancing their career advancement. In any event, the assessment of core values and work orientations could be valuable in screening candidates, and since the calling orientation and its core values can be enhanced and reinforced, they could also be valuable considerations in seminary formation. In short, work orientation may be a significant contribution of vocational psychology to the seminary world.

Organizational Psychology

Organizational psychology studies the application of psychological theory and method to organizational issues including the influence of the organization's structure, strategy, leadership, and culture. Culture always reflects the actual core values—in contrast to the stated values—of an organization or institution. The core values of clerical culture have been identified as privilege, entitlement, separateness, and status, and in clericalism, these values are considered inconsistent with priestly ministry (Conference of Major Superiors of Men, 1983). To the extent that priestly formation fosters these values, clericalism will be reflected in the seminary's identity and the behavior of faculty, administration, and seminarians. While concern about clericalism has been expressed by church leaders (Conference of Major Superiors of Men, 1983), this concern has not resulted in appreciable action. Arguably, the insights and change strategies of organizational psychology can contribute greatly to the process of priestly formation.

In contrast to the traditional clinical psychology model of individual dynamics, organizational psychology also offers a useful tripartite model of viewing behavior in terms of the influence of individual, situational, group, and organizational dynamics. The danger of ascribing to an individual dynamics model is that diocesan and seminary personnel can unwittingly accept the "fundamental attribution error." The fundamental attribution error is the belief that the best explanation for a seminarian or priest's behavior or misconduct involves individual dynamics rather than situational, group, or organizational dynamics and influences. For example, church leaders commonly explain the sexual misconduct of priests as a result of fatal character flaws which were not detected during the admissions or formation process. This explanation reflects the individualistic perspective of traditional clinical psychology in which misconduct is viewed as a function of an individual's psychopathology. Another way of saying this is that a priest who engages in such behavior is a "bad apple."

This is a very limiting explanation which contrasts with the social psychology explanation wherein situational factors better explain a given behavior. In this perspective, called the "bad apples" explanation, a seminarian's or priest's behavior—such as sexual misconduct—is explained in terms of the influences of others whom he knows, lives or works with who engage in such behavior. The third explanation is dubbed the "bad barrel" explanation wherein organizational or institutional dynamics can significantly, but often subtly, influence an individual's behaviors. Essentially, it is the organization's culture, values, policies, and system of rewards and sanctions in combination with the individual dynamics of the seminarian or priest, as well as situational factors, that best accounts for sexual misconduct among priests or manifestations of clericalism (Sperry, 2003). Comparing the cultures, operative values, policies, and actions of officials of dioceses with higher incidence rates to dioceses with lower incidence rates of sexual misconduct can offer a compelling explanation for the misconduct. In the organizational psychology perspective, it is not individual, situational, or organizational dynamics that best explain behavior. Rather, it is a combination of all three which bear responsibility and explain behavior. In short, the insights and methods of organizational psychology regarding culture, organizational core values, and the tripartite model are very useful in explaining the behavior and actions of seminarians and priests, as well as the process of seminary formation.

Concluding Note

Despite the massive social, political, and economic changes of the past century, psychology has contributed much to seminary life. Still, some hold negative perceptions ranging from occasional wariness to serious skepticism and antipathy, i.e., the belief that psychology is a God-less science that has harmed the priesthood. This final section summarizes a number of concerns about psychology as well as its contributions.

Even though positive psychology has rediscovered virtue and is beginning to recognize the influence of how one’s anthropology impacts one’s actions, concerns remain. For example, in an effort to develop a spiritually sensitive psychology, what passes for spirituality can be little more than a “psychologization of spirituality” (Sperry, 2002). It is often a “reduction” of spirituality to psychology. Such a psychology is suspect in that it is likely to eliminate or underplay mystery, grace and God, and overemphasize spiritual narcissism. Thus it is incompatible with Catholic spirituality. Furthermore, certain philosophical premises are incompatible with a Catholic anthropology and are a cause for concern. So is unwarranted optimism about psychology’s promise to

treat pedophilia and other sexual disorders. Likewise, the propensity toward the fundamental attribution error continues to be a concern. Table 1 summarizes these negative as well as positive views of psychology.

Overall, psychology appears to have made—and presumably will continue to make—major contributions to the priesthood from seminary admission to seminary formation and beyond. Arguably, some of the suspicions and antipathies toward psychology were, and may continue to be, warranted. Nevertheless, to the extent that vocation directors, seminary formators, and consulting psychologists are able to conceive of psychology beyond the boundaries of traditional clinical psychology, they can appreciate the many and varied contributions of philosophical psychology, social psychology, vocational psychology, and organizational psychology to seminary admissions and seminary formation.



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**TABLE 1
PSYCHOLOGY’S PERCEIVED POSITIVE & NEGATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO SEMINARY FORMATION**

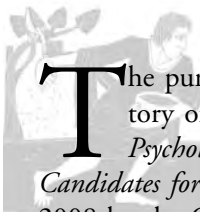
Perceived Positive Contributions	Perceived Negative Contributions
<p>ACPA and others’ advocacy of psychological assessment: MMPI and projective techniques, e.g., Rorschach</p> <p>Resurgence of interest in philosophical psychology of Catholic anthropology in clinical practice</p> <p>ACPA’s advocacy of psychological consultation in seminary formation</p> <p>Developments in social and vocational psychology, i.e., vocation and calling orientations</p> <p>Recovery of virtue in clinical psychology (positive psychology) for assessment and formation</p> <p>Research in clinical psychology on image of God: assessment and formation</p> <p>Organizational psychology’s insights of impact of seminary culture on seminarians</p>	<p>Reductionistic and value-free psychology</p> <p>Incompatibility of scientific naturalism and Freudian pansexualism with Catholic anthropology</p> <p>Psychologization of spirituality</p> <p>Death of virtue in psychology</p> <p>“Overselling” psychology’s effectiveness in the treatment of sexual misconduct</p> <p>“Overselling” of psychology’s explanatory power/prediction of individual vs. institution influences, e.g., fundamental attribution error</p>

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Setting the Stage for Psychology's Role in Priestly Formation and the Creation of the "Guidelines" Document

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The purpose of this article is to review the history of the document *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood* published on October 30, 2008 by the Congregation of Catholic Education. My comments are those neither of a specialist in psychology nor of a long-time seminary formator. Rather, they stem from my experience as a diocesan bishop and as the former Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education. During my tenure at the Vatican these Guidelines were in the final stages of their long period of preparation.

According to *Pastor Bonus*, the apostolic constitution which regulates the responsibilities of the Roman Curia, the Congregation for Catholic Education "gives practical expression to the concern of the Apostolic See for the training of those who are called to Holy Orders, and for the promotion and organization of Catholic education" (art. 112). Within the Congregation this task is carried out by the Seminary Office, which, among other duties, oversees the publication of numerous documents which provide guidelines and directives for priestly formation.¹ Before looking at the *Guidelines*, it is helpful first to review its context: how the Roman Curia has viewed the role of psychology in priestly formation since Vatican II.

Vatican II and Response

For the first time ever, the Council Fathers recognized a role for psychology in the theological and pastoral formation of seminarians previously. They stated in *Gaudium et Spes*: "In pastoral care, sufficient use must

The Council Fathers realized that theology could profit from other sciences so that a more profound knowledge of the human person would result.

be made not only of theological principles, but also of the findings of the secular sciences, especially of psychology and sociology, so that the faithful may be brought to a more adequate and mature life of faith" (n. 62).

The Council Fathers realized that theology could profit from other sciences so that a more profound knowledge of the human person would result; theology can be enriched by the contributions of the human sciences. According to the Council Fathers, in seminaries "the norms of Christian education are to be religiously observed and properly complemented by the newer findings of sound psychology and pedagogy. Therefore, by a wisely planned training there is also to be developed in the students a due human maturity" (*Optatam Totius*, 11).

Inspired by the Council, in 1968 Father Pedro Arrupe, General of the Society of Jesus, proposed to the Congregation of Catholic Education that the Gregorian University set up a new Institute of Pastoral Psychol-

ogy. Moreover, he envisioned this project as a concrete response to Pope Paul VI's encyclical on priestly celibacy which affirmed that the human sciences, above all psychology, could make a contribution to "the difficulties and problems which make the observance of chastity very painful or quite impossible for some," since they "spring, not infrequently, from a type of priestly formation which, given the great changes of these last years, is no longer completely adequate for the formation of a personality worthy of a 'man of God'" (*Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, 60). In those turbulent years this opening to the contribution psychology could make to formation was fostered by the sense of urgency felt because of the high numbers of those leaving the seminary and active ministry.

Those in Rome were very cognizant of two principal doctrinal and practical difficulties which the study and use of psychology presented in formation: first, the danger coming from the behavioristic tendencies widespread in the psychological sciences; second, the difficulty of finding professionals who can understand the particular needs of seminarians and know how to ensure that "a truly adequate formation should harmoniously coordinate grace and nature" (*Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, 63), prudently integrating the findings of modern psychology with the Church's theological and spiritual tradition.

The Gregorian's proposal was accepted by the Congregation for Catholic Education, approved by Paul VI and established in 1971.

John Paul II and Benedict XVI: Confidence and Diffidence

Pope John Paul II, with his great interest in Christian anthropology and the question of the human person, developed a comprehensive vision of priestly and religious formation. In his post-synodal apostolic exhortations, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992) and *Vita Consecrata* (1996), we find an approach to priestly and religious formation that is "dynamic, integrative, and holistic. . . . One of the important contributions made by Pope John Paul II has been to incorporate more systematically into the Church's anthropology of vocation and formation certain developmental perspectives drawn from the human sciences."²² Indeed, throughout his pontificate, the Pope encouraged the study of the human sciences such as sociology and psychology, because he thought that "for a deeper understanding of man and the phenomena and lines of development of society, in relation to a pastoral ministry which is as 'incarnate' as possible, the so-called 'human sciences' can be of considerable

use, sciences such as sociology, psychology" (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 52). While incorporating into his Christian anthropology of vocation certain insights from the human sciences, he also insisted that it was necessary to go beyond a purely natural understanding. The human person can only be understood in light of Christ. On innumerable occasions he invoked the teaching of *Gaudium et Spes*:

The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of him who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear" (n. 22).

On the one hand, then, a certain confidence is placed in the positive contributions of psychology and other human sciences. John Paul defended the conviction that "only a Christian anthropology, enriched by the contribution of indisputable scientific data, including that of modern psychology and psychiatry, can offer a complete and thus realistic vision of humans."²³ In a speech to the Roman Rota, the usual place of such remarks because of the use of psychology in annulment cases, the Pope said: "Christian anthropology, enriched by the contribution of recent discoveries in psychology and psychiatry, considers the human person, under every aspect – terrestrial and eternal, natural and transcendent. In accordance with this integrated vision, humans, in their historical existence, appear internally wounded by sin, and at the same time redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ."²⁴

At the same time, John Paul II warned against certain trends of contemporary psychology that, "going beyond their own specific competence, are carried into such territory and are introduced under the thrust of anthropological presuppositions which cannot be reconciled with Christian anthropology."²⁵

In summary, Rome was still cautious, warning that every scientific discipline grasps only a partial dimension of the mystery of the human person. The Congregation for Catholic Education, in *its Directives Concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators* (1993), aptly summarizes the view of John Paul II:

The Church calls for an attitude of trust in these fields of scientific research and exhorts the maintaining of a climate of mutual comprehension and dia-

logue with her, but at the same time she marks its limits, inasmuch as “each particular science is able to grasp only a partial – yet true – aspect about man” (Octogesima Adveniens, 40). In fact, concrete dangers of generalization due to incomplete results, and the risk of ideological conditioning of such research exist, and cannot be ignored (n. 59).

The same wariness about the undue claims for the use of psychology is also evident in the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI. During his visit to the Gregorian University in 2006, while praising the venerable tradition of cultivating the human sciences, he said: “For the very reason that these sciences concern the human being, they cannot set aside reference to God. In fact, man, both in his interiority and in his exteriority, cannot be fully understood unless he recognizes that he is open to transcendence. Deprived of his reference to God, man cannot respond to the fundamental questions that trouble and will always trouble his heart concerning the end of his life, hence, also its meaning.”⁶ There are few references – other than the very generic – to the discipline of psychology in Benedict’s writings. This might lead one to conclude that he is little interested in its contributions. The *Guidelines* prepared by the Congregation for Catholic Education which he ordered to be published in 2008 tell, however, a somewhat different story.

The Development of the Current Guidelines

Study of the use of psychological expertise in the admission and formation of candidates for the priesthood began in earnest in the Roman Curia in 1975. The Congregation for Catholic Education first looked at this issue in light of a Note prepared by the Secretariat of State to which was attached a letter of Cardinal Villot. In this letter the Cardinal underlined three points that the Congregation needed to keep in mind in its deliberations on the role of psychology in formation.

First, the letter affirmed that no superior, either diocesan or religious, could have access to matters that touched upon a person’s privacy without the prior, explicit, informed and absolutely free consent of that individual. No use of psychological testing used either at the time of admission or during the course of formation could be legitimately used without such consent, which was not to be extorted in any way.

Second, the psychologist must not reveal to third parties, whether religious or political (no doubt thinking of totalitarian regimes where such information could

readily be used against a candidate) anything touching upon the privacy due the person, without the consent of the one being tested or treated.

Third, the psychologist or expert should, for his part, respect the privacy of his client and maintain the natural, professional and committed secrecy proper to his role. With these cautions in mind, the Congregation began to study in earnest the question of the use of psychology in formation. Nothing, however, was published as a result of this first investigation.

First Draft

In 1995 the need for the Congregation for Catholic Education to take up the question of the use of psychological testing before admitting candidates to the seminary was approved by the plenary assembly meeting in Rome. The bishops and cardinals asked that a draft document be drawn up for their next plenary session.

Typically a draft is prepared either in the Congregation or, more usually, with initial input from a consultant who works closely with the officials within the Dicastery.

Three years later, at the plenary of 1998, they received a first draft entitled *Psychological Screening and the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood and the Consecrated Life*. In his discourse at the opening of the plenary assembly, John Paul II said:

The great concern of the Seminaries Office is to see that candidates for the priesthood are given an integral formation, attentive to the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral dimensions. In this regard, there is a particularly important relationship between human and spiritual formation. It will be your task to set forth the criteria for using the behavioral sciences in the admission and formation of candidates for the priesthood. I consider it useful to employ the contribution of these sciences for discerning and fostering growth in the human virtues, the capacity for interpersonal relationships, affective-sexual development and education in freedom and conscience. However, it must remain within the limits of their specific fields of expertise and not stifle the divine gift and spiritual inspiration of a vocation or diminish the place of discernment and vocational guidance which is the proper duty of seminary educators.⁷

For their part, the members of the plenary expressed certain reservations about the draft: they cau-

“At the time of the young men’s admission to the seminary, their suitability for living a celibate life should be carefully assessed.”

tioned prudence about the nature of the test and about any generalized use of such testing, even though this practice had become commonplace in many dioceses and institutes of consecrated life. Furthermore, they asked for further precision regarding the appropriate time for administering any test and on its role in the overall process of vocational discernment. Despite these reservations, the members thought that this draft could serve as the basis for a future document, provided that the necessary changes were introduced.

Second Draft

At the conclusion of the plenary assembly, the text and the observations of the Fathers were given to several experts of different psychological schools who were asked to help in the preparation of a second draft. Several other dicasteries were also invited to offer their observations, and those of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith were given particular attention.

