

## **Formation as Psycho-Spiritual Integration**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Psycho-spiritual integration is the blending of the psychological wellbeing and spiritual essence in an individual. The integrated person is one who is at peace with himself, his society, and his God because integration implies that a person's feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and body processes are part of a larger whole. Formation involves the whole person. In the synthesizing of every aspect of personality, emotional integration is a key element. Wholeness occurs when both psychological principles and spiritual principles unite. Psycho-spiritual integration begins to happen naturally when the personality and soul meet, each honoring the other for its natural way of being. Integration refers to a dynamic interplay of experiences that finally lead to mature relationships and behaviors. It encompasses both the psychological and spiritual dimensions of the human being, who finally learns to transcend himself as a loving response to God's call.*

### **Introduction**

Ours is the age of specialization. There are experts and specialists in every field of human activity. Increasing specialization has led to the compartmentalization of life, e.g. spiritual, psychological, intellectual, physical, etc. A lack of integration may lead to psychological disturbances and the blockage of energy in the human system. The dynamic balancing and synthesis of all that is related to being human, is imperative for harmony and a sense of

wellbeing. The concept of integration implies harmony, wholeness, flow and unity. The New Catholic Encyclopedia (1977) deems it as an “incorporating and unifying process tending to produce wholeness.” The aim of all formation is to facilitate the integration process through various means by making use of all available resources. Religious formation is an internal movement towards wholeness, perfection, and unity with one’s own self and the entire creation.

The word ‘psycho-spiritual’ is emerging in most writings related to religion today, and is an indicator of the new thrust towards integration. Formators and formation personnel do not want to be untouched by a social science that makes lofty claims such as promoting health, healing and wellness. A recent promotional advertisement of a Psychology Course is seen offering the following benefits:

*Begin a journey of compassion and return to self. Get a deep understanding of your feelings, thoughts, and behavior. Learn to communicate meaningfully. Learn to get your needs met in a healthy way. Solve your problems effectively. Make healthy choices in everyday life. Live mindfully to your full potential.*

If psychology as a discipline can render all these claims to its consumers, it should be taken seriously. Even if it is rendering fifty percent, or even twenty-five percent of the claims, it is still valuable, and to be desired. As spirituality and formation are more and more understood in terms of wholeness, self-realization, vibrant living and maturity, it seems that psychology may be a handmaiden in assisting integration. Psycho-spiritual integration warrants a basic understanding of ‘self’ and its psychological dimensions.

### **Psycho-spiritual Self: Where is the Border?**

Nowadays, the word ‘self’ is being used with all its various meanings and implications. The ‘self’ I refer to here, is the unique identity of ‘me’ as a subject, with a natural unity of body and soul. This unity itself is an integration of physical, chemical, biological, psychic, intellectual, and volitional properties. The ‘self’ is endowed with freedom, intelligence, moral power and the power of transcendence, thus indicating the need for continuous

integration to maintain its essential unity. It is also capable of growing and developing in many and varied ways. Christian or religious formation makes use of this inherent power of the self to grow and change. All through the changes and growth, an identity - an unchangeable ground - is kept, which we term 'self'. The self is rooted in the sinfulness of humanity, and is open to many deformities (Tyrrell 1998: 32). One's choices, beliefs, actions, thoughts, habits, and ignorance, can all distort and deform the self in destructive ways, resulting in somatic, psychic, and spiritual consequences; hence the need for guidance and an integral formation.

Many spiritual masters and theologians are afraid that psychologists will reduce religion and religious beliefs to mere psychology. There are psychologists and psychologies that do not acknowledge the existence of a non-material world. Pure materialists may not give any room to the spiritual. Many are silent and do not want to enter into the area of spirituality, in order to avoid confusion, or conflict with religion. Most psychologists and counselors of today have no difficulty in accepting the spiritual world and spiritual experiences. Our spiritual experiences are to a great extent psychological, too. Everything I experience is in a sense psychological. When I behold you, my experience is psychological. Your hair and skin color, texture, countenance, fairness, posture, and size are perceived with my subjectivity and my psychological state. The psychological dimension of my self is integrally connected with my being. We cannot separate them at will.

