

**TOWARD A CONTEMPORARY  
MODEL OF SPIRITUAL  
DIRECTION: A COMPARATIVE  
STUDY OF SAINT  
JOHN OF THE CROSS AND CARL R. ROGERS**

In a position paper written in 1976 for the United States Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, Father Louis Cameli states: « The relationships between psychology and spirituality — convergence, difference, complementarity, etc. — are yet to be explored in a satisfactory systematic fashion »<sup>1</sup>. Cameli's point applies especially to spiritual direction. Writers for years have noted modern psychology's value for spiritual direction<sup>2</sup>, although little has been done to demonstrate systematically its precise place in this ministry<sup>3</sup>. The lack of such inter-disciplinary research accounts in part for our current situation in the United States where we are involved in an extensive revival of spiritual direction, yet, as Carmeli observes, « working with an incomplete theoretical and systematic framework which would describe the exact function of a spiritual director today »<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Louis J. Cameli, *Spiritual Direction for Priests in the USA: The Rediscovery of a Resource* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1977), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the following: Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, « Special Graces of the Spiritual Director », trans. M. Timothea Doyle, *Cross and Crown* 2 (December 1950): 413; Dorothy Dohen, « Spiritual Direction », *Spiritual Life* 4 (September 1958): 199-204; Ernest E. Larkin, « Spiritual Direction Today », *American Ecclesiastical Review* 161 (September 1969): 205-7; Sandra M. Schneiders, « The Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction », *Chicago Studies* 15 (Spring 1976): 131-33; Matthias Neuman, « Letter to a Beginning Spiritual Director », *Review for Religious* 37 (November 1973): 883.

<sup>3</sup> A systematic demonstration of modern psychology's contribution to spiritual direction may be seen in F.W. Kimper's, « A Psychological Analysis of the Spiritual Direction Given by Saint Francis of Sales » (Ph. D. dissertation, Boston University, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> Cameli, *Spiritual Direction*, p. 14.

In response to the need expressed by Cameli, this article presents the results of my own attempt to develop a method for exploring systematically the relationships between traditional theories of spiritual direction and the findings of modern therapeutic psychology. Using Saint John of the Cross and Carl R. Rogers as representatives of spiritual direction and therapeutic psychology respectively, I have searched for relationships between these two writers and formulated my findings into hypotheses about spiritual direction that can be evaluated by further psychological and theological research. In presenting these hypotheses, I hope to foster the development of a reliable model or « theoretical and systematic framework » for guiding current practice and research in spiritual direction<sup>5</sup>.

Saint John of the Cross and Carl Rogers have proven especially rewarding subjects for this interdisciplinary inquiry. An acknowledged master of Christian spirituality, Saint John was also an experienced spiritual director whose prose writings, the fruit of nearly twenty-five years in this ministry<sup>6</sup>, chart the entire road to union with God with profound insights into human behavior that presage the psychological discoveries of our day<sup>7</sup>. Though written expressly for sixteenth-century Spanish religious and laity, John's treatises continue today to guide thousands throughout the world in their search for divine union.

As formulator of the influential client-centered approach to modern psychotherapy, Carl Rogers also writes out of his years of experience as a psychotherapist. Supporting his theories with extensive empirical research, Rogers attempts to explain a wide range of human behavior (e.g., individual, interpersonal, group, family, etc.)

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<sup>5</sup> This article is based on my doctoral dissertation, « Toward a Model of Spiritual Direction Based on the Writings of Saint John of the Cross and Carl R. Rogers: An Exploratory Study » (Ph. D. dissertation, Boston University, 1979). I am particularly indebted to Professors Orlo Strunk, Jr., and Judson D. Howard of Boston University for their guidance throughout the course of this research.

<sup>6</sup> Saint John wrote his major treatises — *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Dark Night*, *The Spiritual Canticle*, and *The Living Flame* — expressly for the benefit of his directees (see, for example, A, Prol., 9; C, Prol., 1-3; F, Title and Prol., 1). His Letters and Minor Works derive almost entirely from his spiritual direction ministry.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Bruno de Jésus-Marie, « Saint Jean de la Croix et La Psychologie Modern », in *Les Etudes Carmélitaines: Direction Spirituelle et Psychologie* (Bruges: Desclée, De Brouwer & Cie, 1951), pp. 9-24. This article is translated into English as « Saint John of the Cross and Modern Psychology » by Jane Maddrell in William Birmingham and Joseph Cunneen, eds., *Cross Currents of Psychiatry and Catholic Morality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), pp. 226-43.

on psychological grounds alone, although many have seen implications in his work for theology, pastoral counseling, and spiritual direction<sup>8</sup>. Comparing two writers so experienced in their subject matter, comprehensive in scope, influential in their field and rich in implication for the work of the other has yielded an abundant harvest of insight into the relationships between spiritual direction and therapeutic psychology.

My research method involved analyzing texts which record Saint John's experience as a spiritual director and Roger's as a psychotherapist. With Saint John, I analyzed his *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night*, two treatises which together form one coherent literary work<sup>9</sup> explaining « how to reach divine union quickly »<sup>10</sup> and describing the road that leads to this union. Although spiritual direction is not the stated subject matter of the *Ascent — Dark Night*, this work nevertheless reveals both John's understanding of the spiritual director's role in guiding a person along the road to union with God and his own practice of spiritual direction as he attempted in these pages to lead his readers to divine union. I carefully analyzed each book of the *Ascent-Dark Night* to determine both their explicit and implicit teachings on spiritual direction; I then formulated the results of this analysis into a synthesis, a summary statement expressing Saint John's theory of spiritual direction as found in this one work.

Next, I examined two major articles by Rogers — « A Theory of

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the following: Francis X. Meehan, *Client-Centered Therapy in the Writings of Carl R. Rogers: A Theological Evaluation* (Rome: Pont. Universitas Lateranensis, 1965); Francis Colborn, « The Theology of Grace: Present Trends and Future Directions », *Theological Studies* 31 (December 1970): 692-711; Michael R. Parisi, « Justification and the Theory of Carl Rogers », *Thought* 48 (Winter 1973): 478-507; Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville & New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 27-40, 273-75; Thomas C. Oden, *Kerygma and Counseling: Toward a Covenant Ontology for Secular Psychotherapy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966); Joseph MacAvoy, « Direction Spirituelle et Psychologie », in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, s.v. « Direction Spirituelle », vol. 3, cols. 1156-1173; Eugene C. Kennedy, « Counseling and Spiritual Direction », *The Catholic Theological Society of America, Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Convention* (Yonkers, NY: St. Joseph's Seminary, 1964), 119-20; Pietro Brocardo, *Direzione Spirituale e Rendimento* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Salesiana, 1966), pp. 109-112.