After receiving this input, the officials of the Congregation prepared the second official draft; it was presented at the next plenary assembly in February, 2002. At the beginning of this meeting, Pope John Paul II made the following remarks to the members of the assembly:

You are going to examine some Guidelines for the use of psychological expertise in the admission and formation of candidates to the priesthood. This document is intended to be a useful tool for those involved in the work of priestly formation, who are called to discern the suitability and vocation of a candidate for his own good and that of the Church. Of course, the contribution of psychology has to be incorporated in a balanced way within the process of vocational discernment where it becomes part of the overall process of formation in a way that safeguards the great value and role of spiritual direction. An atmosphere of faith in which, alone, the generous response to the vocation received from God can mature, will lead to a correct

understanding of the meaning and use of psychology, that does not eliminate every difficulty and tension, but, encourages a broader awareness and freer exercise of personal freedom so that the candidate can take up an open and honest struggle, with the irreplaceable help of grace. It will therefore be right to pay attention to the formation of expert psychologists, who, with good scientific qualifications, will also have a sound understanding of the Christian vision of life and of the vocation to the priesthood, so as to provide effective support for the necessary integration of the human and supernatural dimensions.⁸

Clearly the Pope agreed that a document should be published, though he again expressed some cautions.

Third Draft

The second draft, with the observations of the members of the plenary assembly, was next circulated to various Congregations of the Curia, including that for the Doctrine of the Faith. Consultation was widespread. In light of these suggestions, a third draft was prepared for the 2005 plenary assembly. In his message to the Fathers, John Paul II made only a passing reference to this document; not surprisingly, he put it in the context of celibacy, since the document on the admission of homosexual men to the seminary was under discussion. He wrote to the members:

In light of current social and cultural changes, it can sometimes be useful for educators to avail themselves of the work of competent specialists to help seminarians acquire a deeper understanding of the requirements of the priesthood and to recognize celibacy as a gift of love for the Lord and for their brethren. At the time of the young men’s admission to the seminary, their suitability for living a celibate life should be carefully assessed so that a moral certainty regarding their emotional and sexual maturity may be reached before they are ordained.⁹

As in editing any document, the decision about which suggestions made by the various Curia bodies and other consultors are to be accepted is crucial in revising the text. Those made at the plenary assembly and those from the CDF undoubtedly have greater weight, though, in the last analysis, it is the responsibility of the superiors of the Congregation of Catholic Education to make such judgments: the prefect, the secretary and the undersecretary.

The members of the 2005 plenary assembly did not recommend the publication of the third draft as it was submitted but asked for further modifications.

Fourth and Final Draft

In June 2006 the third draft, together with the Fathers' observations and further ones from the relevant Dicasteries consulted, was given to a consultor to edit the text. The fourth draft, shorter by nearly one-third than the previous version, was presented to the plenary assembly in January 2008. The members found the text to be satisfactory. They approved it with 23 yes, 1 no and 5 yes with reservations votes, and asked that it be submitted to the Holy Father for his approval before its publication. After inserting the final recommendations, the Prefect, Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, was received by Pope Benedict in an audience on June 13, 2008. The Pope confirmed the submitted document, noting that one negative vote was insufficient to place a roadblock to its publication.¹⁰

Some Pertinent Concerns of the Instruction

In this section I would like to consider several of the questions that seem to have caused the most difficulty in preparing the various drafts of the *Guidelines*. First, however, it should be noted that this Roman document proposes to resolve neither theoretical disputes concerning the relationships between psychology, theology and spirituality, nor questions about the merits of different schools of psychology. Rather, as Cardinal Grocholewski noted at the press conference which presented the *Guidelines*, they are limited to making "a practical contribution"¹¹ to the question at hand.

1. Real, but Limited Role of Psychology in Vocational Discernment

A primary concern evident in the *Guidelines* is its insistence that there is a real but only limited role for using psychology in vocational discernment both at the stage of admission of candidates and in the course of their formation. The document is very clear in affirming that "Inasmuch as it is the fruit of a particular gift of God, the vocation to the priesthood and its discernment lie outside the strict competence of psychology. Nevertheless, in some cases, recourse to experts in the psychological sciences can be useful" (n. 5). Chapter III of the document is purposely entitled, "Contribution of Psychology to Vocational Discernment and Formation" rather than, for example, "The Usefulness of Recourse to Experts in the Psychological Sciences," a title used in

an earlier draft.

In the background two different, if not opposing, opinions can be discerned. On the one hand are those who stress the positive contributions that a proper use of psychology can bring to vocational discernment. They are aware, as the *Guidelines* affirm, that "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" (n. 5). On the other hand are those who are more aware of possible abuses in the use of psychology: where such experts in the discipline are given a role that – whether intentionally or not – obscures the spiritual formation of seminarians. For this reason the document affirms that "the priestly ministry, understood and lived as a conformation to Christ, Bridegroom and Good Shepherd, requires certain abilities as well as moral and theological concerns, which are supported by a human and psychic – and particularly affective – equilibrium" (n. 2). While human formation is absolutely critical, the primacy of spiritual formation must be maintained: "The Church has the duty of furnishing candidates with an effective integration of the human dimension, in light of the spiritual dimension into which it flows and in which it finds its completion" (n. 2).

Indeed, the role of psychology is to assist in, not substitute for, spiritual formation. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) is particularly sensitive to situations where the use of experts in psychology has become obligatory and widespread for the admission of all priesthood candidates and in their subsequent formation. The *Guidelines* directly address the CDF's concern that human formation could be equated with psychological well-being or that psychologists could replace spiritual directors and other formators: "The assistance offered by the psychological sciences must be integrated within the context of the candidate's entire formation. It must not obstruct, but rather ensure, in a particular way, that the irreplaceable value of spiritual accompaniment is guaranteed; for spiritual accompaniment has the duty of keeping the candidate facing the truth of the ordained ministry, according to the vision of the Church" (n. 6).

And later, in its section on the "Specific Character of Spiritual Direction," the document adds: "It is a firm principle that spiritual direction cannot, in any way, be interchanged with or substituted by forms of analysis or of psychological assistance. Moreover, the spiritual

life, by itself, favors a growth in the human virtues, if there are no barriers of a psychological nature" (n. 14). Elsewhere the *Guidelines* unequivocally state the need for grace: "A certain Christian and vocational maturity can be reached, including with the help of psychology, illumined and completed by the contribution of the anthropology of the Christian vocation and, therefore, of grace. Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the fact that such maturity will never be completely free of difficulties and tensions, which require interior discipline, a spirit of sacrifice, acceptance of struggle and of the Cross, and the entrusting of oneself to the irreplaceable assistance of grace" (n. 9).

2. Discernment and Formation are Ecclesial, not Professional Tasks

A second affirmation of the Congregation for Catholic Education that emerges with increasing clarity in the course of the various drafts is this: discernment and formation are above all an ecclesial matter. A vocation to the priesthood comes from God as his gift to the Church, and so she has "the duty of discerning a vocation and the suitability of candidates for the priestly ministry" (n. 1): "It belongs to the Church to choose persons whom she believes suitable for the pastoral ministry, and it is her right and duty to verify the presence of the qualities required in those whom she admits to the sacred ministry" (n. 11). While carefully respecting every candidate's right to privacy and his good name or reputation, guaranteed by canon 220¹² and which the *Guidelines* vigorously protect, the Church has the right and obligation to guarantee the suitability of her ministers.¹³ In ensuring their suitability, the Church may have "recourse to medical and psychological science." For this reason, "in cases of doubt concerning the candidate's suitability, admission to the seminary or house of formation will sometimes only be possible after a psychological evaluation of the candidate's personality" (n. 11).

Bishop's Role

Careful to avoid any impression that experts in psychology have a primary role in vocational discernment and formation, the *Guidelines* intentionally rank those responsible. Pride of place belongs to the bishop or major superior: "In fact, it belongs to the bishop or competent superior not only to examine the suitability of the candidate, but also to establish that he is suitable" (n. 11). Then the Congregation added a timely reminder: "A candidate for the priesthood cannot impose his own personal conditions, but must accept with humil-

ity and gratitude the norms and the conditions that the Church herself places, on the part of her responsibility" (n. 11). The bishop's role confirms the essentially ecclesial nature of determining who can proceed to Holy Orders; he has the ultimate responsibility of recognizing and confirming the authenticity of the call (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 65). The *Guidelines* cite three times canon 1052 in this regard. Before proceeding to a candidate's ordination, the bishop must have moral certitude about his suitability; that is, he must be satisfied that "positive arguments have proven the suitability of the candidate" (canon 1052.1).

Formator's Role

The bishop's first assistants are the formators. Their concern is the good of the candidate who wants to be formed as a priest as well as the good of the ecclesial community which has a right to priests capable of carrying out their ministry. The formators' irreplaceable role in discernment is to help the bishop or competent superior reach a judgment about a candidate's suitability in every dimension, including the human dimension, which is "the foundation of all formation" (n. 2). Their task is delicate, since they are expected "to understand profoundly the human person as well as the demands of his formation to the ordained ministry" (n. 4). Hence the document insists that "every formator should have a good knowledge of the human person: his rhythms of growth; his potentials and weaknesses; and his way of living his relationship with God" (n. 3). The bishop must see to it that they receive a suitable formation, including a psychological preparation, so that they can carry out their responsibilities.

A very heavy burden is laid on the shoulders of formators since, as far as possible, they should be able "to perceive the candidate's true motivations, to discern the barriers that stop him integrating human and Christian maturity, and to pick up on any psychopathic disturbances present in the candidate" (n. 4). This is a tall order. Everyone would agree that such judgments should be reached about seminarians. Moreover, most formators are convinced that the use of experts, at least through an initial screening, might ordinarily be necessary. The help of such experts is needed because the Congregation notes the limits of the formators when it affirms that "in consideration of their particularly sensitive nature, the use of specialist psychological or psychotherapeutic techniques must be avoided by the formators" (n. 5). One wonders whether too much is expected from formators in diagnosing difficulties, frequently referred to

as “psychological wounds” in the document, which are not readily discernible and could easily be missed.

Experts in Psychology

The *Guidelines* emphasize the need for a human formation which makes use of the insights of modern psychology, but they expect the formators to have a suitable knowledge in this area such that experts are not always necessary for successful discernment and formation. Indeed, and this is an important qualification, the document affirms that “*in some cases*, recourse to experts in the psychological sciences can be useful” (n. 5). Ordinarily the formators, with the help of the spiritual director and confessor, deal with the difficulties inherent in the gradual development of the moral virtues, and help candidates overcome difficulties “with the grace of God.” Nevertheless, again “*in some cases* . . . the development of these moral qualities can be blocked by certain psychological wounds of the past that have not yet been resolved” and the help of experts can prove beneficial (cf. n. 5). Indeed, the document affirms that “it is useful for the rector and other formators to be able to count on the cooperation of experts in the psychological sciences . . . who [however] cannot be part of the formation team” (n. 6).

Even if psychologists or similarly trained experts are not themselves formators, the Congregation is very careful to insist that they, too, have the kind of preparation and sensibilities suitable for dealing with questions that touch upon the action of grace in the soul. The *Guidelines* point out that “it must be borne in mind that these experts, as well as being distinguished for their sound human and spiritual maturity, must be inspired by an anthropology that openly shares the Christian vision about the human person, sexuality, as well as vocation to the priesthood and to celibacy. In this way, their interventions may take into account the mystery of man in his personal dialogue with God, according to the vision of the Church” (n. 6).

3. “If the case warrants”

It is evident, therefore, that experts in the psychological sciences might be helpful, but only “if the case warrants” (“*si casus ferat*”). Everyone would acknowledge that experts be consulted for seminarians already in a formation program only if there is reason to believe that such a consultation is necessary. The fifth edition of the American Bishops’ *Program of Priestly Formation*, approved after the draft submitted to the plenary of the Congregation in 2005, says as much. It acknowledges

that “counseling is often a helpful tool in the candidate’s human formation” and states that “the rector or his delegate should make provision for psychological and counseling services. . . . These services are made available to seminarians for their personal and emotional development as candidates for the priesthood” (n. 105). Likewise, the Italian *ratio* (*guiding document*), approved in the same year, states that “in the area of the seminarians’ human formation the use of psychologists *can* be helpful.”¹⁴ Clearly both statements fall within the limitation set by “in some cases,” since there is no hint of psychological expertise being mandatory for seminarians.

The *Guidelines*, however, go one step further in affirming that such experts should not be used as a matter of course or prescribed, even in the *initial* discernment of those seeking admission to a program of formation in a seminary or institute of consecrated life:

“Si casus ferat” – that is, in exceptional cases that present particular difficulties – recourse to experts in the psychological sciences, both before admission to the seminary and during the path of formation, can help the candidate overcome those psychological wounds, and interiorize, in an ever more stable and profound way, the type of life shown by Jesus the Good Shepherd, Head and Bridegroom of the Church (n. 5).

This restriction to using psychological expertise only “in exceptional cases that present particular difficulties” applies, it seems, to candidates seeking admission to the seminary. While acknowledging its usefulness, such use is purposely circumscribed: “In the phase of initial discernment, the help of experts in the psychological sciences can be necessary principally on the specifically diagnostic level, whenever there is a suspicion that psychic disturbances may be present” (n. 8). In the footnote, the *Guidelines* cite the *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, published in 2004, which supports this restrictive interpretation:

The complex and difficult situation of young people in today’s world requires that the Bishop be particularly attentive in assessing candidates at the time of their admission to seminary. In some difficult cases, when selecting candidates for admission to the seminary, it will be appropriate to ask them to undergo psychological testing, but only si casus ferat, because recourse to such means cannot be generalized and must be undertaken with the greatest prudence, so as not to violate the person’s right to privacy (n. 88).

The preparation of holy and psychologically healthy men for the priesthood is among the Church's noblest and most pressing responsibilities.

In the press conference given upon release of the *Guidelines*, Cardinal Grocholewski, commenting on this passage, stated: "In any case, it is clear that the use of psychology must not be a practice which is either obligatory or ordinary in the admission or formation of candidates for the priesthood."¹⁵ At the same press conference, Archbishop Jean-Louis Bruguès, Secretary of the Congregation, acknowledged that the use of psychology "has become obligatory in very many dioceses for candidates who wish to enter the seminary."¹⁶ He did not, however, go beyond the straight-forward statement of fact, either affirming the practice or calling it into question.

Here a problem arises. In most countries and dioceses, at least in the English-speaking world, it is common, in the stage of initial discernment for candidates seeking admission to the seminary or a religious institute, to use some kind of psychological testing and assessment. *The Program for Priestly Formation* states that "a psychological assessment is an integral part of the admission procedure" (n. 52). The Italian *ratio* is more circumspect and speaks of the opportuneness of "offering" such testing and evaluation to all candidates.

Do the Italians have it right? Should we be considering a revision of what is a common practice in light of the Congregation's *Guidelines*? The framers of the document appear to be aware of the widespread practice which makes psychological testing obligatory at the stage of initial discernment. Indeed, it seems to suggest the need for a change: "In faithfulness and coherence to the principles and directives of this document, different countries will have to regulate the recourse to experts in the psychological sciences in their respective *Rationes institutionis sacerdotalis*. The competent Ordinaries or major superiors will have to do the same in the individual seminaries" (n. 7). Perhaps further discussion can shed some light on this practice of obligatory recourse to experts in psychology in initial vocational discernment.

Conclusion

The preparation of holy and psychologically healthy men for the priesthood is among the Church's noblest and most pressing responsibilities. May this discussion enlighten all of us so that we can carry out the work that the good Lord has entrusted to us so that he might bring it to completion!