The fundamental premise of integration is that our self is psycho-spiritual in nature. The whole person is involved in vocation and formation. That the harmony, unity, and wholeness of the person shall be maintained throughout the formation process is the essence of psycho-spiritual integration. The need for the harmonious integration of the various aspects of formation is emphasized in *Vita Consecrata* (John Paul II, 1996 # 65). Formation should involve the whole person, in every aspect of the personality, in behavior and intentions. "Integrated formation is a journey that encompasses both the spiritual and psychological dimensions of the human person leading him/her to

transcendence by consistently striving towards a passionate love and zeal for the Lord” (D’ Almeida, 2007: 155).

Pastoral counselors, spiritual formators, and mentors in the early 1970s and 1980s depended too heavily on psychology to understand human nature and personality, often leaving aside the classical Christian view. It was a kind of “psychological reductionism” in which spirituality becomes the activity of some relatively independent part of the personality outside the other psychological mechanisms and processes (Benner, 1998). In this model, spiritual problems are judged to reside in the spiritual part of personality, while psychological problems lie in the separate psychological part. This kind of truncated view cannot help in the promotion of wholeness and a fully functioning life. Spirituality seen as an added appendage to personality for an added meaning or satisfaction is not compatible with the Christian understanding of the human person (Benner, 1989: 20). Humans are not a composite of a number of parts. We do not have a body and have a spirit; rather we are an embodied spirit.

Hebrew psychology was holistic in nature. Parts were never seen as independent realities but as conceptualizations having no independent existence (Benner, 1988: 110). A biblical awareness of the fundamental unity of personality, is essential to the nature of developing Christian discipleship and sanctification. Our quest for God involves the whole personality. It is not only the spirit that longs for God and is satisfied with the God experience. The spiritual cannot be separated from ‘being’. Spirituality is what it means to be human (Benner, 2002b: 108).

Our original self is created in the image of God. It is exposed to bad influences and negative environments (original sin). Religious and psychological literature is full of reflections about the nature of true self. The true self is initially endowed with dynamic orientations towards meaning, truth, goodness, value and the Divine. As Christians, we may not be able to subscribe to all the “true self” understandings of some of the secular psychologists. Our true self is psycho-spiritual in nature. According to Tyrrell (1988: 33), “The true self is an incarnate subject, a unity of body and spirit in one person; this remains such even when the perfect Christ self is realized in the final resurrection from the dead. Being

created in the image of God, our natural self is capable of realizing the Christ self – the image and life of the transcendent God.”

The psycho-spiritual understanding of human nature and self leads to the idea that spiritual growth is related to psychological growth. Benner (1988: 126-127) puts this relationship and distinction by conceptualizing “structural milestones” and “directional milestones.” Psychological development is understood having structural milestones. It refers to movement from higher levels of dependence by passing through different stages of growth, to becoming an autonomous self through a process of integration. Directional milestones involve basic trust in the capacity for self-transcendence, after passing through the stages of awareness of one’s call, one’s own insufficiency, awareness of sin, freedom from bondage, sanctification, bearing fruits of the spirit, and finally to mystical union with God.

A person is a unity not a dichotomy. This approach is likely to encourage a cross fertilization of ideas from both psychology and Christianity. The process of formation involves the personal crisis of growth in physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. Spiritual growth calls for psychological maturity of the candidate.

### **Our fundamental Call and Integration**

Our fundamental call is to become lovers – lovers of our own selves, humanity, and God. This is all the more true in formation, having received a special call from within. This lovability of our selves is unmistakably brought out in sacred Scripture. God loves each one of us personally; it is not merely a collective love for humanity. Psalmist says “You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb” (Psalm 139: 13). God’s plan for humans is collective and individual. Individuals can easily realize their God-given nature when there is community that fosters and supports it. Maturity can easily be measured by my ability to love and be loved. If I am not lovingly relating to the people around me, I cannot claim that I have developed a healthy and strong personality. One of the classic definitions of a weak ego is the person who is incapable of genuine relatedness (Kelsey, 1988: 65).