<sup>9</sup> Juan de Jesús María, « El Díptico Subida-Noche », in « *Sanjuanística* », ed. Theological Faculty of the Discalced Carmelites (Rome: Collegium Internationale Sanctorum Teresiae a Jesu et Joannis a Cruce, 1943), pp. 27-83. See also the « Introduction to *The Ascent of Mount Carmel — The Dark Night* » in *The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, with Introductions by Kieran Kavanaugh (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1964), pp. 43-64. References to Saint John in this article are to the Kavanaugh & Rodriguez translation unless noted otherwise.

<sup>10</sup> *Ascent*, title, p. 68.

Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships, as Developed in the Client-Centered Framework »<sup>11</sup> and « Client-Centered Psychotherapy »<sup>12</sup> — which succinctly state his psychological theories. I analyzed these articles asking the heuristic question: What do the psychological theories of Rogers have in common with Saint John's theory of spiritual direction in the *Ascent-Dark Night*? I then formulated the results of this analysis into hypotheses about the nature of spiritual direction that can be evaluated in further research. My contention is that testing these hypotheses will provide the necessary constructs and relationships for a reliable theoretical model or systematic framework to guide practice and research in spiritual direction.

In this article, I will present first the summary statement of John's theory of spiritual direction in the *Ascent-Dark Night*, followed by Rogers' contributions to this theory expressed in hypotheses for further research and implications for spiritual direction, and finally an outline of the steps for completing this research and formulating a contemporary model of spiritual direction.

## I. SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IN THE ASCENT OF MOUNT CARMEL AND THE DARK NIGHT

In this first section, I summarize Saint John's teachings on spiritual direction as found in the *Ascent-Dark Night*<sup>13</sup> stating the main elements of his teaching in eight major propositions, each

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<sup>11</sup> In Sigmund Koch, ed., *Psychology: A Study of a Science*, vol. 3: *Formulations of the Person and the Social Context* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), pp. 184-256.

<sup>12</sup> In Alfred M. Freedman, Harold I. Kaplan, and Benjamin J. Sadock, eds. *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry-II*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1975), pp. 1831-43.

<sup>13</sup> Other discussions of Saint John's theory and practice of spiritual direction may be seen in the following: Aurelio del Pino Gómez, « San Juan de la Cruz: Director Espiritual », *Revista de Espiritualidad* 1 (Julio-Diciembre 1942): 389-410; Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, *The Spiritual Director According to the Principles of St. John of the Cross*, trans. a Benedictine of Stanbrook Abbey (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1951); Lucie-Marie de Saint-Joseph, « La Direction Spirituelle d'après Saint Jean de la Croix », in *Les Etudes Carmélitaines: Direction Spirituelle et Psychologie*, 173-204; Gabriel de Sainte-Marie-Madeleine, « L'Esprit-Saint et L'Eglise Visible dans la Direction Spirituelle », *Ephemerides Carmeliticae* 5 (1951-54): 70-90; Marco di Gesù Nazareno, « Principi di Direzione Spirituale in S. Giovanni della Croce », *Revista di Vita Spirituale* 14 (Ottobre-Dicembre 1960): 414-38; Olivier Leroy, « Quelques Traits de Saint Jean de la Croix comme Maître Spirituel », *Carmelus* 11 (1964): 3-43; José Vincente Rodríguez, « Magisterio Oral de San Juan de la Cruz », *Revista de Espiritualidad* 33 (Enero-Marzo 1974): 109-24; Elisabeth Krakau, « Johannes vom Kreuz als Seelenführer: Seine Lehre den 'Dunklen Nächten' », *Christliche*

followed by a brief explanation. Citations from Saint John's writings supporting these propositions are given in the footnotes. I express and arrange these propositions, not necessarily in the words and sequence used by Saint John, but according to a terminology and logic suggested by the teaching themselves. These propositions thus represent his theory of spiritual direction expressed as a synthesis emerging from an inductive analysis of the texts of the *Ascent-Dark Night*<sup>14</sup>.

— *God is a person's principal spiritual director*

In this proposition, God means primarily the Divinity present within the human person. John occasionally expresses God's guidance within the human person in Trinitarian terminology, such as Jesus Christ (*Jesucristo*) teaching persons by His words and example or the Holy Spirit (*el Espíritu Santo*) infusing divine wisdom into the soul; however, he most frequently attributes divine guidance simply to God (*Dios*) substantially present within the person (*dentro del alma sustancialmente*) as Master, Teacher, or Guide<sup>15</sup>.

— *The goal to which God leads the human person is union with Himself in perfect faith, hope, and love*

John considers the ultimate goal of human life to be perfect union with God resulting from a fully developed faith, hope, and love. This union makes the person God by participation, heals all sin and imperfection, and transforms the human faculties, enabling them to know and love in a divine manner. Viewed either theo-

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*Innerlichkeit* 13 (1978): 13-23, 83-96, 161-73, 221-28, 280-86, 14 (1979): 30-34; Joel Giallanza, « Spiritual Direction according to St. John of the Cross », *Contemplative Review* 11 (Fall, 1978): 31-37.

<sup>14</sup> This method of deriving theories through analysis and synthesis is taken from biblical theology. See David Michael Stanley, *Christ's Resurrection in Pauline Soteriology* (Rome: E. Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1961), pp. 2-4; John L. McKenzie, « Problems of Hermeneutics in Roman Catholic Exegesis », *Journal of Biblical Literature* 77 (1958): 199; R.A.F. MacKenzie, « The Concept of Biblical Theology », *The Catholic Theological Society of America, Proceedings of Tenth Annual Convention* (New York: n.p., 1955), p. 65.

<sup>15</sup> A, Prologue, 3; A 1, 5, 2&8; 13, 1; A 2, 7, 1-12: 12, 6-8; 16,4; 17, 1-9; 19, 3; 22, 5-9; 29, 1-2&6-7&11; 30, 3-4; A 3, 2, 7-12; 13, 2-4; 23, 2-4; 35, 5; 36, 3; 42, 1-6; N 1, 1, 1-2; 6, 5; 7, 5; 8, 3; 9, 9; 11, 3; 13, 3; 14, 5-6; N 2, 7, 3-4; 16, 8; 17, 2; 25, 2; Cf. C 1, 6-7; 35, 5; F 3, 28-33, 44-46, 54, 57, 61-62.

gically or psychologically, union with God perfects the entire human personality<sup>16</sup>.