J. Michael Miller, CSB, was named coadjutor bishop of Vancouver in June 2007 and became archbishop in January 2009.

Endnotes

1. *The Teaching of Philosophy in Seminaries* (1972), *The Theological Formation of Priests* (1976), *Instruction on Liturgical Formation in Seminaries* (1979), *Guide to the Training of Future Priests concerning the Instruments of Social Communication* (1986), *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests* (1988), *The Virgin Mary in Intellectual and Spiritual Formation* (1989), *Instruction on the Study of the Fathers of the Church in the Formation of Priests* (1989), *Directives on the Formation of Seminarians concerning Problems Related to Marriage and the Family* (1995), and *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* (2005).
2. Timothy Costello, "Integrating Formative Roles," in *Formation and the Person*, ed. by Alessandro Maanenti, Stefano Guarinelli and Hans Zollner (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 242.
3. John Paul II, Address to the Roman Rota (10 February 1995), 3: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 87 (1995), 1014.
4. John Paul II, Address to the Roman Rota (25 January 1988).
5. John Paul II, Address to the Roman Rota (5 February 1987), 2: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 79 (1987), 1454. This text is repeated by John Paul II, Address to the Roman Rota (10 February 1995), 3: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 87 (1995), 1014.
6. Benedict XVI, Address during Visit to the Pontifical Gregorian University (3 November 2006).
7. John Paul II, Address to the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for Catholic Education (28 October 1998), 3.
8. John Paul II, Address to the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for Catholic Education (4 February 2002), 2: *AAS*, 94 (2002), 465.
9. John Paul II, Message to the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for Catholic Education (1 February 2005), 2.



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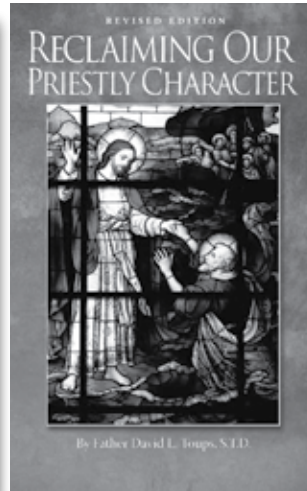
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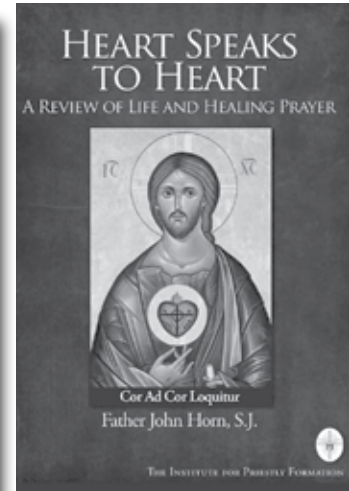
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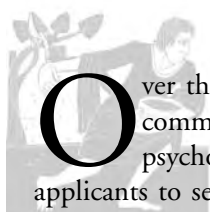
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10. The material on the *text* is drawn largely from the intervention of Archbishop Jean-Louis Bruguès, Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education, at the press conference announcing its publication, on October 30, 2008: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20081030_conf-orientamenti_it.html.
11. Zenon Cardinal Grocholewski, Press Conference for Presentation of the *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood* (30 October 2008): http://www.vatican.va/roman_curial/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20081030_conf-orientamenti_it.html.
12. "No one is permitted to harm illegitimately the good reputation which a person possesses nor to injure the right of any person to protect his or her own privacy."
13. Cf. Code of Canon Law, canons 1051-1052.
14. Italian Episcopal Conference, *La formazione dei presbiteri nella Chiesa italiana: Orientamenti e norme per i seminari*,

- 3rd edition (4 November 2006), n. 76; cfr. n. 93.
15. *Op. cit.*
16. Jean-Louis Bruguès, Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education, at the press conference announcing its publication, on October 30, 2008: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20081030_conf-orientamenti_it.html.

Psychological Evaluation of Seminary Applicants: The Need for Dialogue Between the Psychologist and the Vocations Director

Ronald J. Karney, Ph.D.



Over the years many dioceses and religious communities have employed the services of psychologists to conduct evaluations of their applicants to seminary formation. It fell upon the vocation director to make the necessary arrangements for this evaluation, which was part of the overall application process for review and determination of the applicant's suitability. Many vocation directors have shared the story that with their first candidate they would seek out the psychologist that their predecessor used and ask him or her to conduct the "usual" evaluation. Sometimes the vocation director was aware of the nature and scope of a psychological evaluation, knowing what to expect and what would be unrealistic to anticipate. Other times, he was learning what a formal evaluation entailed and reading a psychological report for the first time.

For the psychologist who conducts such evaluations, there was a similar initial episode in which the professional needed to assemble a testing protocol that could determine if this applicant was suitable for seminary formation. Similar to the experience of the new vocation director, some psychologists were aware of what the criteria were for an acceptable applicant for formation and were able to conduct the evaluation. However, others, while experienced in conducting psychological evaluations, were unaware of specific criteria to guide them in the evaluation process.

In order to conduct and have a useful and helpful psychological evaluation, it is important to have a well-formulated referral question or series of questions. *Why is the individual being referred? What information needs*

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to be known about his psychological functioning? Are there specific criteria that make an applicant more or less desirable, acceptable or unacceptable? These referral questions set the stage for the psychologist to conduct his/her evaluation in a manner that will yield the greatest value and utility.

However, the psychologist cannot set up these questions in isolation or alone. Attention needs to be directed to what are the standards or criteria that can identify individuals who have the desired personality traits necessary for entrance into formation, as well as those issues which may prove to be problematic for acceptance. In other words, a psychologist needs to know the criteria for inclusion and exclusion.

Several church documents are available to help guide the vocation director and the psychologist. These include the *Program of Priestly Formation, 5th Edition* (2006) from the U.S. bishops, and *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood* (2008), *Pastores Dabo Vo-*

bis (1992), and *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* (2005), from the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education.

Since its inception in 1971, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has promulgated the standards regarding formation of priests in the *Program of Priestly Formation* (PPF). Currently in its fifth edition, several exclusionary factors were identified as not being suitable for entrance into formation. These included: not meeting the minimal level of development necessary based upon the principle of gradualism (35, 36); serious pathology (37); not being able to function competently without extensive therapeutic or remedial work (37); not having adequately dealt with family or personal issues (54); an inclination toward sexual activity with minors (55); same sex experiences and/or inclinations in light of the guidelines provided by the Holy See (56); manifestation of extreme inflexibility, narcissism, antisocial behavior or any other serious pathology; lack of sexual integration; deep and unresolved anger (especially against authority); deep attachment to a materialistic lifestyle, and compulsive behaviors or addictions (89). Taken together these factors present a template or checklist that can assist the psychologist in knowing and understanding what conditions will raise serious red flags if the person was admitted into formation.

One principle that is important to understand is the principle of gradualism which means that the closer one is to ordination, the more developed the person needs to be. As such, more tolerance for immaturity may be given to a seminarian entering after high school than to a college graduate or one who has worked after graduation and now wishes to enter the seminary. In the former instance there is time for the individual to further his development since he may face 8 to 10 years of seminary formation, while the older, already college educated person, would be facing a shorter period of time in formation.

Additionally, the *PPF 5th Edition* also identified several factors that would be considered desirable for human formation. These include: having the necessary foundation in human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral development to allow for future development (36), having the proven capacity to function competently in ordinary human situations without the need for therapeutic or remedial work (37), having psychosexual maturity commensurate with chronological age (37), having a genuine empathy that enables connecting well and con-

One important task for the vocation director is to make certain that the evaluating psychologist understands the institutional meaning of church terms.

necting personally with others (37), having a capacity for growth or conversion (37), having a requisite level of affective maturity, and having the capacity to live celibate chastity (39). Finally, section 89 of the *PPF 5th Edition* presented the signs of a healthy personality as having sound, prudent judgment, being responsible, having personal initiative, having the capacity for courageous and decisive leadership, having the ability to work in a collaborative and professional manner with men and women, and being able to forgo self-interest in favor of cooperative effect for the common good.

One important task for the vocation director is to make certain that the evaluating psychologist understands the institutional meaning of these terms, since many psychologists are not trained in Catholic anthropology. As McGlone, Ortiz, and Vigilone (2009) pointed out, translating the Church's meaning into useful psychological concepts can be a struggle in some instances. With regard to the *PPF 5th Edition* standards, what does it mean to "live celibate chastity," have "deep attachment to a materialistic lifestyle," or have the "capacity for growth or conversion"? Working together, the vocation director is in a position to assist the psychologist in understanding these concepts and then determining how they can be translated into terms or ideas that can be formally assessed through a psychological evaluation.

In addition to these Church institutional standards, each diocese or religious community may have its own standards or qualities that it expects the new members who enter formation to be capable of following. How much latitude is the local institution capable of tolerating with regard to personality dynamics, a past history of alcohol/drug abuse, or taking medication for depression, anxiety, or bipolar conditions? Again the vocation director helps the psychologist understand these unique conditions or the degree of latitude that could be em-

played in the development of the referral questions.

Finally, one special area consists of those unique questions or concerns that the vocation director has developed based upon the extensive interactions he has had with the applicant or even with the applicant’s family during the application process. Too often the vocation director “sits on” or withholds these special concerns, observations, or hypotheses with the expectation that he will wait to see if the psychologist notices the same thing. Unfortunately, sometimes the psychologist sees them but doesn’t know that it is a possible concern. Experience has taught that it is better for the vocation director to share with the psychologist his concerns about this applicant so that the psychologist can look to see if they are present and assess to what extent they could be problematic during formation. These concerns can then be incorporated into the referral questions.

It is critical that early in the collaborative process the psychologist and the vocation director hold full discussions related to the church criteria, the local diocesan or religious community criteria, and the unique issues presented by the applicant. Early in the working relationship, a complete discussion of the above is necessary, so that both parties share a similar understanding of what is being asked. Over time, these discussions can shorten to focusing primarily upon any special or unique concerns regarding the applicant.

While this may appear obvious and an overstatement of a common-sense view for the development of the referral questions, a study by the NCEA Seminary Department (2010) found that there is a significant disconnect between both parties. In this national study, every Catholic diocese in the United States, all religious communities of men who have ordained priests as members, all seminary rectors, and those psychologists who conduct such evaluations were asked a number of questions concerning psychological assessments. One specific question concerned the provision of guidelines to the assessment psychologist regarding four specific questions required by the *PPF 5th Edition* (standard 51). These questions were:

- the traits and qualities that are consonant with a vocation to religious life and to the priesthood;
 - the expectations of the Church regarding celibacy;
 - counter-indications that would suggest an applicant is not suitable; and
 - the expectations of the Church regarding the permanence of the commitment.
- The fifth question referred to the types of tests to be used. In addition the psychologists who conducted the evaluations were asked if they received these guidelines.

In examining table 1, which summarizes these findings, a strong pattern emerged showing a disconnect between church personnel (vocation directors and seminary rectors) and the psychologists. While 80% of the vocation directors and seminary rectors provide guidelines of desirable traits and qualities to include, only 70% of the psychologists reported receiving them. The issues of celibacy, counter-indications, and permanency of commitment show a much greater gap between those making the referrals and those charged with conducting the assessment. It is clear that such discussions are most likely not occurring, and that both parties are not operating from the same perspective.

Approximately half of the psychologists who par-

Guidelines For Evaluation:

If the arch/diocese, religious institute, or seminary provides guidelines to those conducting psychological evaluations, do the the guidelines specify the following?

	Diocesan Voc. Dir.	Religious Voc. Dir.	Seminary Rectors	Psychologists
The traits and qualities consonant with a vocation to religious life and to the priesthood	78%	80%	84%	69%
The Church’s expectations regarding celibacy	78%	80%	84%	40%
Counter-indications that would suggest that an applicant is not suitable	58%	63%	73%	38%
The Church’s expectations regarding permanence of commitment	66%	62%	76%	27%
The types of tests to be conducted	79%	52%	71%	51%

NCEA Seminary Department and CARA Survey, 2010

anticipated in this study on psychological assessments indicated that they assess both applicants for dioceses and religious communities. Their responses to how they assess both groups stressed the need to understand the culture or charism of the religious community, the issue of a communal versus an independent lifestyle, and the meaning of vows and promises. This further supports the need for the assessment psychologist to understand the group to which the applicant is applying. This concept is not new to industrial or organizational psychologists who stress the need to match the applicant with the institution so that there is a “best fit.” The dialogue between the psychologist and the vocation director is well suited for developing an understanding of what would constitute universal referral questions, that is, questions that are applicable to all individuals reflecting church, diocesan or religious community expectations, in addition to the best specific questions that reflect unique concerns relative to the applicant.

Once the psychologist and vocation director have defined the referral questions, it is up to the psychologist to translate the ideas into psychological constructs, variables, and hypotheses that can be tested. The issue of living a life of celibate chastity cannot be directly assessed, but several referral questions can be generated that can be subjected to formal testing or interview data: *What is the applicant’s understanding of celibacy? What is his psychosexual developmental history? What is his capacity for intimate, non-sexual relationships?* Many others could also be developed around this construct of celibate chastity. Additionally, if the applicant presents with unique factors, such as the vocation director observing that he is awkward in his interactions with the vocation director and on retreats with other potential applicants, further questions could be developed, such as: *How does the applicant handle his sexual feelings and urges? Has he had any history of sexual abuse or trauma?*

Based upon these translated referral questions, the psychologist is ready to develop his/her assessment battery using a multi-method approach. This can include any combination of structured and unstructured interviews, cognitive tests, objective personality tests, projective personality tests, questionnaires and specialized measures, collateral information, and behavioral observation. The value in such a multi-method approach is the convergence of the findings across various data points in order to have maximum validity of the conclusions. This is in keeping with the best practice model for psychological testing developed by the American Psychological Association (Myers, et. al., 2001).

In the written report there needs to be a minimum of psychological jargon.

Following the completion of the assessment, scoring, and interpretation of the findings, the psychologist now needs to translate the results into a language that can be easily understood by the applicant, the vocation director, and those in leadership who will need to follow up on any of the recommendations. In the written report there needs to be a minimum of psychological jargon. Psychologists need to remember to whom they are writing the report, basically to non-psychologists and non-mental health professionals who may have only introductory psychology course knowledge of such concepts as *ego state*, *transference*, *reality testing*, etc. When psychology terms need to be used, then supplying a definition is critical in assisting the reader in understanding what is being said or nuanced.

Prior to release of the written report, having a feedback session with the applicant and with the vocation director may serve as a useful final step in the evaluation process. Such a joint meeting allows for two tasks to be conducted. First is the conveying of the results in a manner that allows both the applicant and the vocation director the opportunity to discuss them for a full understanding of what is being reported, the opportunity to ask for additional information and clarity, and the chance to offer additional data that may or may not change the interpretation of the findings. This discussion respects the need of the applicant to fully understand the findings, implications, and recommendations that may lead to his entering into seminary formation. It provides the applicant with a foundation to understand why he may be required to engage in certain skill-building exercises during formation. The vocation director is also afforded the same opportunity to raise questions that may help him understand more fully the results in terms of the potential of the applicant for acceptance into formation. The vocation director can then explain to the admission board or committee more of the nuances that were reflected in the written report. Also, the vocation director is given the opportunity to ask questions that may point out discrepancies between his experience of the applicant and the psychologist’s portrayal of the same person.

The second important task is to provide the vocation director the opportunity to witness how the applicant handles and deals with information about himself which can be positive and confirming or that can be challenging and perhaps upsetting. There have been times when the applicant, by virtue of his reactions, demonstrates the very dynamics that are being described. It is recognized that throughout formation, the individual will be receiving regular feedback about his personality style, his behaviors, and his interactions. This feedback session can demonstrate how he may handle such encounters.