God does not love only a part of me or that eternal part of me; He loves me wholly and fully. As I pay attention to this great spiritual

truth and become sensitive to it and respond accordingly, my love spills out and over to all living beings. Thereupon, I begin to show God's own love to my neighbor, that is, unconditional love. It is by becoming a great lover that I realize myself and become more fully human. Salvation is to be understood as the full blossoming of our humanity. It is restoring our humanity in Jesus to become an ever-expanding vessel that holds out God's love to others. Formees become true disciples of Jesus by fully embracing all that is human and integrating it into the self. "The integral formation of a person has physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual dimensions. It is achieved when our personal love for Christ becomes the very centre of our being" (*Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life*, 1991 #34). This integration takes place at four levels: integration within oneself, with fellow human beings/society, with the environment/creation, and with the Divine. Harmonious and balanced relationships within these levels would necessarily enable him/her to commit himself/herself wholly towards self-transformation and, consequently, to become an agent of social transformation.

To be in formation, one must be "in formation" oneself. Since growth comes from within, no one can assume responsibility for another's growth. Formators are not really forming but accompanying the young, and providing a suitable environment that inspires them towards the process of integration and growth. When a person is not fully integrated, there are voids and the individual is likely to experience contact boundary disturbances (Sharf, 2004).

### **Formation for Transcendence**

When one chooses the spiritual life, or enters into religious or priestly life, one is making a deliberate choice to engage seriously with one's given nature. The task of formators and the formation house is to create a conducive environment for the candidate to seriously engage with his psycho-spiritual nature. It is also the will of God that those who have not realized the true nature of humanity be enlightened and guided in this respect, so that they may realize their true self more fully. Our common reference, "This brother, or this sister, is spiritual and the other one is not" is an acknowledgement of differing awarenesses of God's call to

fulfill ourselves by seriously engaging in our inner longing and quest. According to Benner (1988: 233), the essence of being human is being spiritual, which is a response to a deep and mysterious human yearning for self-transcendence and surrender. Spirituality may receive myriad expressions and responses based on the uniqueness of the individual. A sensitive formator can discern the spiritual sensitivities of the candidate.

One of the primary expressions of human spirituality is that we inherently seek to surrender, or align ourselves with a self-transcendent being or thing. To experience our full humanity and its potential, a surrender or dedication to a cause greater than oneself is necessary. This has been the human experience down through the centuries. Relating and surrendering to a transcendent being or cause means aligning one's life and its rhythms accordingly, in order to maintain the transcendent relationship. Every relationship is dynamic in nature. It may not be a steady growth, but might involve ups and downs, as human nature has its limits, choices, and freedoms.

The authentic self means constant integration of actions, thoughts, intentions, and external behavior, affections and cognitions - both conscious and unconscious - and so forth (Benner, 1989: 21). The reference point for this integration is not my own limited self, but outside of myself and my little world. In Christian formation, the reference point is the Christ self. As the result of constant integration, we grow out of our known self. This new knowing and new experience becomes part of being spiritual.

As there is an inherent disposition to relate to the Transcendent and grow into its likeness, so too is there grace that prods one to respond to the quest, or to enter into a more and more meaningful relationship with it. In formation, a greater thrust is given to this graced call and response. Building on Gerald May's view, Benner suggests that our spirituality becomes religious only when an individual experiences the self in relationship with some higher power and responds to the relationship with prayer or worship (Howard, 2006). In the Christian formative context, God's invitation and response are emphasised based on Christian revelation, so that it can be meaningfully discerned and responded to more accurately rather than vaguely. The lived experience of

many saints, mystics, one's own founder's charism, and past human experience all become signposts for a Christian as he/she develops a deep relationship with the Transcendent. For a candidate in formation, the philosophical transcendent being assumes the form of the Incarnate Word, Jesus, who through His spirit guides us to perfect union with the Father, and thus, to being a fully functioning person here and now.