— *God guides the human person to divine union through human nature, especially the light of natural reason; through divine revelation, particularly as expressed in the Person of Jesus Christ; and through infused contemplation*

John focuses in the *Ascent-Dark Night* upon the last of these three means of divine guidance. Through infused contemplation, God communicates Himself directly to the human person in divine wisdom and love, thereby guiding the person in whom He dwells to divine union according to his unique individuality. Contemplation both purifies a person of his inordinate love of creatures and unites him with Uncreated Love. A person disposes himself for God's unique guidance through infused contemplation by withdrawing his sensory appetites from inordinate attachments to creatures and by directing his spiritual faculties to God through faith, hope, and love; in response, God communicates His wisdom and love to the person with increasing intensity, eradicating the soul's imperfections and uniting the entire person, sense and spirit, to Himself. Because of the inner deprivation and pain caused in the person by the mortification of the sensory appetites, the theological virtues, and God's Self-communication, John likens divine guidance through infused contemplation to a journey in darkness<sup>17</sup>.

— *Persons committed to seeking divine union are capable of following God's guidance without the aid of a human spiritual director*

Human reason, divine revelation, and infused contemplation, in themselves, are sufficient to guide every person to union with God. Relying only on these sources of guidance, a person journeys more securely toward union with God than he does when following the

<sup>16</sup> A, Title, Theme, & Prologue, 1-3; A 1, 2, 4; 5, 2; 11, 2&6. A 2, 5, 1-8; 6, 1; 16, 15; 17, 1; A 3, 1, 1; 2, 8-9&16; 13, 5; 16, 3; 26, 5-6; N. Title & Prologue, N 1, 1, 1; 3, 3; 11, 4; N 2, 2, 1-2; 3, 3; 5, 1; 6, 5; 9, 3-4&9-10; 10, 1-10; 12, 6; 13, 10-11; 16, 10; 18, 4; 29, 4; 21, 11-12; 22, 1; Cf. C 11, 11-14; C 20&21, 1-19; F 3, 24&29.

<sup>17</sup> A, Prologue, 2; A 1, 13, 3-4; A 2, 5, 10; 7, 4-12; 17, 2-3&8; 21, 2-4; 22, 5-8&13-15; 24, 6; 27, 6; A 3, 23, 2; 36, 3; 39, 2; 44, 4; N 1, Explanation, 1; N 1, 1, 1-2; 8, 1; 10, 2-6; 12, 1-4; 13-10; N 2, 1, 1; 3, 3; 5, 1-4; 7, 3; 13, 11; 14, 1-3; 16, 7-8; 17, 2&8; 23, 1-3&11-13; 25, 2. Cf. C 13, 10; C 14&15, 2&5&14-21&26-27; C 25, 5; F 3, 25, 32-34, 44, 49, 54, 59, 62, 65-67; *Sayings of Light and Love*, 19&41.

counsel of someone who is insensitive to the unique way God guides each individual person or who is ignorant of the dynamics of infused contemplation. However, in trying to follow God's guidance all alone, a person can also deceive himself, misinterpret his religious experiences, and develop harmful attachments that hinder spiritual growth. For these reasons, God ordains that persons ordinarily journey to divine union with the help of other human persons. Thus, a person may discern God's guidance not only privately through prayer, reflection, spiritual reading, and growth in faith and love, but also through an interpersonal relationship with a human guide<sup>18</sup>.

— *Spiritual Direction is a ministry in the Church to help persons follow God's guidance to divine union*

Spiritual direction is a human relationship between a director or spiritual guide and a directee or one seriously seeking union with God through love which has as its subject matter the entire psychological experience of the directee — thoughts, desires, feelings, emotions, and actions — insofar as these reveal his relationship to God and God's action in his life. In this human relationship, the spiritual director helps the directee to discern and follow God's guidance, especially as received in infused contemplation. The director also helps the directee to relinquish his inordinate attachments to creatures and to center his entire life upon God in faith, hope, and love, thus becoming disposed to receive God's guidance in infused contemplation. Metaphorically speaking, a director guides the directee through the interior darkness caused by self-denial, faith, and contemplation to a loving union with God. A spiritual director thus acts as an instrument in God's guidance of a person to union with Himself<sup>19</sup>.

— *The essential function of the spiritual director is to guide the directee along the road to union with God*

John's understanding of the spiritual director's role may be seen in the titles and activities he assigns to the director. He calls the

<sup>18</sup> A, Title; A, Prol., 3-9; A 2, 4, 1-4; 7, 13; 12, 8-9; 17, 4-5; 18, 2-6; 19, 5&7; 20, 3; 21, 4; 22, 7-19; 26, 18; 30, 5-6; A 3, 15, 1-2; 24, 4; 36, 5; 39, 1-3; N 2, 18, 5; 25., 4. Cf. C 1, 11-12; F 3, 29-62; *Sayings of Light and Love*, 5-11; *Letters* 10&19 to Juana de Pedraza.

<sup>19</sup> A, Prologue, 3-7; A 1, 12, 6; A 2, 4, 1-7; 8, 5-7; 10, 1-4; 22, 7&12&19; 23, 1&4; 24, 4; 28, 1; A 3, 1, 1; 2, 2-4&13-16; 16, 1-6; N 1, Explanation, 1-2; N 1, 1, 1; N 2, 1, 1; 3, 3; 16, 14. Cf. C 1, 21-C 2, 3; 6, 4; 14&15, 4-5; F 3, 18-23, 38-43, 46-47, 55&62.

director a master or teacher (maestro espiritual), spiritual father (padre espiritual), confessor (confesor), and guide (guía). The spiritual director teaches his directee the nature of the journey to union with God and how to cooperate through self-denial and prayer with God's guidance; using advice, counsel, instruction, directives, and commands, he trains persons in detachment and the practice of faith, hope and love; he evaluates his directees' religious experience and growth in prayer; with understanding and compassion, he supports them during periods when God prepares them for divine union with intense sensory and spiritual purification. The word which best expresses the role of the spiritual director as implied by these titles and activities is *guidance*: whether he is called father, master, or confessor or whether he is teaching, evaluating, training, or supporting his directees, the spiritual director is essentially a *guide* who leads persons along the dark and difficult road of mortification, theological virtue, and contemplation leading to union with God through love<sup>20</sup>. As a guide, the spiritual director's unique contribution is the interpersonal relationship he forms with the directee, for in this relationship the directee gains instruction, discernment, and support for the spiritual journey, benefits not found in other forms of spiritual guidance such as spiritual reading or self-guidance relying on faith and reason alone.