Following release of the written report, the opportunity continues to exist for both the psychologist and the vocation director to continue to talk about the findings. Questions may arise about how a concept is presented and what is meant by it. Having these conversations allows the vocation director to be in the best position for when he presents all of the data to the admission committee or board for their review. He is ready to answer questions and help explain the findings of the evaluation as it relates to the recommendations for admission, deferral, or denial as well as for specific recommendations regarding the applicant's formation in the seminary. At the same time, such a discussion serves as a useful feedback loop for the psychologist to more completely understand salient aspects of the diocese or religious community's criteria for exclusion or inclusion. With such knowledge, the psychologist is in position to offer a psychological evaluation that can be useful and meaningful to the diocese and community for selection and for formation.

In summary, the best practice for the working relationship between the psychologist and the vocation director with regard to the psychological evaluation of seminary applicants is to maintain ongoing communication: at the beginning of the relationship, prior to each referral, upon review of the assessment findings, and afterward, to have periodic discussions of the quality of the evaluations. Such ongoing conversations will lead to an increase in confidence in each other, trust in the process and findings of the evaluation, and a more useful psychological evaluation for the admission board and for the seminary formation program.



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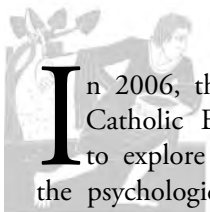
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Executive Summary

Psychological Assessment: The Testing and Screening of Candidates for Admission to the Priesthood in the U.S. Catholic Church

Rev. Mark A. Latcovich, Ph.D.

The executive summary is reprinted from *Psychological Assessment: The Testing and Screening of Candidates for Admission to the Priesthood in the U.S. Catholic Church*. The full report is available from NCEA Publications: 800.711.6232.



In 2006, the Seminary Department of the National Catholic Educational Association received funding to explore the possibility of conducting a study of the psychological assessment process for candidates for priestly formation and priesthood, with the objective of developing recommendations or guidelines for seminaries and others involved in the priestly formation process. The Seminary Department collaborated with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University and consulted with various experts in psychological assessment, priestly formation, and priestly life and ministry to do two things: 1) to examine the policies, procedures, and practices that are used by dioceses, religious institutes, and seminaries to test and screen candidates for admission to priestly formation, and 2) to guide the admission and ongoing evaluation of candidates for the priesthood.

In May 2007, the Seminary Department convened an advisory group to help inform and guide the study. The advisory group included representatives from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors and the National Religious Vocation Conference, the National Association of College Seminaries, the Midwest Association of Theological Schools, the Organization for the Continuing Education of Roman

Catholic Clergy, the Legal Resource Center for Religious, and psychological assessment and treatment centers that serve priests and religious.

The Seminary Department also convened a consultation in January 2008 on confidentiality and privacy issues related to psychological assessment. The purpose of the consultation was to identify best practices with respect to confidentiality, privacy rights, access to data, and record keeping policies to maintain the integrity of the “internal forum” of the candidate and to serve as a framework for the review of the information collected by CARA. In addition to many of the members of the advisory group, the meeting included experts in civil and canon law as well as in psychological assessment, priestly formation, and priest personnel issues.

In 2008 and 2009, CARA conducted a series of surveys of diocesan and religious vocation directors, seminary rectors, and psychologists who conduct the psychological testing for dioceses, religious institutes, and seminaries. CARA conducted focus groups with selected groups of vocation directors at the annual meeting of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocation Directors, and with seminary personnel at the annual meeting of the Midwest Association of Theological Schools and the annual meeting of the East Coast Rectors. The focus groups helped further identify and clarify issues that surfaced from the

surveys and explored how these issues might be addressed. In addition, CARA worked with the advisory group to refine questions for the survey of psychologists.

In June 2009, members of the advisory group created the present document, a synthesis of the research findings from surveys of 215 diocesan and religious vocation directors, 58 seminary rectors, and 55 psychologists who interview potential candidates for seminaries or religious communities.

The report is thirty-seven pages, and includes Appendix A “Assessment of International Candidates,” Appendix B “Guidelines for Identifying Qualified Psychologists for the Assessment of Applicants for Seminary Formation,” and Appendix C “Glossary of Psychological Tests.” These are followed by commentaries from a canonist, a bishop, and a psychologist.

The report is divided into the following sections:

Part I: Components of Assessment and Screening

- Components of the admission process, i.e., policies, procedures for admission, admission committee members, and admission requirements
- Background and history of the candidate
- Types of documentation and/or background checks required

Part II: Areas of Assessment

- Characteristics and abilities assessed, i.e., capacity for spiritual growth and conversion, psychosexual development, capacity to live celibate chastity, affective maturity, capacity for critical thinking, levels of self-knowledge
- Interviewers of candidates and required references and recommendations

Part III: Psychological Evaluation

- Guidelines and credentials for mental health professionals
- A review of psychological tests used in the process of admission as well as the process for feedback to the candidate and the vocation director, religious community or seminary

Part IV: Canonical and Legal Concerns

- Rights to privacy and confidentiality
- Reporting results of psychological testing and evaluation
- Records retention and access to records

Major Findings

Major findings from each section of the report are summarized:

Components of the admission process

- Nine in ten rectors (ninety percent) report that their seminary has a written admissions policy for candidates for priestly formation. By contrast, only sixty-five percent of diocesan vocation directors and eighty percent of religious vocation directors say their arch/diocese or religious institute has such a policy. In all three groups, the policy typically has been updated since 2007.
- About two-thirds of diocesan vocation directors and seminary rectors report that their arch/diocese has procedures for admission to priestly formation that are separate from those for admission to the seminary.
- By contrast, twenty percent of the religious vocation directors report that candidates for their institute/society are required to undergo a separate screening process for admission to priestly formation.
- Nearly all diocesan and religious vocation directors report that personal interviews, letters of recommendation, psychological assessment, medical assessment, and autobiography are part of the admissions process for their arch/diocese or religious institute.

Background and history of the candidate

- Nearly all of the vocation directors and seminary rectors explore family and educational background, employment history, physical and mental health, spiritual development, vocational discernment, and financial status as part of the application process.
- Seventy-eight percent of rectors report they follow the diocesan or religious community guidelines regarding the financial standing of a candidate. Financial status is an important indicator of a candidate’s stability and sense of responsibility. It reports a candidate’s financial portfolio of student loans, car payments, credit card balances and management of personal funds, and in some cases, it indicates addictive behaviors such as gambling, unwise investments, or fiscal irresponsibility.

Types of documentation and background checks required

- All of the responding vocation directors and seminary rectors report that they require sacramental records (baptismal and confirmation certificates). Half of the respondents or fewer require a parent marriage certificate, since the 1983 revised *Code of Canon Law* no longer holds this as a canonical requirement for Orders.
- Previous academic records and formation program reports (e.g., college seminary programs or pre-theology programs) are required by nearly all in the admissions process.
- More than three-fourths of seminaries require proof of citizenship and medical records.
- Most seminaries require state and federal criminal records checks as mandated by the 2002 USCCB document, *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. In many cases, the federal and local background checks include information regarding social security status, prior military service, and any notations on a driving record. The report suggests that seminary personnel should be cognizant of whether or not the arch/diocese or religious institute conducts these checks for students seeking admission.

Additional requirements for international students

- Almost all of the rectors report that most requirements are the same for foreign-born candidates, but many rectors impose additional requirements such as visa/immigration status/I-20 or proof of U.S. citizenship, international academic evaluation of transcripts, and ESL/TOEFL results.

Minimum time requirements for candidates seeking admission

- About nine in ten vocation directors and seven in ten seminary rectors indicate that they have a minimum waiting period of two to three years for a recent convert to the faith, or someone who recently returned to the faith, before they can be admitted to the seminary.
- Sixty-eight percent of rectors require a minimum waiting period for someone with previous experience in the seminary or religious

life, usually about two years.

Characteristics and abilities assessed from psychological testing

- Affective maturity, interpersonal skills, capacity for empathy, and psychosexual development are characteristics that are most likely to be part of the psychological assessment process.
- Vocation directors are more likely than seminary rectors and psychologists to report that they assess the capacity to live celibate chastity.
- About eight in ten respondents indicate that assessment of psychosexual development is “very much” a part of the admissions process for candidates. This assessment includes sexual inclination and sexual history.
- Three-fourths of the respondents report that affective maturity and the capacity for growth and conversion are assessed as part of the admissions process.
- Skills associated with the ability to communicate, relate to and interact with others, along with the candidate’s family or personal history of substance abuse are relatively high on the list of qualities and characteristics assessed.
- The capacity for critical thinking and understanding of practical and abstract questions is less likely to be assessed professionally during the admissions process.

Interviewing potential candidates

- Nearly all vocation directors interview potential candidates, with at least half of the diocesan vocation directors reporting that the bishop also personally meets with candidates.
- At least three-fourths of rectors interview candidates who will be admitted to their formation program and about half of them work with a formation team or admissions committee.

References and recommendations required

- Most respondents report that references or recommendations are required from the candidate’s pastor. References from former teachers, employers and friends are often requested by the candidate as a “letter of recommendation.”
- Some theologates require letters from priests

as well as from previous seminary rectors (as in the case of a college seminary recommending a candidate for theologate or from a pre-theology director).

Guidelines for psychological evaluations and requirements of psychologists

- Nearly eighty percent of vocation directors and eighty-four percent of seminary rectors report that they provide guidelines to psychologists for the psychological evaluation. However, psychologists report that it is not always clear to them what areas they should be testing. Rectors and vocation directors report that psychologists need to have a familiarity with the Catholic Church, experience with working with seminarians, and some familiarity with diocesan and religious life as well as some understanding and experience of the Roman Catholic priesthood in general.
- The study noted that vocation directors could improve the utility of the psychological evaluation by more clearly articulating specific criteria that reflect the ministerial components, living conditions and rectory dynamics required of diocesan priests, such as the celibate lifestyle, emotional and spiritual support systems, capacity to live the permanence of commitment, or for religious priests, to explore the interpersonal and psychological dynamics necessary for living within a religious community with a specific charism.

Credentials for psychologists and other clinical professionals

- Psychologists do more than ninety percent of admissions testing.
- Ninety-nine percent of the psychologists surveyed in this study are licensed, with one pending licensure.
- On average, respondents reported twenty-six years of experience in assessment, of which sixteen years was specific to evaluating candidates for priestly formation.
- On average, psychologists surveyed in this study work with three dioceses, four religious institutes, and three seminaries.

Psychological tests utilized

- Ninety-eight percent of psychologists report using a clinical interview as part of the evaluation process.
- For cognitive assessment, nearly all psychologists utilize one of the Wechsler scales of intelligence, which seems to be reflective of a standard protocol for cognitive assessment. The Wechsler scales of intelligence are widely researched and validated and provide good predictability of academic performance, problem solving, coping skills, and the ability to navigate stressful events.
- For personality assessment using objective tests, ninety percent or more of psychologists use the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory II for pathology-focused measures. For strength-focused measures, thirty percent of psychologists use the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire. The balance of both types, pathology-focused and strength-focused, allows for identifying clinically significant issues that would preclude acceptance and for identifying strengths and weaknesses that would be relevant to the formation process.
- For personality testing using projective tests, about sixty percent of psychologists include the Rorschach Inkblot Test. Projective testing often involves asking individuals to respond to ambiguous stimuli. Since the stimuli do not demand particular reactions, how the individual responds to them reveals the workings of his personality.
- For addictions or addictive behaviors, psychologists are most likely to be asked by seminaries and vocation directors to evaluate addictive behavior in the areas of alcohol, drugs and pornography. They are less likely to evaluate internet use and gambling for addictive behavior.

Specific issues noted by psychologists in assessing seminarians

- Psychologists report that they need to make adjustments in their interviews, noting different behavior and contextual requirements between religious and diocesan clients.
- Psychologists need to communicate test results to a candidate in a clear and effective manner by integrating the data into a meaningful report

of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses with less emphasis on scores and percentiles.

- Psychologists need to assess foreign-born candidates and international applicants with necessary accommodations due to language, translation, and cultural behaviors.

Canonical and legal concerns

- Nearly all of the vocation directors and seminary rectors report that the candidate is required to sign a waiver to release the results of psychological testing. Some report that this is done orally.
- Most seminaries and vocation directors note on the release form to whom the results will be released, and explain how the results will be used. About three-fourths or less of the release forms specify who will have access to the results. Most forms do not specify the length of time the testing results will be kept.
- Three-fourths of the psychologists disclose that they give the report to the candidate. If the candidate receives the report, it is typically in an oral report communicated by the clinician.
- One-third of the vocation directors state that they communicate the results of the psychological report to the candidate orally, excluding the psychologist's written summary and raw scores from standardized tests.
- Most vocation directors and seminary rectors report that the seminary receives the psychologist's written summary and report. Half of the diocesan vocation directors and close to one-third of the seminary rectors report that the seminary admissions board receives a copy.
- Most religious vocation directors report that both the vocation director and the major superior have access to the written report.

Psychological testing during formation

- Close to half of the rectors interviewed report that their seminary has a written policy regarding the use of the results of psychological testing and assessment during the period of formation. Those that report a policy state that it includes who has access to the results and how those results are used in both the internal and external fora.

- Most rectors report that counseling is available to candidates through referrals to clinicians outside the seminary community.

Record retention

- Most diocesan vocation directors report that the results of psychological testing and assessment are retained. Two-thirds note that the full report is retained, while one-fifth indicate that only a summary is retained. Most report that records are maintained by the chancellor or vicar for clergy after the candidate is ordained. Religious vocation directors report that their religious superiors retain these reports in their community files.
- Legal consultants noted that record retention may be useful in the event that a liability claim is made against the diocese, institute or society. The use of assessment records for ministerial assignments and other purposes may have little or no value after ordination.

Record disposition

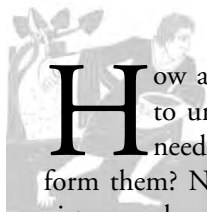
- Reports of psychological tests before admission or psychological counseling during formation are reportedly destroyed by about forty percent of seminaries.
- Sixty-six percent of seminaries retain the annual evaluation of their seminarians with thirty-five percent of this group forwarding the evaluation to the bishop or major superior.



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Developmental Milestones for Young Adult Males

Deacon Douglas Crawford, Ph.D.



How are formation personnel and psychologists to understand each other when speaking to the needs of seminarians and the institutions that form them? Neither formation personnel nor psychologists can change human nature, but they can, when working together, perhaps improve it. This article offers a way in which formation personnel and psychologists can utilize a basic and common language that addresses human nature and a rational manner of assessment. Using the acronym “BASIC” to represent the behavior, affect, sensation, interpersonal relationships and cognition of seminarians, I show how they apply to psychological thought and scripture, and then apply the model to the developmental factors operating in seminarians at the time of their training.

We all have a particular history that influences our present and future. We all participate in an internally- and externally-created reality, in which we manage pain, pleasure, self and the actions of others. We have a self-image ego (our fears and desires) that is subject to human knowledge and understanding. Throughout the life cycle, we move outward toward the external world and the external world moves toward us through circumstance, chance, education, cause, and effect. We have learned to find meaning in our created existence. We have discovered what it is to be human and to make informed choices about the vocation we choose. How might psychologists, vocation directors, formators and candidates speak a common language that facilitates vocational choice? An acronym such as the word “BASIC” can be one way of developing a general common language.