### **Art and Task of Integration**

Formation involves teaching the art of integration - the integration of our sexuality, intellect, emotions, spiritual quest, needs, wants, desires, etc. Often in formation, the Scripture verses on *denial* become the 'wild card'. Scripture does not ask us for the denial of our humanity, but for the denial of a false and mistaken self, that is a self other than spiritual. Holiness does not involve annihilation of our identity from God's identity; rather it involves the restoring of our relationship with the life and character of a holy God, (Benner, 2002: 36-37) and our becoming like the God with whom we live in intimate relationship. Much of our spiritual journey and formation, therefore, involves dealing with our sinful self. To leave this sinful self in order to rediscover one's true self needs guidance, mentoring, and accompaniment. The formator's role is to expose the nature of one's false self. Together with the formee, the formator may explore how and in what fashion this false self is constituted, or how it was reinforced and maintained so far. Living out of the false self is easy because of social conditioning and learned habits. The false self is easy to identify in most situations. The false self is the inappropriate and unrealistic dependency on what we have, what we do, and what people think of us (Howard, 2006: 235). In Galatians 2: 20, St. Paul tells us to crucify the sinful self or false self. The natural question, then, is: "What are we to actualize?". The self I am to become, is Christ in me; it is myself in Christ (Benner, 2002: 39). Daily dying and rising are taking place in the lives of any authentic spiritual seeker until he reaches the top of the mountain, where at last God chooses to speak to His chosen ones with their face unveiled (2Cor 3: 12-18). By taking up the cross daily in the imitation of Christ, and seeking the things that are in heaven where Christ is sitting at God's right hand (Col 3:1), they share evermore richly in the life of Christ and his resurrection.

Self-love and self-esteem are not sinful, rather they dispose us to receive God's love more effectively, and help to transform us without being threatened or violated. Without deeply knowing one's nature, needs, wants, and longings, human growth and development leading to spiritual maturity will remain utopian. A full awareness of one's psycho-spiritual self promotes continuous integration and self-realization. Formation should not be understood as the meeting of an individual's spiritual needs. Neither is its goal to make one a decent human being. Formation involves a full range of the developmental milestones of an individual's psycho-spiritual lifespan. This necessitates greater integration of all God-given faculties. Archetypes in the human psyche represent the need for balance and integration. Archetypal figures like king, hero, maiden, witch, teacher, fool, mother, slave, trader, angry father, etc., may arise. If any one of these archetypes gets the upper hand and one identifies with it, crippling disease will result. The archetypes are morally neutral and capable of being used either creatively or destructively, for good or evil (Kelsey, 1988: 53). Our task is to balance and unite the two dimensions of existence. Often, our inner discomfort is calling attention to the fact that we have not yet balanced and integrated these two dimensions.

To bring the totality of one's being into God's transforming influence, one must understand the psyche as deeply as possible. It is meaningless to speak about the spiritual life or formation that does not involve sexual drives, power motives, our treatment of others, etc. Feelings and emotions are very much part of our human lives. They are integrally connected to our spiritual and mental wellbeing. God calls, challenges, enlightens, and empowers - but never forces. We must be aware of our feelings and inner experiences, accept them, and take stock of what is happening within us. We then acknowledge that we are affected, angry, frustrated, sensual, frightened, or being drawn to God. As we reflect on these feelings and experiences, we recognise their effect on us. Once we are aware of what direction we are being pulled in, we take a stand or make a deliberate choice. Obviously, we listen to God's invitation and voice and then move in the direction He is calling us. In this way, our automatic responses are converted to authentic responses to God and others. Feelings motivate us to act.

Feelings in tune with spiritual goals motivate us to do what God wants. Neglect of feelings causes trouble in our relationship with God and others. An integrated self has a greater awareness of feelings and behaviors, and has the ability to choose fitting responses.

Christian formation is a radical commitment towards transformation, by replacing the false self with one's true self in Christ. Correcting and restoring oneself by casting away one's shadows is not achievable overnight or by one's own efforts. Throughout the Bible, we see the Divine pedagogy guiding His people through mentors and guides. Maturing by our own effort is against our human nature. The human's long infancy and various stages of slow development indicate that transformation is strugglesome. Left to oneself, it is easy to become disillusioned or disappointed in not attaining one's developmental goals. Consequently, a psycho-spiritual model of Christian formation needs the substantial involvement of other people with varying degrees of intensity, and on numerous occasions. Hence, we come across the stages of formation and the need for proper guidance in the process of self-integration.