As a role model for this ministry, a spiritual director may look with profit to Jesus Christ. Saint John maintains that God gave Jesus to mankind as a brother, companion, and master. Similarly, a spiritual director is a brother or sister to the directee in their common sharing of human nature, a companion for the spiritual journey to God, and a teacher of the spiritual life.

To be a spiritual director, one need not be a priest. Although John speaks of confessors (confesores) when discussing spiritual direction, he does not intend thereby to limit this ministry to ordained priests working in sacramental settings: unordained persons with the necessary knowledge, experience, and skill are also capable of guiding others along the road to God<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> In his original Spanish, John seldom uses the term « spiritual director » (director espiritual), an interesting fact in view of today's discussion about the most suitable terminology for the ministry traditionally referred to as spiritual direction. See Adrian van Kaam, « Religious Anthropology — Religious Counseling », *Insight* 4 (Winter 1966): 1-3; Larkin, « Spiritual Direction Today », 204-7; Schneiders, « Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction », 122-4; Cameli, *Spiritual Direction*, p. 6. The English term which probably comes closest to describing John's view of this ministry would be *spiritual guidance*. See my dissertation, pp. 216-21.

<sup>21</sup> A, Prologue, 1-9; A 1, 13, 1-11; A 2, 7, 1; 9, 5; 10, 1&4; 11, 1&3; 12, 3-15, 5; 19, 11&14; 22, 5-19; 23, 4; 26, 1; 28, 1; 29, 5; 30, 5-6; A 3, 1, 1; 15, 1-3; 16, 1-2; 17,

— *To fulfill the role of an instrument in God's guidance of persons to divine union through infused contemplation, the spiritual director must possess knowledge, experience, and skill in helping relationships*

a. *Knowledge*

John's theory of spiritual direction maintains that God guides persons to divine union through infused contemplation: therefore, the human director must, first of all, possess a *theology* that accounts for God's communication of Himself to persons, not only indirectly through divine revelation and human reason, but also directly through infused contemplation. The director's theology should also acknowledge God's transcendence and immanence, the divine attributes which require that persons journey to union with God primarily by faith and interior prayer. The director should also be versed in *Sacred Scripture*, understanding both the history of God's guidance of His people (the prototype of all divine guidance) and the various levels of biblical interpretation (which reveal the full meaning — letter and spirit — of the Scriptures)<sup>22</sup>.

Secondly, a director must have a *philosophy of human knowledge* that recognizes a person's capacity to receive God's Self-communication in infused contemplation. Saint John employed the scholastic theory of active and passive intellect to explain, on the one hand, the human person's inability to formulate adequate images or concepts of God, and on the other hand, his innate capacity to receive a general, loving knowledge of God in contemplation. Although a director may not hold a scholastic epistemology, his theory of knowledge should account for a person's capacity to receive God's direct Self-communication. Lacking such a theory, he may fail to understand how to dispose his directee to receive God's guidance in infused contemplation<sup>23</sup>.

Thirdly, the director's knowledge should include a *theology of the spiritual life*. As a systematic ordering of the principles of Christian spirituality, spiritual theology describes: the relationship of God and man in terms of human experience; the development of this relationship through distinct stages, each characterized by

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2; 21, 2; N 1, 4, 7-8; 9, 1-10, 6; N 2, 7, 3; 16, 4-7; 21, 1-12; 22, 2. Cf. F 3, 30-62; *Degrees of Perfection*, 1-17; *Letters*, 10, 12, 14, 15, 19, 28.

<sup>22</sup> A, Prologue, 2; A 2, chaps. 16&17; 19, 1-10; 20, 6; chap. 22; A 3, 2, 3-4; 5, 3; 12, 1-3; 13, 1-5, 15, 1-2. Cf. C, Prol. 1-3; F 3, 30.

<sup>23</sup> A 2, 10, 1-4; 11, 6; 15, 2; 16, 10-11; 23, 1; 29, 7. Cf. C 14&15, 14-15; F 3, 30-35, 44, 48-56.

predictable and recognizable phenomena; the necessity of mortifying inordinate desires and practicing the theological virtues for disposing oneself to be guided by God; and the nature of prayer and contemplation as a dialogue between the human person and God. Familiarity with these principles enables the spiritual director to recognize the major factors in a person's relationship with God and journey to divine union<sup>24</sup>.

Finally, the director should know *psychology*. God guides persons according to the laws of human nature: the more a director understands these laws, the better prepared is he to assist the directee in responding to God's guidance. The following areas of psychology provide especially helpful information to the director for understanding human behavior: sensation, perception, learning, memory, emotion, motivation, human development, personality, and abnormality. Knowing the basic psychological principles in each of these areas prepares a director to appreciate the human factors affecting a person's relationship with God<sup>25</sup>.

#### b. *Experience*

Spiritual direction is guiding persons along the dark and difficult road to union with God. To guide others effectively, a spiritual director must know this road from his own experience of self-denial, faith, and contemplation. In addition to giving the director a firsthand knowledge of the road to divine union, this personal experience prepares him to perceive and judge his directees more accurately and to interact with them more objectively, thus increasing his effectiveness as an instrument of divine guidance. Also, the added experience of guiding others in their journey toward God

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<sup>24</sup> We distinguish here between theology of the spiritual life and « mystical theology », one of John's synonyms for infused contemplation or the experiential knowledge of God acquired through love. A, Prologue, 4-5; A 1, 12, 6-13, 11; A 2, 6, 1-8; A 2, 8, 6; chaps. 12-15; 17, 3-5; A 3, 1, 1; 16, 1; N 1, 1; N 2, 5, 1; 12, 5; 17, 2&6; 18, 5; chaps. 19-21. Cf. C, Prologue, 3; F 1, 18-26; F 3, 31, 43-53, 56. For examples of texts in the theology of spiritual life, see Joseph de Guibert, *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, trans. Paul Barrett (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953), and Antonio Royo and Jordan Aumann, *The Theology of Christian Perfection* (Dubuque, Iowa: Priory Press, 1962).