During the “A Necessary Conversation” conference in June 2010, it was clear that religious formators, vocation directors, psychologists, and therapists sought to develop a dialogue among their respective disciplines.

This article offers a way in which formation personnel and psychologists can utilize a basic and common language that addresses human nature and a rational manner of assessment.

A goal of the conference was to gain insight into how the psychological and religious communities could best assess and form seminarians in their vocational choice. The formators and psychologists at times wrestled with the challenge of integrating their different perspectives on human and religious development. Many in attendance talked about a need for a common approach to understand the life stages of seminarians and to address their needs from both a religious and psychological perspective.

A Model of Mutual Understanding and Common Language

We can remember key influences on our development during various stages of life. Perhaps when choosing your vocation you sought out your relatives and asked them questions regarding their memories of how they coped with the early years, created a career, raised a family or chose religious life. You made fundamental observations about your behavior, affect, somatic or

Behavior may be psychologically evaluated though such instruments as social history, inventory, diagnostic interviews and projective testing such as the Rorschach Test.

physical self, interpersonal relationships and thinking skills regardless of the vocational choice you made. In psychology, this process is known as a multimodal approach to understanding human behavior that contributes to enriched understanding. Each element or mode of the “BASIC” model is described below. Each element or mode is connected to every other mode or element. Each element or mode gives us a glimpse of the formation of a human being, particularly relative to a religious vocational choice. Consider the following.

The “**B**” in BASIC refers to our **behavior** or what we do. The priest is someone who has an appreciation and knowledge of behavioral limitations and gifts and can maintain personal balance and flexibility in his life when carrying out his responsibilities. He demonstrates the ability and skill to be self-reflective as he assesses situations, creates hospitality, engages in liturgy and carries out ministry. He has the capacity to live celibate chastity. He has a balanced sense of courage and behaves with integrity. He knows that Jesus wants us to participate in His divine life (*Catholic Catechism* 260, Acts 4:12), and that Jesus works and makes things happen in this life (John 4:1-42).

Psychological theories take into account demonstrated behavioral strengths and weaknesses. Internally, for example, an Adlerian approach maintains that subjective life goals give direction to our behavior. Alfred Adler and later Rudolf Dreikers stressed that human beings are motivated by a sense of community and strive to achieve a social well-being. Existentialists such as Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Buber, Frankl and others have attempted to define the nature of the created internal human experience. An existential approach upholds that it is the uniqueness of self in the present choice of action that gives meaning. Essentially, existentialists believe that humans are free to discover the self and the meaning of life through behavior and

the experience of anxiety and death. Reality therapy maintains that what is happening creates feelings, not the environment. Finally, relative to an internal perspective, cognitive-behavioral therapy postulates that behavior is a result of what comes from a person’s belief system. Externally, behavior therapy holds that what is learned, reinforced and imitated causes a person to do what he or she does. Our behavior is the product of learning from our external environment. Behavior may be psychologically evaluated though such instruments as social history, inventory, diagnostic interviews, projective testing such as the Rorschach Test that measures coping resources, and objective testing that determines the presence of behavioral difficulties.

The “**A**” in BASIC refers to our **affect** or what we feel. The priest has an appreciation and knowledge of his emotional limitations and gifts and can use enthusiasm, humor and empathy in encouraging others to find Christ. He demonstrates an emotional ability and skill that engenders trust and dispels prejudice. He has the capacity to show affective maturity and temperance. He is aware of Jesus as the suffering servant who bears our sins and intercedes for us (Isaiah 53:1-11, *Catholic Catechism* 601-603). Jesus empathizes (Luke 7:11-17).

Psychological theories also take into account our emotional qualities and virtues. For example, an Adlerian approach contends that we are all striving to overcome feelings of inferiority and our subjective impressions. Rogerian therapy is based upon accurate empathy, inner feelings, nonjudgmental presence, unconditional positive regard and a capacity for self-healing. This view holds that human beings can emotionally accept themselves in their effort to become more fully self-actualized. Fritz and Laura Perls emphasized the here-and-now affective experience rather than the “talked-about” experience of life. Using concepts such as energy, resistance, and nonverbal language, they advocated an immediate experiential awareness to manage feelings. Affect may be evaluated through a clinical interview, the Rorschach assessment of self perception and emotional control, and objective testing such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Inventory-2 or the Personality Assessment Inventory that determines the presence of mood disorders and personality difficulty.

The “**S**” in BASIC refers to our physical **sensations** or the ability to feel, hear and do. The priest has appropriate psychosexual maturity. He is aware of his physical limitations and gifts, and can see himself as a whole person who maintains a psychophysical equilibrium. He knows that Jesus assumed a human nature

(John 1:1-14 and *Catholic Catechism* 461-464), and that Jesus knows what it is to suffer (Mark 14:26-42).

This area takes into account our health, sexual identity, and biological development. Each personality theory deals with the physical effects of difficulty, but it is Freudian therapy that emphasizes the presence of conflicts during psychosexual stages of development. These stages deal with unconscious motivations by trying to bring them into conscious awareness. Cognitive Behavioral Intervention teaches us how to examine our thoughts in such a way that the physical effects of emotions are more effectively modulated. Sensation or somatic assessment is accomplished through clinical interviews, but is also part of the Rorschach and objective testing.

The “**I**” in BASIC refers to our **interaction** with others. The priest strives for loving human relationships by showing respect, demonstrating trustworthiness, encouraging others, giving himself to the church, strengthening families, and reflecting the behavior of Christ. He has the capacity to interact with authority and to demonstrate interpersonal justice and leadership. He is loyal, genuinely compassionate and respectful. He knows that out of love, Jesus comes to teach us (John 8:1-11) and to bring us into an eternal relationship with God (John 3:16-17, *Catholic Catechism* 519-560).

Within the realm of psychology, Freudian and psychoanalytic thought focus upon the conflicts humans have with others during the psychosexual stages of development. The goal of intervention is to restructure personality for overall healthy interaction rather than to solve immediate problems. Adlerian interpersonal intervention, on the other hand, has as its goal to encourage patients to develop socially effective goals. Existential intervention into interpersonal matters is designed to deal with the immediate experience to find meaning in the interaction with others. Rogerian intervention aims at bringing about a congruence between what one wants to become and what one actually is in relationship with others. A feminist approach addresses development through egalitarian experiences with others. Gestalt intervention stresses an I/Thou relationship designed to facilitate greater awareness and choice in personal relationships with others. Cognitive-Behavior Therapy emphasizes how humans can better relate to each other. Finally, Eriksonian psychology maintains a psychosocial approach that blends physical and social developmental growth throughout the life cycle. Growth and maturity can occur at each stage or turning point in life. According to the Eriksonian stages of life, one can discern

strengths and weaknesses in one’s life choices. The interpersonal mode of human functioning can be measured through a clinical interview, the Rorschach Test and objective testing.

The “**C**” in BASIC refers to our **cognition** or thoughts. The priest is able to set goals, communicate roles, discern and evaluate his needs, promote justice and perform loving acts of charity and justice. Here too, as with all the modes or elements in BASIC, a clergy person is aware of his limitations and gifts. He has the capacity to display critical thinking, to grasp abstract issues and to show appropriate decision-making skills. He knows that the life of Christ is a manifestation of the decision to love (2 Cor 5:21, *Catholic Catechism* 516).

The priest strives for loving human relationships by showing respect, demonstrating trustworthiness, encouraging others, giving himself to the church, strengthening families, and reflecting the behavior of Christ.

Psychologically, Cognitive-behavior therapy examines personality and life problems according to a person’s belief system. Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck maintain that, although personality difficulty may have its roots in childhood, such difficulty really continues in what a person keeps reinforcing through irrational and illogical thinking. An actual event is viewed through a particular belief system leading to a particular result. Consequently, the best way to change problematic emotions is to change one’s belief about the problem at hand. The Wechsler Abbreviated Intelligence Scale, Brown Attention-Deficit Disorder Scales, The Bender Gestalt test, and the clinical interview can most effectively measure cognitive assessment. The Rorschach Test will give insight into how the individual processes, mediates, and expresses thought.

Overall, the BASIC human experience is what we: do (B), feel (A), sense (S), relate (I) and think (C). These elements exist in every human being and can act

as a foundation for assessing and forming aspirants and candidates for religious life.

Understanding the Developmental and Formation Milestones for Young Adult Males

As noted above, Eriksonian psychology maintains a psychosocial approach that blends physical and social developmental growth throughout one's life span. Growth and maturity can occur at each stage or turning point in life. While psychologists, formators and directors should be aware how each of the eight Eriksonian stages has its particular behavior, affect, sensation, interaction and cognitive goal, they are most often interested in the adolescent and young adult stages. Relative to the BASIC model, the adolescent and young adult stages are as follows.

Between the ages of 13 – 21, the Identity vs. Confusion stage, the adolescent clarifies his sexual identity, selects a vocation, begins to separate from family, and works to integrate his personality through peer groups and other leadership experiences. The adolescent has the ability to think about what is possible rather than simply focusing on concrete reality. When Jesus had an awareness of his identity in the temple, he separated himself from his parents and expressed the call he heard from the Father for a personal reality different from the everyday life he was living with Mary and Joseph. In modern day psychology, this realization is formal operational thinking and goes beyond previous concrete thinking about experience. This thinking is sometimes idealistic, but nonetheless is an emerging, independent sensibility that dwells inside as one moves from family into the larger world. The adolescent becomes more socially engaging and from a moral viewpoint, shows a concern for the approval of others. The individual begins to reflect on the biblical story, and builds interpersonal relationships based on trust. Love and friendship will provide awareness and readiness to place oneself into the hands of God. Relative to the "BASIC" system, the adolescent who successfully develops an identity behaviorally integrates various roles, and leaves childish behaviors behind. Affectively, the adolescent is more centered rather than empty and lost. Adolescents can be physically strong rather than disconsolate and prone to illness. They are not confused about their sexual orientation. Success leads to interpersonal affiliation rather than conflicted relationships, a lack of peer relationships or hesitant interaction with others. Cognitively, they seek basic values such as trust. Evaluators and formators need to be aware of these developmental issues, deviations

Psychology addresses how the candidate experiences the created reality of existence. Christianity addresses how human beings experience the uncreated reality of God.

and delays.

Between the ages of 18-35, the Intimacy vs. Isolation stage, young adults continue to separate from family and integrate personality through peer groups, vocational choices and intimate relationships. At this time, the young adult may establish a lasting relationship with another person or choose religious life. The young adult learns to be creative and productive through respectful interpersonal relationships. This period is a time of competition and cooperation where there is a sharing of love, work, recreation and possible procreation. A person in this stage uses logic and, morally, is interested in maintaining the social order and obeying the law. In matters of faith, individuals develop an explicit worldview and solidify self identity. They learn how to discern the good of life, their intentions and the nature of reality. There is a demythologizing of symbols into a personally meaningful formulation. They see how the Holy Spirit leads them into the desert to face their deepest selves. Successful adaptation at this time in life provides positive self-esteem and comfort. Previous success in developing trust, autonomy, initiative, industry and a sense of identity allow for intimacy with God and others.

Relative to the "BASIC" system, the young adult's behavior is appropriately intimate, genuine and authentic rather than restricted, isolated and remote. Affectively, the young adult is emotionally close, secure and open rather than on edge, depressed or disheartened. They are more energized, comfortable and animated than lethargic, passive or restrained. Interpersonally, they cultivate respectful, sharing relationships rather than express formal and stereotypical associations. Cognitively they learn to confide easily and express thoughts openly. Evaluators and formators need to be aware of these young adult developmental issues, deviations and delays. They can help a person respond to God's call (Isaiah 6:8, Ephesians 2:10). They help the person see that ev-

ery vocation is one of loving through sacrifice, dying to self, and striving to love by responding to the love they have been given through Jesus (1 John 4:7-18).

Conclusion

Every candidate for religious life has a particular history that has influenced him. He has lived through internally- and externally-created reality in which he has managed pain, pleasure, self and the actions of others. He has a self-image and has learned to survive, succeed, fail and find meaning in life. He has discovered what it means to be human by cultivating virtues and making informed choices about the vocation he chooses. Psychology addresses how the candidate experiences the created reality of existence. Christianity addresses how human beings experience the uncreated reality of God. Christianity reveals the person of Jesus teaching us how we can choose to approach life. By understanding human behavior through the “BASIC” system, psychologists, vocational directors, formators and candidates can develop a common language that facilitates vocational choice. Using “BASIC” may enhance the necessary conversation between the Catholic psychological and religious communities. Discerning a basic common ground between the religious and psychological communities will facilitate a loving vocational choice that serves God and others.



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PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT: THE TESTING AND SCREENING OF CANDIDATES FOR ADMISSION TO THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE U.S. CATHOLIC CHURCH

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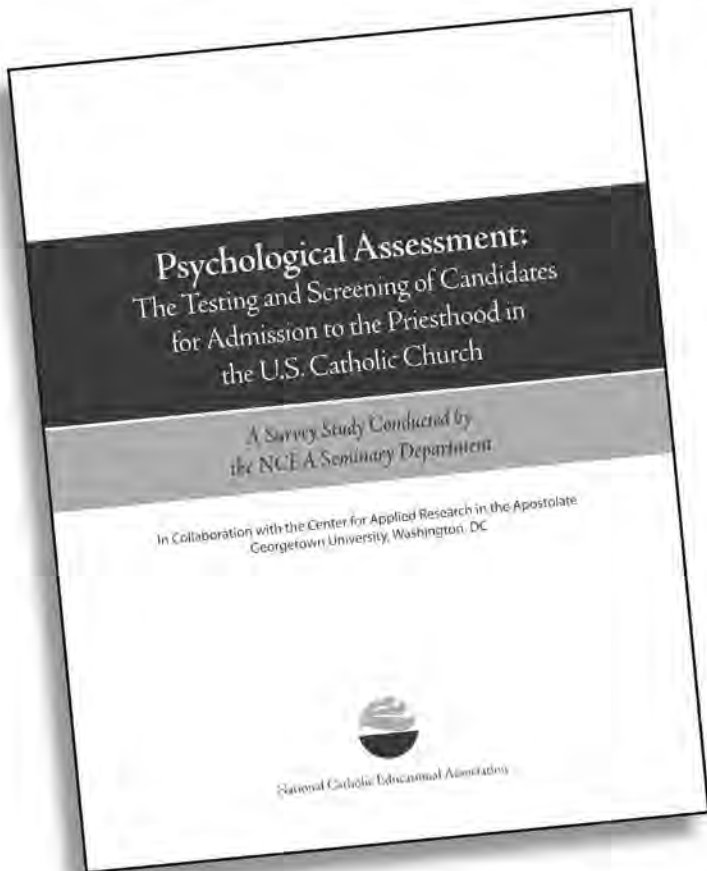
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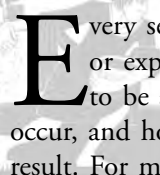
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Priestly Formation and Catholic Anthropology: Implications for Assessment

Len Sperry, M.D., Ph.D.



Every seminary candidate and priest has a theory or explanation for understanding what it means to be a human person, how sin and brokenness occur, and how healing, restoration, and redemption result. For many, this theory is *implicit*, meaning that it has not been consciously and logically articulated. Nevertheless, it guides the individual's attitudes, decisions, and actions. While it may be life giving and useful, it can also prove to be harmful and ineffective. On the other hand, a theory that is *explicit* will be philosophically – and perhaps even theologically – informed, internally consistent, and likely to be life giving and effective (Sperry, 2009a). Technically, such a theory about human personhood, life's meaning, and a basic view of human nature is called an anthropology, and it profoundly influences one's attitudes, decisions, and actions (Brugger, 2009). Furthermore, an anthropology compatible with the Catholic vision is a Catholic anthropology.