### **Towards more Positive Formation**

At the outset of any formational programme, the formator as well as the formee shall realize the truth that we are amphibious creatures. This means that we can choose to relate either with the superficial material world or with a deep and wider spiritual world with no limits. I can contend with the former if I choose to do so; but I can also make right choices and good choices where I will have a totally different experience and realize the fullness of my personality. Therefore, the first question in formation is: has this formee made a fundamental decision and commitment to seek the infinite good and right choices accordingly? As long as this fundamental option exists, a positive formation makes sense.

Most formees are in their teenage years. Teenagers need to be treated psychologically as adults. Treating them as children is not proper for their growth. Seldom can they be pushed; however, they can be led when they feel they are understood and that someone is really concerned about them. Some formees develop inflated egos. They think they can adequately manage life and the

world. Such a psychological condition is a block to spiritual life and progress. Inflated egos shall not be simply crushed, for we do need an intact ego to work towards integration and the final goal of wholeness.

A negative thrust in formation does not promote self-integration. We have been used to a problem-focused formation, rather than formation focused on growth and the inner life. Formation occurs only in the context of set goals and direction towards those goals. We are good at giving “from what” and “to what” but the “how” receives scant attention (Kelsey: 1988). To make life worthwhile and valuable, we need to focus on worthy and valuable concepts, ideas, behaviors, and thoughts. What is right with people, and what their strengths are, is at the heart of a positive formation. By focusing on weaknesses, shortcomings, and pathologies, we cannot promote growth in humans. Focusing on the good with sufficient intensity and attention can enhance the power of good in the formees to overcome the bad. Formators should realize that the best work they can do is to amplify the strengths rather than repair the candidate’s weaknesses. Increased attention on the strengths of individuals and societies can be a good start to seeing the power of good in the present.

Candidates are in formation to evolve and grow out of their present limitations. Free will is intended to make us free eventually from all bondage and limitations. We are capable of growing, learning, and changing throughout life. Physical growth and change are natural to people, but psychological and spiritual growth require involvement of free will and consciousness. Most time, our desires and preferences are not freely chosen. Many are installed in us by our training and environment. Formators shall help formees to discern what the chosen values are, what are instilled in us, and what are the automatic thoughts and behaviors. By different techniques and approaches, formation shall imbibe greater awareness and insight into one’s psycho-spiritual self and its functioning. Real problems shall be dealt with as systematic problem-solving approaches. Goal setting, checking the progress, identifying the blocks, and rewarding the achieved task are part of formation that triggers integration and wholeness.

Life is a dynamic movement towards God and others. Individualistic life has no meaning; deeper meaning is found in the act of reaching out to God and others and being in authentic communion with them. Different disciplines help us in this process. Noticed or not, God is always at work within us as well as in the world. Contemporary culture and life put many obstacles before us on the path of self-realization. So many things cause frustration, conflicts, and tension. All can be opportunities for growth. Left to oneself, one may not be able to make sense of life without some guidance and direction. Endowed with freedom, consciousness, and the grace available to God's children, one can always transcend the environment and the unconscious driving forces. Formators must understand the seeker's problem by situating it in the context of his/her life and the stages of his/her growth. Formators help the seeker to turn the crisis into an opportunity to grow by encouraging the seeker to rediscover the true self, his/her strength and weakness as revealed through the crisis, and assist him/her to manage it. The formator without being too preachy accompanies the seeker in his/her struggles like a loving father, mother, and genuine friend.

Formation guides are not simply giving some answers to difficult questions of life or helping to solve a series of problems systematically; rather they practice consciously entering into the mystery of being human. Our life is a mystery to be lived in such a way that it integrates our gifts and resources, and respects our intrinsic limits. Formators would understand that each one's spiritual journey is unique and personal.

### **Integrating the Tensions of Growth**

One of the critical tasks of any formator is to foster in young people an intense process of self-integration with its normal struggles. An integrated person goes more and more beyond the present circumstances, to become a more complete human being by entering into the world of meaning, values, beauty, and harmony. The more the self-integration, the greater is the thrust for self-transcendence. Maslow's hierarchy of needs points towards the human aspiration towards superior potentials and possibilities. As basic needs are met, we tend to step to higher realms, namely, the psychological and spiritual. The artist who

loses himself in the creation of a work of art is the one who realizes himself as an artist (Tyrrell, 1988: 50). It is this self-integration and self-transcendence Jesus refers to when he said, "Without denying yourself you cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

Many people first come to religious life and practice hoping to skip over their sorrows, wounds, and the difficult areas of their lives. True maturation requires that we discover the depth of our wounds and our grief from the past. The unhealed pain, rage, childhood abuse, traumas from the past, and abandonment all become powerful unconscious forces in our lives. Unless we are able to bring awareness and understanding to our wounds, we are likely to repeat the same old hurts throughout our lives.