<sup>25</sup> A, Prologue, 4-7; A 1, chap. 3; A 2, 10, 1-4; 13, 6; 17, 3-4; A 3, 16, 2-6; N 1, 1, 3; 3, 2-3; 4, 2-5; 5, 1; 6, 1-3&5-6; 7, 2-5; 9, 2-3. In response to the question raised by Cameli regarding the « exact background in psychology needed for effective spiritual direction », Saint John of the Cross' answer would undoubtedly be that the background in psychology for a director should be substantial (see Cameli, *Spiritual Direction*, p. 15).

enables the director to observe the infinite variety of ways God leads souls to Himself as well as the infinite variety of human response to His divine guidance. With this experience, the spiritual director is better prepared to walk in faith with each directee, discerning that person's unique road to God as God gradually reveals it to them and helping each one follow faithfully that road to divine union<sup>26</sup>.

### c. *Skill in Helping Relationships*

Because the relationship between the director and directee is the essential characteristic distinguishing spiritual direction from other forms of spiritual guidance, the spiritual director must possess adequate skills for this relationship. These skills presuppose in the director an awareness of: his own humanity as an instrument for guiding others according to reason and faith; the directee's unique individuality and capacity for self-direction; the presence of Jesus in the relationship clarifying and confirming divine truth in the hearts of both the director and directee; the many dynamics in a helping relationship, such as unconscious communication of attitudes, clarification of personal experience through its verbal expression to an attentive listener, resistance, transference, and collusion. Skill in the helping relationship of spiritual direction demands that a director be able: to recognize and handle the dynamic factors as they emerge in his work with a directee; to create an interpersonal climate which enables the directee to relate significant experiences — both positive and negative — on the journey to God; and to communicate to directees a sympathetic understanding of their experiences. With these interpersonal skills, the director makes the helping relationship an effective means for the directee to discern God's guidance<sup>27</sup>.

Knowledge, experience, skill in helping relationships: these three qualities distinguish an effective spiritual director. John recognizes that some Christians may be endowed with other extraordinary gifts and graces, including the biblical charisms of healing, prophecy, and discernment of spirits (1 Cor. 12: 8-11); however, he

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<sup>26</sup> A 1, 8, 1-7; 11, 5-6; A 2, 16, 14; 18, 5-6; 19, 11; 20, 3; 21, 7; 22, 7-16; 26, 14&17; 29, 4; 31, 2; 32, 2; A 3, 19, 3-4&6; 20, 2; 25, 2-6; 26, 4; N 1, 13, 3; 14, 6. Cf. F 3, 30-31, 41, 53, 57-62.

<sup>27</sup> A 2, 5, 10-11; 17, 5; 18, 1-6; 21, 2-3; 22, 5-19; 24, 6; 26, 18; 27, 6; 30, 5; A 3, 25, 7; N 1, 2, 3-4&7; 4, 3&7; 6, 3-4; 7, 3; N 2, 17, 5. Cf. C, Prol., 2; C 26, 7; 29, 3; F 3, 59; *Letters* 8, 10, 15, 19.

does not consider them essential for the ministry of spiritual direction. With the necessary human knowledge, personal experience of the spiritual life, and competence in human relations, one is adequately prepared to serve as God's instrument in His guidance of persons to divine union<sup>28</sup>.

— *A spiritual director's work with a directee differs in each stage of the directee's journey toward union with God*

Throughout the entire journey, the director uses his knowledge, experience, and skills to help the directee surrender entirely to God's guidance; however, the precise helping activities performed by the director differ with each stage of the directee's progress in prayer and the spiritual life.

a. *Beginners*

To prepare beginners to accept God's guidance, the director first clarifies with the directee the goal of the spiritual journey (union with God through love) and the means to this goal (self-denial, theological virtue, and infused contemplation). The director then helps the beginner to center his affectivity entirely on God by letting go of habitual, inordinate attachments to creatures and by enkindling a desire for God through meditative prayer.

Although truly converted to God and sincere in their desire for Him, beginners are nevertheless disordered in their relationship with themselves, with others, and with God as a result of their inordinate attachments and are motivated primarily by the desire for sensory pleasure in their religious activities. These factors cause in a beginner a rationalized resistance to God's guidance, emotional distress and psychological dysfunction, and denial of their true spiritual condition. For these same reasons, a beginner is likely to be hostile, manipulative, dishonest, dependent and sexually aroused in his relationship with the director. The director must recognize these factors when they emerge in a beginner and help him to order all of his behavior according to reason and the demands of true interior devotion. Working with beginners in these ways, the spiritual director prepares them for the passive night of

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<sup>28</sup> A 2, 26, 11-14; A 3, 30, 1-5; 31, 2-9.

sense when God commences to communicate Himself directly to their spirit and to guide them through infused contemplation<sup>29</sup>.

### b. *Passive Night of Sense*

As persons progress in self-denial and meditative prayer, disposing themselves for divine guidance, God soon responds by communicating Himself directly to their spirit, leading them from meditation to contemplation, transforming their motivation from self-love to love of God, and replacing their sins and imperfections with virtue. Although God's communication strengthens a person spiritually, it also produces an intense sensory dryness characterized by three phenomena occurring simultaneously: loss of consolation in both God and creatures, a painful desire to serve God, and an inability to practice discursive meditation. The director's role during this critical transition period is: to recognize these signs when they appear in the directee; to determine whether the phenomena are indeed caused by infused contemplation or by some other cause, such as infidelity or physical and emotional disturbance; to convey an understanding of the phenomena to the directee; to support the directee in the personal trials of this period; and to guide him in the transition from meditative prayer to contemplative prayer. In these ways, the director helps the person through the passive night of sense into the second stage of the spiritual journey, the *via illuminativa* or the stage of proficientes in which God communicates His knowledge and love directly to the person in infused contemplation<sup>30</sup>.