While one's anthropology may or may not be compatible with the Catholic vision, it *always* reflects one's basic personality dynamics and core values. As such it is influenced by one's early life experiences and perceptions, although it may not be consistent with one's formal learning or Catholic beliefs. Presumably Catholics, including priests, have been taught the Catholic vision of human nature, brokenness, and restoration. Central to this vision is the belief that all individuals are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27 and *Catholic Catechism*, #396) and can respond to grace. Thus, human nature is viewed as good, albeit affected by original sin. However, there can be a disconnect between knowing this and acting in light of it because negative early life experiences, including trauma and deprivation, can distort or override an individual's formal

Because of its pervasive influence, consulting psychologists, vocation directors, and seminary formators would do well to recognize the importance of a candidate's anthropology in the process of seminary formation.

learning and religious beliefs. Because of its pervasive influence, consulting psychologists, vocation directors, and seminary formators would do well to recognize the importance of a candidate's anthropology in the process of seminary formation. As such, its identification should be incorporated in the assessment process.

This article begins by defining various meanings of the term anthropology and then describes three common anthropologies, illustrating one of these in a seminary context. Next it describes the implications and applications of this construct in assessment. Emphasized are three markers of a candidate's anthropology and how it can be assessed.

Meaning and Varieties of Anthropology

Psychologists are likely to associate the term "anthropology" with the study of human persons from sociological (applied anthropology), cultural (cultural anthropology), or even biological perspectives (medical

anthropology or forensic anthropology). Others including vocation directors and seminary formators are just as likely to think of anthropology in broader terms, including philosophical and theological perspectives. Philosophical anthropology refers to conceptions of the human person derived from philosophical reasoning, while theological anthropology is derived principally from Christian revelation, particularly scripture. Catholic anthropology is a combination of both philosophical and theological anthropology which addresses the emotional, mental, moral, relational, and spiritual health of the human person (Sperry, 2009b). It specifies the origins and purpose of human persons as well as the place of sin, suffering, personal effort, grace, and healing.

One's anthropology is important because it significantly influences one's thinking and actions. There are at least three dominant anthropology models: based on Catholic assumptions, on scientific naturalism, or on Freudian psychology.

The *Catholic model* is a hopeful one that assumes that humans are made in God's image and likeness. Therefore, human nature is considered to be good but affected by original sin, i.e., "wounded" in the *Catholic Catechism* (#405) or a "state of privation" in Rahner's view. Although sin and suffering are realities so is personal effort aided by grace and healing. There is redemption and life has a transcendent purpose which is to increase the kingdom of God in the world. Moreover,

healing, spiritual growth, and living life to the full are not only possible but are considered normative.

In contrast, the *Freudian model* views human nature as bad and that individuals are controlled by internal and external conflicts with little hope for ultimate fulfillment. This perspective is a mechanistic view of life in which repressed sexual desire accounts for one's problems and there is little expectation for growth. In fact, the most that is possible is some degree of adjustment to life circumstances. Christians who hold that human nature is basically depraved and that only good people – and not the bad – will merit eternal reward might bristle at the notion that they espouse a Freudian-like world view, but such beliefs are more consistent with Calvinism or "cultural calvinism," as described by Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I. (2010), than with a Catholic anthropology.

Similarly, the *scientific naturalistic model* views all reality as a function of matter. Although human nature is viewed as neutral—and sometimes as bad – there is no provision for choice or free will. Neither is there a transcendent purpose to life other than maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. Unfortunately, this third model underlies most undergraduate and graduate education in the Western world particularly in the sciences. Brugger (2008) is probably accurate in his observation that most psychologists, irrespective of their religious affiliation or training program, "accept" the scientific naturalistic or

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF SCIENTIFIC NATURALISM, FREUDIAN, AND CATHOLIC ANTHROPOLOGIES

Life is a material phenomenon, where mind is the expression of matter; God and afterlife are false projections of the mind. Human nature is neutral.	Life is a material phenomenon; and human nature is essentially bad. Or, may reflect Calvinist or cultural calvinist views on the depravity of human nature and the division between those who are good and bad.	Humans are created in God's image and likeness; therefore human nature is good, but affected by (original) sin.
Humans are only the products of evolution. Freedom and free choice are also false projections of the mind. Individualism is emphasized over a communal understanding of human interaction.	Human behavior and feelings are the results of biological (id) impulses and other unconscious processes and conflicts. Individualism is emphasized over a communal understanding of human interaction.	The human person can be influenced by past experiences and concupiscence but has free will, and can respond to grace which builds on nature. Relationships with others and God are important. Balance between the communal and the individual is sought.
Human life has no transcendent purpose. The only reasonable purpose in life is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.	Human life has no transcendent purpose. But through insight and effort it is possible to achieve some degree of personal adjustment in life while indulging in pleasure.	Human person is redeemed and has a transcendent purpose which is to increase the kingdom of God in the world; healing and living life to the full are possible and normative.

Freudian models, albeit unwittingly.

A brief comment is in order about a less common model of anthropology which is reflected in certain forms of existentialism. While some of the existential schools, and even Rogers' client-centered therapy, view human nature as good, such approaches have no place for original sin and redemption. Table 1 further elaborates the three most common anthropological models.

Implications of Anthropology for Priestly Ministry

As noted earlier, what vocation directors, seminary formators, spiritual directors, and consulting psychologists believe about human nature can and does influence how they conduct their personal as well as their professional lives. A reasonable question is: do faculty and formators with Freudian and scientific naturalism anthropologies—whether held implicitly or explicitly—have a place in Catholic seminaries? In my opinion, the answer is “no.”

The reason is that a priest's operative view of human nature is reflected in how he preaches, functions as a confessor, provides spiritual guidance, and develops—or fails to develop—emotionally and spiritually. For example, a priest influenced by the Freudian anthropology will operate from beliefs that human nature is hopelessly flawed, evil or bad, that individuals cannot be trusted, and that the only change possible is mere adjustment to life circumstances. Such a sense of spiritual futility is not only inconsistent with the Catholic vision, but it can adversely affect the personal and spiritual well-being of the seminarians under the influence of that faculty member or formator.

Illustration of Father Sisyphus

Rev. Jason Sisyphus has been on the seminary formation team for the past year and a half. He provides spiritual direction to five seminarians in first and second year theology. While he seems congenial and has a dry sense of humor, the rector was somewhat taken back by a homily in which Father Sisyphus described how he deals with life-long issues of impatience and criticalness, and a recent incident of road rage. His solution to the road rage was to refrain from driving in heavier traffic, at least until it interfered with his priestly responsibilities. His overall message was life is tough, human nature doesn't change, and the best one can do is continue to work against one's shortcomings and vices. This is similar to his advice to his directees: avoid difficult circumstances and accept that life is difficult so just “grin

Identifying an individual's anthropology provides a baseline for making admission decisions.

and bear it.” His anthropology of spiritual futility is more consistent with a Freudian rather than a Catholic anthropology. Furthermore, the rector's concern about Sisyphus' influence on a future generation of priests is more than justified.

This illustration points out the importance of identifying the operative anthropology of formators as well as seminarians and seminary candidates. Identifying an individual's anthropology provides a baseline for making admission decisions as well as for endeavoring to modify or change anthropologies that are inconsistent with the Catholic vision.

Assessing Anthropology

An individual's anthropology is a set of core convictions about self and the world that are significantly influenced by early life experiences that have been confirmed and reinforced by one's ongoing experiences. Furthermore, that anthropology parallels one's psychology, i.e., psychological core convictions. Accordingly, that anthropology does not easily change. Lectures and academic advisement tend to have little or no influence in changing it when compared to transformation resulting from psychotherapy, spiritual direction and growth, or other life changing experiences.

Since an individual's operative anthropology can be identified, presumably this information can be useful in making admission decisions and guiding priestly formation. Because individuals' view of human nature is a reasonably accurate marker of their anthropology, it can be assessed in a number of ways. This section reviews three ways of identifying an individual's view of human nature with the assessment of attachment styles, family functioning, and God images.

Attachment Style

Attachment is an emotional bond to another person. Bowlby hypothesized that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers—usually mothers—greatly impacted other relationships throughout life. The basic premise of attachment theory is that mothers who

are available and responsive to their infant's needs establish a sense of security. His colleague, Ainsworth (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1965), identified three major styles of attachment in infants and children: secure attachment, ambivalent-insecure attachment, and avoidant-insecure attachment. Later, Main and Solomon (1990) added a fourth attachment style, disorganized-insecure attachment. Research has supported Ainsworth's conclusions and found that these early attachment styles can predict behaviors in adulthood. Four attachment styles are identified in adults: secure, anxious-preoccupied, dismissive avoidant, and fearful avoidant. The secure attachment style in adults corresponds to the secure attachment style in children. The anxious-preoccupied attachment style in adults corresponds to the anxious/ambivalent attachment style in children. However, the dismissive avoidant attachment style and the fearful avoidant attachment style, which are distinct in adults, correspond to a single avoidant attachment style in children.

An individual's expectations and belief systems, called working models, that develop in early years tend to persist throughout life. These beliefs guide our perceptions of ourselves and the world, including others. Models or views of self and the world range from positive to negative. Negative models of the world reflect negative views of human nature, i.e., human nature is bad. These models of self and the world are reflected in specific attachment styles. As might be expected, individuals with insecure attachments tend to have negative views of self, negative views of human nature, or both. Accordingly, adults with dismissive styles and fearful styles tend to view human nature as bad.

How are attachment styles assessed in adults? Crowell and Treboux (1995) provide a description and comparison of the most commonly used assessment measures of attachment styles. These include three interview schedules: *Adult Attachment Interview*, *Attachment Interviews*, and *Current Relationship Interview*, and three questionnaire and rating scales: *Adult Attachment Styles*, *Relationship Questionnaire*, and the *Reciprocal Attachment Questionnaire*. In addition, the *Attachment to God Inventory* (Beck & McDonald, 2004) measures one's relationship with God in terms of an attachment bond. It is a 28-item, self-rating scale with good psychometric properties.

Family Functioning

Family Functioning can effectively be understood and measured with the Global Assessment of Relationship Functioning (GARF). This scale was patterned after the Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) scale

God image refers to the way an individual views God. The image can vary from being loving and caring to stern and wrathful.

which measures individual mental health on a continuum from superior mental functioning to serious mental illness. GARF was designed to measure relational health and dysfunction in couple and family systems and not to reflect individual psychopathology. It assesses the degree to which a family or other ongoing relational unit meets the affective or instrumental needs of its members in the following areas: problem solving, organization, and emotional climate. An individual's GAF and GARF scores are likely to be the same, unless that individual has sufficiently individuated from his family of origin and developed psychologically and spiritually.

GARF scale ranges from 1 to 100 (lowest to highest). Families with GARF scores below 60 are associated with negative views of human nature, while scores above 80 are associated with positive views of human nature. Research indicates that scores below 60 represent Mid-range or lower functioning families (Beavers & Hampson, 1990). In such families human nature is considered evil, people cannot be trusted, and children need physical discipline and punishment to tame their "badness."

GARF is a clinician-rated instrument in which the clinician rates the family or couple's overall relational functioning in terms of problem solving, organization, and emotional climate. Parenthetically, GARF is reported on Axis V of the DSM -IV (Diagnostic Statistical Manual) alongside GAF.

God Image

God image refers to the way an individual views God. The image can vary from being loving and caring to stern and wrathful. There are various explanations as to how these images develop (Hoffman, 2005). Rizzuto (1979) demonstrated that children's images of God appeared to be linked to the way in which they perceived their parents, and that their attachment style influenced their experience of God later in life (Tisdale et al., 1997). Others found a link between God image and an individual's biological father, in that individuals project the characteristics of their father onto their image of

God (Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 1996). Other factors appear to influence how the God image develops. For example, Cheston, Piedmont, Eanes, and Lavin (2003) found that an adult client's God image can change as a result of psychotherapy.

How is God image measured? The most common psychological measure is the *God Image Scales*, useful in research. The shorter version, *God Image Inventory*, is more applicable in clinical practice (Lawrence, 1997).

Illustration of Father Sisyphus Continued

Here is some additional information about Rev. Sisyphus. He and I worked together in psychotherapy for more than one year. During the course of our sessions I was able to identify his anthropology via his God image, attachment style, and family functioning. From all three it was clear that he viewed human nature as bad and depraved. As therapy proceeded his God image shifted from harsh and unforgiving to compassionate and caring. He made progress in both therapy and concurrent spiritual direction. His rage, critical disposition, and negativity also abated. Similarly, his views about human nature and personal change became more positive, views that were more consistent with a Catholic anthropology.

Changes in Anthropology

Two basic changes in one's anthropology are possible. The first involves a shift from an implicit to an explicit anthropology, while the second involves a shift in the content of one's anthropology, i.e., view of human nature. These changes seldom result from reading, a homily, or advisement. They are most likely to occur as a result of transformational experiences fostered by psychotherapy, spiritual direction, or similar life changing circumstances.

The Theological Anthropology course in the seminary curriculum can be one of those life changing circumstances. A not uncommon experience is that seminarians respond to this course on both the cognitive and experiential levels. Besides fostering a shift from a previously implicit anthropology to a more explicit one, it can also foster a basic change in the seminarian's view of human nature. With classmates, formators, and their spiritual director, ongoing discussion and reflection on being made in the image of God, and that all persons are a reflection of that image, can lead to subtle, and not so subtle, changes in attitudes and actions. As the personal and professional implications of this reality begin to be internalized, a shift from a negative to a more positive view of human nature may begin to occur.

Unfortunately, this change does not take place in all seminarians. There are a number of reasons which include, among others, a lack of readiness and willingness to engage in the process of discussion and reflection, or opacity of character. For example, college students can take a similar course called Psychology of Human Nature or Philosophical Psychology, as part of a major or minor in psychology. However, taking and passing this course is unlikely to result in achieving personal changes or transformation. The reason is that most psychology students take this course as an academic requirement rather than as a soul searching or transformational experience. In contrast, in the context of a seminary formation program, seminarians who have the requisite readiness, willingness, and transparency of character are more likely to reflect on the meaning of the course content in their personal and professional lives, and are willing to dialogue and further reflect on this meaning with their spiritual director and other formators.

It should not be surprising that seminarians whose attitudes and actions reflect a negative view of human nature are likely to have insecure attachments, more negative images of God, and lower GAF and GARF scores than seminarians with more positive views of human nature. These seminarians are also not as likely to shift their anthropology during or following a Theological Anthropology course unless psychotherapy, spiritual direction, or other significant life event fosters the experience of spiritual transformation.

Concluding Note

Catholic anthropology extends the traditional view of anthropology to include what it means to be a person, the meaning of life, human nature, sin and brokenness, and restoration. An individual's anthropology reflects his personality dynamics although it may not be consistent with the Catholic vision. Because a candidate's anthropology profoundly influences his attitudes, decisions, and actions, consulting psychologists, vocation directors, and seminary formators should consider its identification essential in the evaluation of the candidate for seminary admission. It may be one of the most important factors in predicting how a future priest functions as a preacher, sacramental minister, spiritual director, and confessor. Parenthetically, in the past few years there has been renewed interest in Catholic anthropology among professionals, including the clinical training of psychologists (Brugger, 2008).