In all human hearts, there is a tension between limitation and transcendence, between what is and what can be, because we have not become what we can be. The tension and conflict between the two dimensions are inevitable. Too much ego-centrism means rigidity, immobility, and stunted growth. Most neurotic problems are the result of avoiding legitimate pain. Without facing the legitimate pain of being human, our nature itself is held back without going forward. The formation period should be seen as a process of integration, a movement towards stability, deeper rooting, consolidating and settling down on the psychological and spiritual truths one comes across.

We discern in the writings of many modern writers and thinkers an attempt to depict the vocation of the human being as a call to the highest levels of psychological and spiritual wholeness and holiness (Tyrrell, 1988: 53). In Erikson's (1959) final stage of 'ego integrity,' we watch this phenomenon. Jung acknowledges it when he says 'the deepest calling of human consciousness is to recognize its descent from a higher unity and to surrender to this source'. We see it in Roberto Assagioli's (1971) description of synthesis of spirit and psyche in which the 'higher and true self' is realized. In short, one is capable of integration in order to realize something greater than ourselves. From the Christian faith, revelation, and from the lives of myriad saints and mystics, we know that this process of integration is oriented towards a Christ-self, the perfection and end of everything.

Part of formation is helping the formees to an inward confrontation of the forces of sin and evil. As long as people are not integrated, they need guidance and mediation through doctrine. Since woundedness and brokenness are part of our humanness, one needs restoration and redemption of our wounded nature. Only a theology and formation that understands the experiences of human brokenness and hurt are able to help those who have been wounded and are seeking help. As embodied spirits, humans need to strike a balance as well as maintain a unity through the integration of our nature. We need to engage in the physical world as well as the spiritual world. One shall not be left in favor of another. The Incarnation is the ultimate action of the Spirit in human nature (Kelsey, 1988). The same Spirit is hovering over individuals to strengthen his/her process of integration and transcendence.

According to Jung, we cannot grow psychologically unless we grow religiously, and we cannot attain our spiritual maturity unless we mature psychologically (Kelsey, 1988: 8). There is a mistaken fear in many religious people that “if I become very spiritual, many of my talents and potentials will be buried in spirituality”. Jungian religious understanding is that we can keep all our mental capacities and still be effectively religious and transformed by the living God (Jung, 1955).

To Jung (1975:265), individuation is the process of coming to wholeness. He considers individuation to be a religious process describing it as the submission of the ego will to God’s will. The first step is ‘abreaction’ in psychological terms, ‘confession’ in Christian terminology, and the ‘purification stage’ in classical spirituality. It means knowing one’s faults and owning them. There is little journey towards individuation without it. The second step is transference - love. We grow as we develop relationships. Unconditional acceptance and regard for others help us to adopt Jesus’ mind and grow in transcending our ego limits. This is why Jesus frequently said, “Love one another.” The third step is integration. It involves knowing the outer world with the people in it, its inner depths, and then trying to function as a unity. It requires a lot of hard work, discipline, and reflection. The goal of wholeness is not reached by our effort alone. It is given in the final stage as we dare to encounter our shadows and stick to our

growth. The holier we become, the greater we realize the need to confess, to love, to grow, and to wait (Kelsey, 1988: 96). The work of the formator or spiritual director is to guide others through these four stages.

Individuation occurs by being aware of all that occurs in life and confronting one's shadows. It is my own unique way of following God's call. And that is the primary requisite for holiness and wholeness. You cannot be someone else. You cannot copy anyone, as you are God's special one, made and given an individual special destiny which is not replicable by anybody else. Formators often fail to give due attention to this individuality. It is easy to apply universal norms and standards to all for convenience sake. As a result of that, psychological and spiritual growth gets stunted.