### c. *Proficients*

After leading a person through the purifying night of sense, God brings him into the second stage of the spiritual journey, the stage of proficientes (also called the *via illuminativa*) in which He continues to draw the person closer to divine union through infused contemplation. Almost everyone who begins the spiritual journey in earnest reaches this second stage, although relatively few pass beyond it to perfect union with God in love. Ordinarily lasting some

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<sup>29</sup> A, Prologue, 3; A 1, chaps. 6-14; A 2, 12, 1-5; N 1, 1, 1-3; 2, 3-4; 3, 1-3; 4, 1-7; 6, 1-8; 7, 2-4; 8, 3. Cf. F 3, 32-33.

<sup>30</sup> A 2, 3, 1-5; N 1, 8, 4; 9, 1-9; 10, 2-6; chaps. 12-13. Cf. F 3, 31-38; *Maxims on Love*, 40.

years, this period is one of relative serenity, interior freedom, and spiritual delight, interspersed with brief spiritual trials.

The director's main function in this stage is to encourage the directee's growth in faith, hope, and love, the three virtues which unite the human person to God. By teaching his directees to let go of voluntary attachments to distinct images, concepts, memories, and experiences of God and to direct the affections of the will away from individual objects toward God, the director disposes his directees to receive in contemplation the transforming knowledge and love of the Transcendent God. In his relationship with the directee, the director must also create an interpersonal atmosphere which allows the directee to express freely his spiritual experiences for purposes of clarification and confirmation. Furthermore, the director helps the directee govern his life according to faith and reason which, more than extraordinary religious experiences, are the ordinary lights for discerning God's will in daily activities. And finally, the director encourages his directee to pray with greater interiority, depending less upon external devotional objects and images and more upon the interior recollection of the entire self — sense and spirit — in God present within. By helping persons to grow in faith, to clarify the meaning of their experiences, to live daily according to faith and reason, and to grow in interior prayer, the director best helps those in the stage of proficient to be led by God to final transformation in love<sup>31</sup>.

#### d. *Passive Night of Spirit*

Before bringing a person to perfect union with Himself, God leads him through a final purification called the passive night of spirit. During this period, God communicates Himself to the person with increased intensity, thereby freeing him from every inordinate attachment to creatures and drawing the powers of his being to be centered firmly in Himself. In this communication, God infuses His own loving Wisdom into the person, filling the human faculties of intellect, memory, and will with divine knowledge and love. This contemplative inflow of God into the human person both purges and illumines the person, with alternating periods both of extreme anguish (when one feels God's absence) and of extreme delight (when

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<sup>31</sup> A 2, 4, 4; chaps. 8&9; A 2, 15, 1-5; chap. 22; 23, 4; 24, 8; A 3, 1, 1-2, 9; 15, 1-2; 16, 1-2; 17, 2; chap. 37-44; N 1, 1, 1; 14, 1; N 2, 1, 1; N 2, 3, 3. Cf. C 29, 1.4; *Sayings of Light and Love*, 19, 41 .

one feels God's presence), until the person is free of every inordinate attachment and ready for perfect union with God in pure love.

Only a relatively few persons undergo this final purification which may last for some time, even years, depending upon the strength of the final attachments that must be uprooted. For these persons, the director performs an important role. Upon recognizing from the intensity of the person's alternating contemplative experiences of inner anguish and delight and the steady increase in his love that the person has left behind the relatively tranquil stage of proficients, the director prepares to support the directee through this transition period to union with God. This support includes: encouraging the directee to continue the practice of interior prayer and the theological virtues which best dispose a person to receive God's communication of loving knowledge; teaching him the nature and the necessity of this purifying night; and providing a sympathetic understanding of his purgative and illuminative experiences. By these means, the director supports the directee through the final purification before reaching perfect union with God in love<sup>32</sup>.

#### e. *The State of Perfection*

After purifying a person of all inordinate attachments in the passive night of spirit, God leads him to the highest stage of the spiritual journey attainable in this life, the state of perfect union with God through love (or the *via unitiva*). This stage begins when the alternating periods of consolation and desolation cease and the person enjoys a habitual, peaceful, joyous awareness of the presence of God. The few persons who attain this union are now entirely centered upon God in pure faith, hope, and love; they are transformed in God and live completely according to the wisdom and love they receive from Him.

Because his union with God is now perfect, the person is guided by God in all his activities. Accordingly, he needs little external guidance from a spiritual director. When the directee is at this highest stage of the spiritual journey, the director must simply recognize the directee's union with God, support the action of God in his life, and not interfere with that action by advice appropriate

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<sup>32</sup> A, Prologue, 4-5; A 1, 1, 3; N 2, 1, 3-5, 1; 7, 3-4; 8, 1-2; 9, 3; 12, 4; 13, 11; 17, 3-6; 18, 3-20, 6; 21, 11-12; 22, 2; 23, 3-4&11-14. Cf. C 6, 1-6; 8, 2; 9, 2; 12, 9; 14&15, 30; 17, 1; F 1, 18-26.

only to an earlier stage of the spiritual journey<sup>33</sup>.

From this brief overview of the stages of the spiritual journey we can see that the spiritual director performs his guidance role in a variety of ways depending upon God's unique action in the directee's life and the directee's stage of progress in the lifelong spiritual journey. In the earlier stages of the journey, when God's Self-communication is less immediate and less intense, the spiritual director takes a more active part in helping the person dispose himself to receive God's guidance in infused contemplation; in the later stages of the journey, when God's Self-communication more directly guides the person, the director assumes a more supportive role in helping the person to respond to the divine guidance received in contemplation.

The various guidance functions provided by the director may, in turn, be reduced to one overall task that applies to each stage of the spiritual journey. At each stage of their spiritual journey, the spiritual director must help persons to imitate Jesus Christ and to live according to His teachings, especially His example and teachings of detachment in sense and spirit for the sake of living according to the will of the Father. In following Jesus's example of Self-emptying, a person best disposes himself to be guided by the same inner Spirit that guided Jesus throughout His life. Jesus, in fact, personifies the entire road (*camino*) to divine union. In conforming one's life to the example and teachings of Jesus, a person gradually empties himself in sense and spirit of inordinate attachments and centers his life entirely upon God, becoming thereby increasingly open to receive the infused loving knowledge of God. In the terminology of Saint John of the Cross, the active nights of sense and spirit are fulfilled in the person's conscious imitation of Jesus Christ; the corresponding passive nights of sense and spirit are experienced by the person as the gradual reception of the Holy Spirit in infused contemplation. To the degree one conforms one's entire life — sense and spirit — to the Self-emptying of Jesus Christ in response to the will of the Father, to that degree is one led interiorly by the Spirit of God; and when one's life is perfectly conformed to Jesus' sensory and spiritual death to Self on the Cross, one is then perfectly quided by the Holy Spirit in all his

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<sup>33</sup> A 2, 5, 1-11; A 2, 26, 1-10; A 3, 14, 1-2; N 2, 3, 3; 9, 4; 18, 4; 20, 4; 21, 2; 24, 1-4; 25, 4. John describes this state of perfect union with God in *The Spiritual Canticle*, chaps. 22-40, and throughout the entire treatise on *The Living Flame of Love*.

activity. At that point, the work of the human spiritual director is virtually at an end<sup>34</sup>.