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Seminary Formators and Psychologists: A Collaboration Model

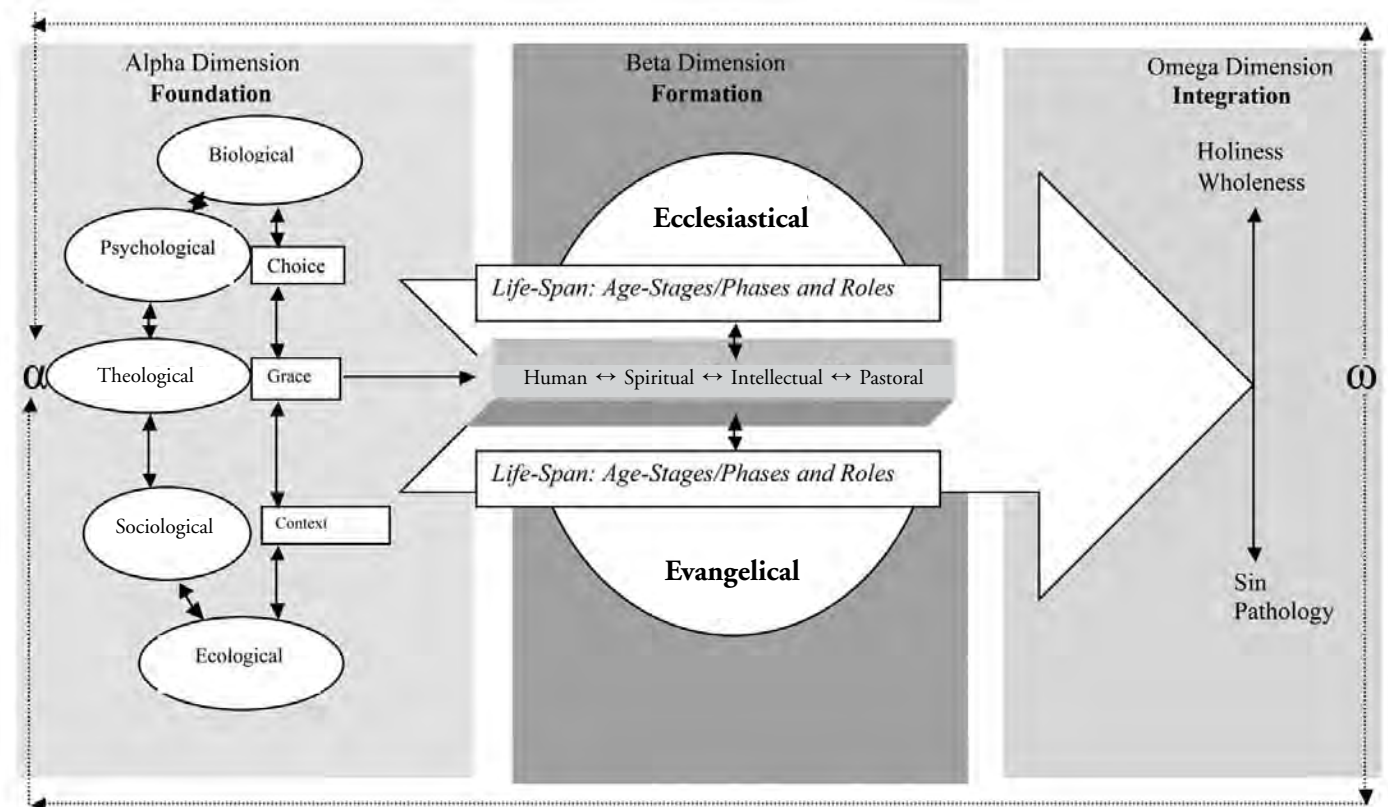
Fernando A. Ortiz, Ph.D. and Gerard J. McGlone, S.J., Ph.D.

The psychological evaluation of candidates to the priesthood is a multidimensional and multi-phase process. It often involves the interface of the referral source (vocation director, seminary rector) with the candidate and with the evaluating psychologist. Assessment information can be potentially reliable, valid, predictive, and instructive if it is obtained while adhering to best professional and ethical practices and standards. We propose the following anthropological and methodological assessment model that hopefully will serve as a template for the collaboration between seminary formators and psychologists. It addresses some

of the core dimensions and most salient phases of the assessment experience based on principles derived from the *Program for Priestly Formation* and on professional and ethical standards outlined by the American Psychological Association.

Vocational Assessment: A Dynamic and Relational Anthropology

Vocational assessment is informed by a sound Catholic theological anthropology. A vocation originates from God and the person responds to this calling, which then integrates the human, spiritual, intellectual,



and pastoral components of seminary formation. One's vocation is a dynamic and developmental experience. Figure 1 illustrates a person's vocational experience as a Christ-like transformation having a beginning (alpha point) and an integrative culmination (omega point). Three distinctive components of seminary formation can be identified: *foundation, formation, and integration.*

Psychologists generally approach the candidate and interpret the psychological data obtained by using anthropological models informed by psychological theories of human functioning. Furthermore, a psychologist may use a psychodynamic, behavioristic, humanistic, bio-psycho-social, neuropsychological, and multicultural theoretical orientation to interpret the data. From a Catholic anthropology, we suggest that the psychologist be fully cognizant of the religious foundational underpinnings of the vocational experience. While evaluating a candidate to the priesthood, for example, the psychologist respects and honors the theological character of the person's calling, especially when the examinee speaks of the vocational experience of grace in responding to God. An integrative assessment views the vocation as an experience that unfolds in a dynamic matrix interwoven by psychological, sociological, ecological, biological and ecological influences (see alpha area). These dimensions are mediated by grace and a proper psychological emphasis is given to choice and context influences in responding to God's call. A systemic and fully integrative anthropology avoids a reductionistic assessment approach that minimizes or ignores any of these foundational influences.

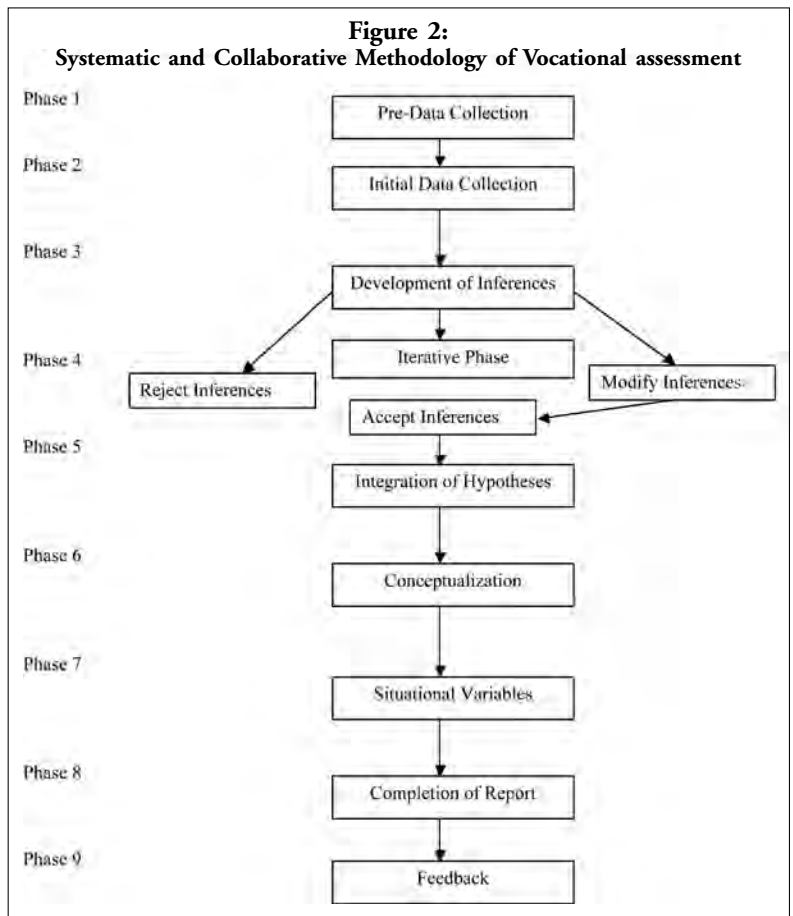
A psychologist evaluates the candidate's personality traits, attitudes, values, and skills that suggest the applicant's suitability for seminary formation, which will take place in an ecclesiastical context and will entail a radical call to living the Gospel (evangelical). These intrapersonal characteristics (traits, attitudes) are not psychologically interpreted as existing and developing apart from their context, and it is important to foresee psychologically how they will be pastorally expressed in the Church and experientially expressed in response to the Gospel message (see beta area). Thus, four vocational dimensions comprise the person's formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. The seminarian will humanly, spiritually, intellectually, and pastorally develop along a spectrum of several life stages and phases in the context of formative roles (e.g., parishioner, semi-

narian, deacon).

The integration of one's foundational experiences and the seminary formation dimensions may be conducive to an adaptive, healthy wholeness. Impairments, deficiencies, or lack of integration in one's vocational discernment may reflect or result in psychopathology. Psychopathology may pre-exist seminary admission. In either case (integration or disintegration), one's vocation has a recursive and dynamic character and the person may return (represented by dotted arrow) to the graced source (alpha). Ultimately, formative seminary integration is a dynamic and developmental experience and not a fixed entity or static event in time. The person in formation may continuously return to either the point of departure or regress to an earlier stage of formation. We note the fluid character of one's vocational journey.

Psychological Assessment: A Systematic and Collaborative Methodology

Psychological assessment is guided by a comprehensive methodology. The collaboration with the seminary during the administration and interpretation of the assessment results can be based on the following phases:



pre-data collection, initial data collection, development of inferences, iterative phase (rejection, modification and acceptance of inferences), integration of hypotheses, conceptualization (use of dynamic, relational and Catholic anthropology), integration of situational variables, completion of report, and feedback to seminary formators and candidates. Figure 2 graphically displays the sequential and collaborative process.

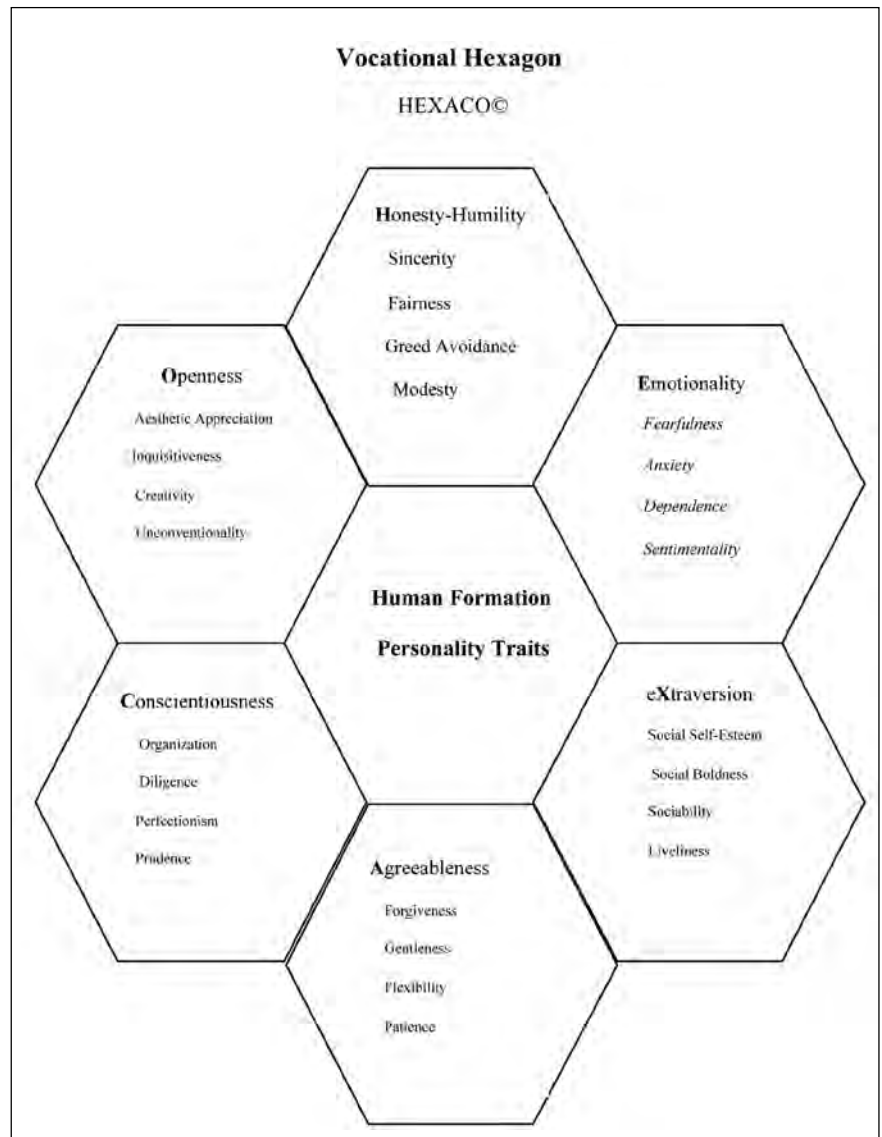
Pre-Data Collection. Developing a professional relationship prior to any assessment data collection is of paramount importance. Psychologists strive to be familiar with vocational practices and expectations as well as with the seminary and situational demands of the formation program. Seminary formators and psychologists understand their respective areas of professional competence and discuss confidentiality, the extent of consent, and specify the type and length of the psychological assessment. These professionals initiating the assessment process conceptualize the assessment experience as a collaborative endeavor and convey this to the applicant to the seminary. They also use active listening to clarify the understanding of the candidate's and attend to any areas of concern with the utmost respect for the free consent and dignity of the seminary applicant.

Being psychologically evaluated can be an anxiety provoking experience for any individual. Seminary formators and psychologists foster an active and conscious participation of the candidate in the assessment process by respectfully listening to the candidate's expectations, apprehensions, and anxieties. Some candidates, for example, from countries where psychology is negatively stigmatized may approach the assessment experience with some apprehension. It is important to know the candidate's perceptions of the psychologist and of the use of psychological evaluation questionnaires and tests.

The vocation director, seminary rector or whoever may be the referral source for the psychological assessment clearly specifies areas of assessment. It is very helpful for the psychologist if clearly articulated referral questions are provided and the seminary personnel are well informed about the candidate's problem areas and overall purposes of the assessment. The referral

questions would not contain vaguely worded statements and they will ask for specific recommendations so that assessment findings may be used during the ongoing seminary formation. During this phase, the professionals discuss and clarify confidentiality in the context of internal and external forum and assessment practices closely adhere to seminary and seminary formation policies and procedures.

Initial Data Collection. Once the psychologist obtains the referral questions from the seminary, the psychologist reviews the referral questions and explains to the candidate the assessment process and how the assessment findings will be used during admission to the seminary. The psychologist also reviews the candidate's previous history and any additional collateral data obtained by the seminary. Ideally, the preliminary data obtained from the seminary is objective and the im-



pressions are mainly behavioral. The psychologist looks beyond the referral questions and determines the basis for the referral questions in their widest scope. It is important to understand the complexity of the seminary setting including the relationship with authority, and implications of internal and external fora.