Human decision and cooperation is essential in the process of self-integration. God will not simply run our life without us taking ownership of it, and responsibility for transformation. The spiritual life warrants some discipline. Those candidates who do not appreciate the value of discipline have no place in religious life, nor are they capable of embarking on a spiritual journey. Discipline keeps the individual and community within proper limits, and also protects the other. Spiritual discipline is founded on a well-ordered ego given to the service of God (Kelsey, 64). Involvement in the spiritual world is no excuse for refusing to deal with the practical outer world. One's feet shall be firmly placed on the ground and be quite aware of where he/she is going. Our psyches need to be continually open to listen for the Spirit's movements.

Formees need discipline in their individual lives too. Discipline by will power alone may not help to attain goals. What formees need very often is the inspiration of a loving person who shows the value of what he/she is trying to do and supports them with love and prayer. While affirming the formees, formators shall deal with any unredeemed aspect of the personality. The formation period is an opportunity to sort out whatever is unredeemed in the formees and help them to deal with it. Many people cannot face the darkness of life unless they have someone to face it with them. Even if they see it, they do not know how to proceed to overcome

it. When formees can confess and recognize the truly unredeemed qualities of life, integration and transformation become a possibility (Kelsey, 1988: 120).

### **Grace and Transformation**

At the outset of His public ministry, Jesus put up a minimum requirement to enter his Kingdom “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15). It refers to a radical conversion and a turning away from the destructive type of being and acting. It involves turning towards a basically constructive life, and a fulfilling way of existing and functioning (Tyrrell, 1988: 4). In formation, this involves a positive decision towards constructing oneself in a new fashion with definitive goals. Conversion is not a one-time event. It is an ongoing phenomenon. The individual confirms the first turning point and decision by practicing an ever-deeper rejection of remaining destructive tendencies. In the process, the individual transforms himself evermore intensely into life enriching values. Insights of psychology can shed new light into the nature of our behavioral motives, feelings, needs, and wants. This may help one open up to the redeeming love and grace of Christ. Along with natural means, the healing and nurturing power of God is present through Jesus and his Word. The greatest Healer of all times shall be in constant awareness of the formees. Naturally, one should be able to open up to the proven Healer for healing and growth. Other psychotherapeutic means are valid but they are secondary. Christ is not only our salvation but He also is the source of all wisdom and insight. At different points in formation, individuals and groups may recall and renew in mind, heart, memory, and imagination their radical turning away from destructive ways and mere existence, to a radical commitment to Christ and his Kingdom. Dante, John of the Cross, and many others have used the image of a constant ascent of a mountain to describe the ongoing integration and spiritual growth (Tyrrell, 1982: 6).

Since our nature is psycho-spiritual, psychological growth prepares the ground for a healthy spirituality. Spiritual growth and development occurs through the positive disintegration and re-creation of the lower levels of personality. Psychological crises are often opportunities of grace, to enable growth to the higher levels of personality and self-realization. For this reason, one’s ego

should be intact and open to receiving guidance and support. In the process of positive disintegration, the person first begins to feel his present level of development and growth as inadequate. Feelings such as shame, guilt, anger, dissatisfaction, restlessness, and similar experiences trigger in the person a struggle to free himself from primitive, stereotypical, and repetitious types of personality organization. As one experiences this, one is equally drawn to new values and new modes of existing. Through a series of insight-directed decisions, the individual rejects what is primitive and immature, and embraces authentically fulfilling values. Tyrrell states "Ideally there comes into being a new and harmonious organization of all one's psychic, aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual functions" (Tyrrell, 1998: 20). Human nature being psycho-spiritual, and essentially 'called' to realize that, as spiritual beings, a combination of psychological and spiritual elements are involved in healing, growth, and restoration. Most psychological problems cannot be treated well, without spiritual attitudes and values. Healing needs a combination of both discipline and grace. So, human problems shall not be reduced simply to being psychological or spiritual in nature. They are a combination of both, and need integration for healing and growth.

Healing towards integration and wholeness involves a particular kind of life review which necessitates an intentional personality, and also, motivation. A personality that operates out of the unconscious never really evolves beyond the ways it developed in childhood. Psychological healing assists us in evolving a mature personality. We are then free to be loving, serving, and less self-serving.