### Summary

The theory of spiritual direction contained in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night* maintains that God dwelling within the person is the primary spiritual director who guides the person to union with Himself in love. God provides this guidance principally through infused contemplation in which He communicates Himself to the person. The human spiritual director acts as an instrument in this divine guidance by helping the person to surrender completely to God's action in his life. To be an effective instrument in this divine guidance, the human director must have sufficient knowledge, experience, and skill in helping relationships. By means of a human relationship in which the director listens, teaches, advises, discerns, supports, and conveys understanding of the directee's experience, the director guides a person along the dark and difficult road of detachment, faith, and prayer, thus disposing the person to receive from God the unique guidance given in infused contemplation. This lifelong process is perhaps best summarized by saying that the human spiritual director guides a person in the imitation of Jesus Christ which, in turn, best disposes him to receive and be led by the Spirit of Jesus who is given in infused contemplation.

## II. CONTRIBUTIONS OF CARL R. ROGERS

The preceding pages contain eight propositions which synthesize Saint John of the Cross' theory of spiritual direction as found in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night*; let us now turn to the writings of Carl Rogers to determine whether modern therapeutic psychology can enhance the usefulness of this theory. By comparing John with Rogers, can we discover relationships upon which to build an effective theoretical model for guiding practice and research in today's ministry of spiritual direction?

At first glance, Carl Rogers, the twentieth-century American humanistic psychologist, appears to have little in common with

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<sup>34</sup> A 1, 4, 1-6, 4; 13, 3-4; A 2, 5, 5; 7, 1-12; 17, 8; 22, 3-8; 29, 1-2&6&11; 30, 4; A 3, 2, 7-12; 23, 2-4; 35, 5; 36, 3; N 2, 4, 1-2; 7, 3; 17, 2; 20, 4. CE: C 1, 10; 17, 1-9; 35, 5; F 2, 28-30; F 3, 40-42, *Maxims on Love*, 42; *Letters* 6, 21, 22, 23.

John of the Cross, the sixteenth-century Spanish mystic, poet, and priest. However, in comparing their writings one discovers amazing similarities. Both are astute observers of human behavior in others and in themselves. Both rely heavily upon personal experience when speaking of helping relationships. Both attempt to describe systematically the recurring orderliness they discover in their observations and experience. Both posit goals for human life and describe a process leading to these goals. Both attempt to discover and formulate the functional relationships which explain the entire phenomena of personality—its motivating principles, the conditions for its development, its deviation and restoration, its optimal degree of functioning. Despite their many differences, John of the Cross and Carl Rogers possess a scientific bent of mind which enables us to compare their theoretical systems<sup>35</sup>.

But there are important differences. St. John is a priest-poet, Rogers a psychotherapist-scientist. John's world view is built upon Christian faith, Roger's upon philosophical humanism. John's approach to the human person is theological, Rogers' is psychological. John studies the human person using the methods and language of scholastic theology and Christian mysticism, whereas Rogers relies upon the methods and language of modern science. John sees the human person as intrinsically and dynamically related to God in love. Rogers sees the human person primarily as a natural organism in a social environment and attempts to describe the nature and dynamics of human relationships. Although both view the human person as in the process of becoming more fully functioning, John describes this process according to the more structured view of faculty psychology, whereas Rogers employs the less structured view of perceptual psychology. They apply different meanings to the same word, as when John often uses « self » to describe the entire person unrelated to God<sup>36</sup>, while Rogers uses « self » to describe « a conceptual gestalt composed of the perceptions of the 'me' or 'I' »<sup>37</sup>. Rogers places primary emphasis upon a person's experiencing as a source of guidance and values<sup>38</sup>, whereas John

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<sup>35</sup> John's scientific mentality and methodology are discussed in Gabriel, *The Spiritual Director*, pp. 40-66. Rogers' scientific mentality may be seen in « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships » and *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.; Sentry Edition, 1961), pp. 199-224.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, A 2, 4, 5; A 3, 21, 1; 24, 4; 28, 8; 38, 2; N 2, 18, 4; C 9, 5.

<sup>37</sup> « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1838.

<sup>38</sup> *On Becoming a Person*, pp. 23-24; « Toward a Modern Approach to Values: The Valuing Process in the Mature Person », in C. R. Rogers and Barry Stevens, *Person to Person: The Problem of Being Human* (Lafayette, California: Real People Press, 1967), pp. 13-28.

subordinates personal experience to the teachings of Sacred Scripture and the Church as a guide for leading one to union with God<sup>39</sup>. Rogers' theory of knowledge, based on perception, makes no attempt to account for knowledge received in contemplation (i.e., communicated directly by God through love without sensory experience to persons seeking Him in faith). Rogers' primary concern is with knowledge (or personal learnings) gained through organismic experience which depends heavily upon sensory perception, whereas John, while acknowledging the importance of sensory knowledge, is primarily interested in knowledge gained by mystical «unknowing» received passively through infused contemplation. In helping relationships, John stresses the authority of the helper in guiding another to union with God, emphasizing such guidance functions as teaching, advising, and correcting; Rogers, on the other hand, emphasizes the authority implicit in the experiences of the one helped, requiring of the helper that he or she create certain conditions in their relationship which enable the one helped to discover the directive meanings of his experience.

In summary, John and Rogers differ in their world view, their scientific frame of reference, their methodology, their terminology, their theories of personality, the importance they attach to personal experience, their theories of knowledge, and their approach to helping relationships. Underlying these differences is John's view of the human person based upon pastoral ministry, scholastic theology, and mystical experience and Rogers' view based upon clinical and empirical observation of significant interpersonal relationships, especially psychotherapy.