To help both the seminary referral source and the psychologist organize the referral questions in a systematic manner, we introduce this framework we have tentatively labeled the *vocational hexagon*. The *Program for Priestly Formation* (PPF) has outlined specific personality traits or character dispositions that comprise the human dimension of the candidate. These are core personal-

ity characteristics predictive of human functioning in the seminary and thus important for psychologists to evaluate. However, these traits are not organized in any systematic way in the PPF document. We have embedded the personality characteristics into a scientific personality model proposed by psychologists Kibeom Lee, Ph.D. and Michael C. Ashton, Ph.D. (Lee & Ashton, 2010). They propose that most personality characteristics can be evaluated along six major dimensions of personality: (1) Honesty-Humility, (2) Emotionality, (3) eXtraversion, (4) Agreeableness, (5) Conscientiousness, and (6) Openness. This personality configuration (i.e., HEXACO©) has been empirically tested and replicated

SAMPLE OF REFERRAL QUESTIONS - EVALUATIVE AND PREDICTIVE OF HUMAN FORMATION

HEXACO Dimensions	Seminary Human Formation Dimension (PPF #76 & 89)	Referral Questions
Honesty-Humility	"A man who can demonstrate the human virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance, justice, humility, constancy, sincerity, patience, good manners, truthfulness, and keeping his word."	How sincere is his motivation to enter the seminary and undergo the seminary formation program? What is the evidence suggesting that he will be able to grow in the virtues of humility, sincerity, patience and honesty?
Emotionality	"A person of affective maturity: someone whose life of feelings is in balance and integrated into thought and values." "The man of communion...should be one of inner joy and inner peace"	Is there any evidence of a mood disorder or a history of emotional problems? What is his tolerance for stress? How does he emotionally cope under difficult situations?
eXtraversion	"A man of communion: a person who has real and deep relational capacities, someone who can enter into genuine dialogue and friendship..." "A good communicator: someone who listens, is articulate, and has the skills of effective communication"	How interpersonally engaging and pleasant is he? Is there evidence suggesting that he is a good communicator, or has the potential to be a good listener? How does he cope with, or is he able to engage in public speaking?
Agreeableness	"A person open to others and available to them with a generosity of spirit" "A person of true empathy who can understand and know others"	How well will he relate to other seminarians? Is there any history of interpersonal difficulties? Is there any evidence of personality disorders such as narcissism, psychopathy, and eccentric traits? How willing is he to cooperate and compromise with others?
Conscientiousness	"A prudent and discerning man: someone who demonstrates a capacity for critical observation so that [he] can discern true and false values..." "Someone who demonstrates a capacity for critical observation so that [he] can discern true and false values." "A person who respects, cares for, and has vigilance over his body: a person who pays attention to his physical well-being" "A good steward of material possessions"	Is there any history of impulsive, unconscionable, unethical, or illegal behavior? What is the evidence suggesting that he is a person who deliberates carefully and inhibits impulses? Is he thorough, dutiful, organized and concerned with details?
Openness	"A free person: a person who is free to be who he is in God's design" "Candidates have the potential to move from self-preoccupation to an openness to transcendent values"	How motivated is he to embrace a celibate lifestyle? How does he deal with ambiguity, different opinions and change? How inquisitive and intellectually curious is he?

VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT BIASES

Type	Definition and Example	Corrective and Remedial Steps
Fundamental Attribution Error	This happens when the psychologist may overestimate the candidate's internal causes of his behavior while omitting or underestimating contextual or external behavioral explanations. .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Look for external contributing factors to the candidate's behaviors. ✓ Ask yourself: What factors in this candidate's situation might lead to his behavior?
Halo Effect	This bias surfaces when the psychologist evaluates the candidate on several traits or dimensions. If the psychologist is overly impressed by the favorability of one dimension and lets this favorable impression (<i>halo</i>) bias the evaluation and interpretation of the other dimensions or traits, the multidimensional assessment results may be inaccurate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be mindful to assess both strengths and deficits ✓ Monitor subjective and evaluative judgments based on personal or impressionistic reactions
Confirmatory Bias	This occurs when the evaluating psychologist is motivated by the desire to bolster a favored hypothesis or impression about the candidate to the seminary and engages in selective or skewed interpretation of the data and thus produces a distorted picture of the candidate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consider discrepant assessment findings. ✓ Include disconfirming and contradictory results with explanation of why this data emerged.
Hindsight Bias	This happens when the outcome of the psychological report influences the judgments the psychologist makes on previously formed behavioral impressions of the candidate. For instance, if the psychological report suggests that the candidate experienced a panic attack just a few days prior or during the actual assessment, a psychologist may erroneously conclude that "I knew it all along based on the seminary collateral data." Most likely, the psychologist's interpretation of the current panic attack is influenced by hindsight bias as he/she retrieves and interprets past data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consider behavioral data in their proper timeframe. ✓ Accurately note the onset, development, and duration of behaviors and symptoms. ✓ Differentiate past-oriented, present, and future-oriented expressions of psychopathology

in extensive personality assessment studies. The theoretical basis for the HEXACO is similar to another psychological model, the Big Five, which posits that certain basic personality tendencies (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism) are universal and measurable. See figure 3 for additional details on the dimensions and facets of the vocational hexagon.

We have drawn a direct correspondence between the vocational hexagon and the *Program for Priestly Formation* personality traits. We have included these sample questions as an aid in the referral process and to provide psychologists with a mnemonic and practical device (HEXACO©). This can potentially make the answering of referral question more comprehensive and consistent with the needs for human formation.

Development of Inferences. The psychologist begins formulating tentative hypotheses regarding the candidate's interpersonal, cognitive, and emotional functioning. If needed, an effort is made to clarify referral questions. A thorough and extensive clinical and

behavioral interview is conducted and inferences in the respective areas of human functioning are made. Multiple inferences based on the data thus obtained are made and these are tentative at this phase in the assessment process. The psychologist strives to avoid cognitive biases during the inferential task and these may include *the halo effect, the confirmatory and hindsight bias, illusory correlations, and ethnocentric and monocultural biases* in the case of ethnically or racially different candidates (Dana, 2005; Groth-Martnat, 2009).

Iterative Phase (rejection, modification and acceptance of inferences). The psychologist makes an effort to counter the fundamental attribution error, which refers to the tendency to over-emphasize personality-based explanations for the candidate's behaviors while contextual factors contributing to behavior are unconsciously or intentionally under-valued (Ross, 1977). The psychologist is encouraged to look for unseen behavioral causes and to use a disconfirmation strategy while looking for information that might disprove incorrect or unconfirmed hypotheses. Accuracy may be improved by

delaying the decision-making process while the assessment is being conducted. In the analysis of behavioral and test data, the psychologist systematically considers alternatives and does not rush to interpretative judgments or conclusions. Interpretative descriptions continue to be generated and an effort is made to avoid interpretations biased by early impressions. Given the varied sources and forms of data being obtained, the psychologist avoids using a “shotgun” or unspecified approach to the assessment process without an adequate focus.

Integration of Hypotheses. The psychologist elaborates on each formulated inference and these do not merely describe the candidate’s behavior in a piecemeal or disjointed manner but the assessment descriptions attempt to capture behavioral trends or patterns. The interpretative descriptions are specific, accurate, objective and behavioral in order to maximize their use during the seminary admission and formation process.

Conceptualization within Dynamic and Relational Anthropology. The interpretation of psychological and vocational data obtained from a candidate responding to God’s calling presupposes a Catholic theological anthropology. The scientific methodology used during the inferential, interpretative, and integrative assessment phases is cognizant of the candidate’s dynamic and relational vocational experience. A merely secular, scientist, reductionistic, atomistic interpretation of the candidate’s vocational data may be countered and avoided by a Catholic, theologically sound, integrative, and personalist anthropology. The psychologist may use figure 1 during the conceptualization and interpretation of behavioral and test-derived data.

Situational Variables. To avoid a purely individualistic and dispositional interpretation (based primarily on personality traits versus contextual and situational factors) of the candidate’s data, the psychologist considers the contextuality of the candidate’s behavior. For example, precipitating and perpetuating factors are considered and this may include interpersonal stress and other environmental triggers. Personality traits are interpreted in reference to their manifestation and expression in specific contexts (e.g., narcissistic traits and fantasies for power, prestige and status as activated in contexts conducive to the expression of these personality characteristics).

Completion of Report. The psychologist completes the comprehensive psychological report and submits it to the referral source. The evaluation statements avoid being merely speculations that may lead the seminary team to develop incorrect conclusions about the can-

didate. Also, the report conclusions should not be phrased in an overly authoritative and dogmatic manner. Misinterpretations may result from vague and ambiguously worded sentences that place incorrect or misleading emphasis on the candidate’s behavior. For example, if the report were to include a statement such as “Sam lacks social skills,” one could argue that Sam must have some social skills, although these skills may be inadequate. Therefore, the statement is technically incorrect. A more correct description would be to state that Sam’s social skills are “poorly developed” or “below average.” This phrasing adds specificity and behavioral accuracy. A statement such as “Sam uses socially inappropriate behavior” may be subject to a many interpretations by the seminary formation team. This report assertion could be improved by including more behaviorally oriented descriptions, such as “frequently interrupts in classes or meetings.”

The report contains relevant, clear explanations that meet the needs of the formation team while addressing the specific referral questions. The language used links behaviors and therapeutic issues and needs. When the conclusions are presented, it is helpful to indicate the psychologist’s relative degree of certainty. The report also indicates whether the interpretation is based on objective data or facts or if it is based on speculative and inferential extrapolations from the clinical interview. The psychologist is also sensitive to content overload. If the report contains too many details, it begins to become poorly defined and vague and thus lacking impact of usefulness. An example of an overloaded statement might be “Sam’s relative strengths are in abstract reasoning, general fund of knowledge, short-term memory, attention span, and mathematical computation.” A more accurate and readable report would adequately develop each of the various points and focus instead on the areas that are more relevant to the purpose of the report. Most reports include detailed vocational and spiritual history that places the data obtained in the form of a seamless life narrative.

Some candidates can mistakenly fear that the purpose of the assessment is to evaluate their sanity.

Feedback. Even the most psychologically confident candidate might easily feel uncomfortable knowing that a report with highly personal information might be circulated and used by persons in power to make decisions about the his admission and formation. In providing feedback to normalize the anxiety experienced, the psychologist may paraphrase, elaborate on, and explain selection portions of the report. The rationale of the assessment can be briefly explained to the candidate and any misconceptions the candidate may have can be corrected. Some candidates can mistakenly fear that the purpose of the assessment is to evaluate their sanity. Using his/her professional and clinical judgment, the psychologist can select the most essential information from the report and provide the candidate with constructive and informative feedback. The psychologist is also considerate of the candidate's ego strength, life situation, emotional stability, and receptiveness to the psychological assessment findings. The psychological material may be negatively interpreted or detrimental to the candidate.

Seminary Formation: Application of Psychological Assessment Findings

The seminary formation team will use the most appropriate and seminary specific interventions first. For example, spiritual direction could be given a priority and this can be concurrently accessed with supervision and regular communication and ongoing meetings. An effort is made to be creative in looking for simple, specific and situational interventions so that improper emphasis on personality areas of growth is not prematurely addressed. Seminary policies and procedures are not a surprise to the candidate during the implementation of assessment recommendations. If counseling is recommended, the seminary personnel and the counselor consider the candidate's concerns about the use of counseling or psychotherapy. Educating the candidate about the usefulness of counseling increases the probability of therapeutic success.

The seminary personnel are cognizant of the various phases when the psychological assessment findings can be utilized and applied during the seminary formation. For example, some psychological data will be more applicable to the pre-admission selection process. Some other psychological recommendations will be applicable at a later time during the various formation stages (use figure 1 to see developmental application of psychological data). The psychological report may also anticipate crisis moments and provide recommendations for deal-

ing with psychological crises (e.g., bipolar disorder acute crisis). Other issues that may require not only descriptive but prescriptive recommendations include addictions, problems with sexuality, celibate lifestyle, struggles with authority, anger management, rigid and dogmatic cognitive style, moral character (honesty, authenticity), clericalism, and burnout.

Conclusion

This heuristic model represents a general model that may be adapted and used according to local and seminary specific circumstances. The application of these best practices occurs in the context of relational trust and partnership among the professionals involved. Regular meetings between seminary personnel and evaluating psychologists are encouraged. A feedback loop can be helpful with regular progress reports on the collaborative relationship. The use of constructive feedback will improve the interface between the seminary and the psychologists.

We are grateful to Len Sperry, M.D., Ph.D., for his comments to improve several sections of this article.



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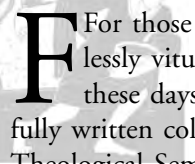
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BOOK REVIEW

Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies

Marilyn Chandler McEntyre

Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009. Reviewed by Msgr. Jeremiah McCarthy, NCEA Seminary Department



FFor those who are weary of the shrill and endlessly vituperative voices heard on media outlets these days, Marilyn Chandler McEntyre's gracefully written collection of essays, delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary as the Stone Lectures in 2004, is indeed "balm in Gilead."

This elegant volume invites us to reclaim the power of words to capture the depth and density of our thinking and feeling as human beings. Words can be weapons of mass destruction, or they can be a summons to a deep listening that creates community rather than polarization.

Dr. McEntyre, who teaches at Westmont College in California, is a distinguished literary scholar and critic. Her mastery of literature enables her to engage the reader in a gracious conversation that, in turns, is illuminated by careful attention to the multi-faceted character of language to expand and ennoble our minds and hearts. Deftly citing poets such as e.e. cummings, Adrienne Rich, and T.S. Eliot and attending to gifted novelists such as Jane Austen, she demonstrates that precision in choosing just the right word, noting its complex range of meaning and connotation, is indispensable if we are to arrive at the truth of things. In the absence of this careful, attentive work, we succumb to adversarial, simplistic, and misleading speech whereby we talk past one another rather than to one another.

She takes dead aim at the coarseness and flatness of our speech today. In our haste to meet the demands of ever faster and technologically imperious forms of media, we reduce words and language to sound bytes. We need to slow down, to allow words to envelop us

and to lead us into places that we would otherwise not go.

Poetry, in particular, is especially important in this effort to reclaim the power of words. The well-chosen word is shaped by many factors—its history, its context, and, in the case of a poem, by its location and spacing within the structure of the poem itself.

McEntyre's lovely reflections are not just another screed against the vacuity of our consumer-driven, sensate, frenetic culture. She reminds us that there is a deep spirituality of Christian tradition that shapes the many ways words inform and shape the Christian spirit. Slowing down, allowing the texture and complexity of words to settle within us, enables us to arrive at truth, to achieve genuine communion and understanding. McEntyre's book is a companion and guide for a disciplined spiritual life that gently leads one into the ways of contemplation and wonder.

I heartily recommend this book for seminary spiritual formation programs. The author's clear, limpid prose invites rumination and reflection. The Catholic community of faith is rooted in a love of texts, scriptural and theological. For seminarians beginning their theological studies, this wise book is an excellent introduction into that "intelligence of the heart" that is essential for the integration of the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of the *Program of Priestly Formation*. Alongside, A.P. Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life* (another wonderful classic that deserves to be introduced to seminarians), add Marilyn McEntyre's book to the seminarian reading list. It will pay rich dividends for the students, their engagement with theological study, and their future preaching.



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In recognition of the 10th anniversary of *Seminary Journal*, the Seminary Department has introduced a new publication series: *The Core Elements of Priestly Formation Programs*. These collections of articles celebrate the “best practices” and wisdom and insight of a wide variety of seminary professionals and church leaders. With only a few exceptions the articles were selected from the archives of *Seminary Journal* (1995-2005). Articles included from other sources are printed with permission.

The Core Elements series will be an ongoing publishing effort of the Seminary Department. The framework for the first three volumes reflects the four pillars as identified in the Bishops’ Program of Priestly Formation: *Intellectual, Spiritual, Human* and *Pastoral*. The fourth addresses the topic of “addictions” and their implications for ministry formation.

These four volumes are produced as an in-service resource for faculty and staff development and personal study and as a potential source book of readings for those in the formation program. New collections of readings will be added annually.

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