Formators have to bear in mind that the modern mind has lost the ability to appreciate the traditional theological language of the Church. People can appreciate things couched in "secular language" more easily. Classical theology and spirituality needs to be packaged in a more attractive way so that they may engender interest for modern minds. Jung found it necessary to demythologize the theological language of Ignatius Loyola in order to speak to contemporaries antagonistic or indifferent to religion (Tyrrell, 1988:5). Though formators are sympathetic to religion and spiritual styles and expressions, we need to consider

the secular mindset of the times. There is always room to see Christ and Christian revelation in new ways. Viktor Frankl speaks of healing and growth that can come through the discovery of meaning in life and existence. Christians can discover Christ as revealer of both Divine and human meaning, and as the source of psychic as well as spiritual healing and transformation (Tyrrell, 1975: 26-28). Generally speaking, there is not much interest in reading about saints and mystics today; instead most like to read psychological self-help books. This may help to some extent to increase one's awareness level, but to fathom the depth, height, and width of the spiritual world and what it has to offer, the formees need to read the best examples of the spiritual treasures. I could learn and integrate the idea of holiness only from holy people.

What is lacking in formation is moral conversion. This is an existential decision to guide one's decisions and actions not by satisfaction, but by worthwhile values. In the absence of moral conversion, strong resistance would be encountered at every instance. It is a decision to act responsibly and to be governed fundamentally in one's ethical activities by the criterion of what is good and worthwhile, instead of by what merely satisfies one's immediate needs and demands for self-gratification (Lonergan, 1972: 240). Psycho-spiritual formation requires some level of intellectual conversion, too. St. Augustine and St. Paul underwent certain types of intellectual conversion in order to fully experience spiritual realities. Formees undergo a certain level of intellectual conversion when they decide to enter the formation stage. The formee realizes that it is not only the physical world and physical experiences that matter but also spiritual phenomena and spiritual experiences. The intellect needs to be enlightened to grasp the basic truths of the spiritual world, and to be authentic, one needs to acknowledge and surrender to these new truths. Lonergan refers to this type of conversion as intellectual because it involves an activity of the mind. By this activity a person determines that 'being', or reality, includes both matter and spirit and is not simply reducible to one or the other (Tyrrell, 1988: 106).

Connecting with our spiritual self is one step. Allowing the spiritual self to lead us, is another step. Learning to differentiate between the desires of our personality and the calling of our heart

is paramount to transforming our life. Transformation through an ongoing awareness of the inner life, and the ongoing choice to surrender the ego to the spiritual self or to the will of the Divine, is the core of spiritual life and formation.

Lonergan calls the dynamisms in us that move us from lower to higher levels of activity and transcendence, “operators.” He names the consolidating, conserving, sustaining principles in us, “integrators” (Tyrrell, 1988). The integrators are familiarly known to us as acquired habits; they are conserving forces that give continuity, consistency, and reliability. At the heart of created reality, there is a tension between limitation and transcendence as we have noted earlier. In persons, this tension appears in the interplay between the integrators and operators of human development. In the beginning of our human development, what we have is primitive integration based on ego needs characterized by security, power, and wealth. Faced with frustration, guilt, and dissatisfaction, one brings about positive integration, breaking up the primary level of disintegration. This occurs provided there is a fundamental commitment to the spiritual journey, and the process is properly assisted.

## **Conclusion**

Your spiritual nature is a psychological fact. It is the real and transformative force that empowers your life. To deny this core nature is to deny your own self. We need to dissolve the dualism and dichotomy we have been conditioned in, and learn to live within the tension of the complimentary opposites within us. Psycho-spiritual integration reconciles the insights of psychology and the graces of the spiritual disciplines. It is a process of spiritual evolution and psychological maturation.

Every person has an innate ability to grow according to the nature given to him/her. Christian growth and development aims at psychological and spiritual maturity, in order to be an effective disciple of Jesus. It is a movement from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness by integrating all our God-given faculties. To foster integration and maturity as persons, nothing is more helpful than to create a family atmosphere of friendship, trust, mutual respect, and dialogue between the formee and the formator. The outcome of formation must be an integrated personality. Spirituality is not a

solitary experience. It should lead to action that acknowledges the reign of God, benefits others and oneself.

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