Despite the differences, the psychological theories of Carl Rogers appear relevant to Saint John of the Cross' theory of spiritual direction in key areas which may serve as a foundation for constructing a theoretical model to guide practice and research in contemporary spiritual direction. Rogers has noted the applicability of his theory of psychotherapy for other modes of human relationships such as family life, education, business, and intercultural relations<sup>40</sup>; it appears also to apply to the human relationship called «spiritual direction» where the focus is upon the directee's relationship with the Ultimate conceived as Person.

Because they arise directly from the helping relationship of psychotherapy, Rogers' theories of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relations apply most directly to other helping relationships

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<sup>39</sup> A, Prologue, 1-2; C, Prologue, 4; F, Prologue, 1.

<sup>40</sup> «Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships», pp. 192-94; «Client-Centered Psychotherapy», pp. 184-243.

such as those in social work, academic counseling and guidance, medicine, and indeed, spiritual direction. Rogers' work is particularly relevant for Saint John's theory of spiritual direction, for it adds the results of scientific research to John's naturalistic observation: for example, Rogers' research with the therapeutic conditions that promote positive personal growth enables us to appreciate even more than did John himself the importance of the interpersonal relationship in spiritual direction.

Perhaps the main value of Rogers' theories for St. John of the Cross' theory of spiritual direction is that they are primarily psychological theories derived from clinical experience and research evidence. With as much scientific rigor as possible, Rogers attempts to describe the human organism as he observes it in therapy and research, independent of philosophical and theological presuppositions. His theories attempt to account for the entire complexity of human life on psychological grounds alone. Such a psychological theory enables us to understand better the human person as a natural organism when we consider the human person in relationship with God. If, for example, clinical experience and empirical research demonstrate that under certain interpersonal conditions the human organism acts in certain predictable ways, these findings ought to be taken into account when treating of the human person's journey to union with God, which is the focus of the spiritual direction relationship.

Rogers himself seems in accord with the logic of relating his psychological theories to St. John of the Cross' theory of spiritual direction. Although he confines his own psychological investigations to the operational methods of empirical science, Rogers nonetheless appreciates the possibility of other realities not measurable by present psychological methods<sup>41</sup>, realities which seem to include the vast world of the spirit explored and described by St. John of the Cross. To relate Rogers' theories to John's may not only have valuable implications for the ministry of spiritual direction, but may in turn serve to widen the context of Rogers' client-centered approach and to extend its applications beyond human relationships to facilitating a person's relationship with God.

To relate Rogers' theories to John's, I have examined in detail two writings of Rogers — « A Theory of Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships, as Developed in the Client-Centered Framework » and « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », — which state

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<sup>41</sup> Carl R. Rogers, « Some New Challenges », *American Psychologist* 28 (May 1973): 385-86.

his major psychological theories with scientific economy and precision<sup>42</sup>. In this examination, I ask the heuristic question: What relevance do these theories have for St. John of the Cross' theory of spiritual direction as contained in the *Ascent-Dark Night*? I then establish six areas where I judge a significant relationship exists between Rogers and John and state a guiding hypothesis for investigating this relationship further. Before stating these relationships, however, it will be helpful first to review briefly those Rogerian concepts and theories with the greatest implication for John of the Cross' theory of spiritual direction.

According to Rogers, a human being is endowed from birth with an *actualizing tendency*, an « inherent tendency of the organism to develop all its capacities in ways which serve to maintain or enhance the organism »<sup>43</sup>. When the human organism lives in an environment of *genuineness*, *caring*, and *understanding* provided by other persons, the actualizing tendency moves the organism toward « growth, maturity, life enrichment »<sup>44</sup>. These qualities appear to emerge in an individual as a result of *congruence* or harmony between the *experiencing* of the organism and the concept of *self*. Experiencing is « the process that includes all that is going on within the envelope of the organism which is available to awareness »<sup>45</sup>. The self-concept may be defined as « the organized, consistent conceptual gestalt composed of perceptions of the characteristics of the 'I' or 'me' and the perceptions of the relationships of the 'I' or 'me' » to others and to various aspects of life, together with the values attached to these perceptions »<sup>46</sup>. The concept of self is formed gradually over an individual's entire life history from relationships with persons perceived as important to one's growth and development. When, in adults, the self-concept is congruent or in harmony with one's organismic experience, the individual is viewed as relatively *mature*, *psychologically adjusted*, a *fully functioning person*. On the other hand, when there is a discrepancy between one's experience and self-concept, the individual is seen to some degree as *psychologically maladjusted*, not functioning fully in accord with his inner capacities for growth. This incongruence may, however, be reduced and congruence increased though new inter-

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<sup>42</sup> In my analysis, I also draw from Rogers' other writings to illuminate the theories expressed in these two articles. These other references will be cited in the footnotes.

<sup>43</sup> « Therapy, Personality and Interpersonal Relationships », p. 196.

<sup>44</sup> « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1838.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », p. 200.

personal relationships in which the individual perceives others relating to him with genuineness, caring, and understanding.

In Rogers' view of the human organism, the individual possesses within his actualizing tendency the potential for a constructive direction in life, within his organismic experiencing the potential for reliably guiding behavior, and within the organism itself the potential for forming constructive human values. The individual's potential for self-direction, behavioral guidance, and value formation is ordinarily released through relationships with other persons who experience and communicate to the individual their own genuineness, caring, and understanding.

As we compare these concepts and theories of Rogers with St. John of the Cross, we must recall the different vantage points and linguistic expressions — the differing world views and symbol systems — of these two men. Rogers views human functioning with the eyes of a twentieth-century psychologist, using the methods and language of modern behavioral science. John views human functioning from a sixteenth-century theological perspective, using methods and language appropriate to that view. Although their perspective, method, and language differ, both St. John and Rogers observe the same subject matter — the human organism in the process of becoming fully actualized, more fully a person. Realizing the unity of subject matter, but the differences of perspective, method, and language enables us more easily to compare the scientifically based theories of the one with the theologically based theories of the other. Furthermore, we can more easily specify in the precise psychological terminology of Rogers many of the human processes which John expresses in theological terms. Awareness of the different perspectives, methods, and terminology permits us to see more clearly the practical implications of Rogers' psychological theories for John's theory of spiritual direction.

In the six areas of comparison that follow, Saint John's position is stated first, followed by Rogers'. They are then compared and a hypothesis stated to guide further research. Corollaries related to the hypotheses are also indicated. Following the six areas of relationship between John and Rogers, I describe three areas in which Rogers' writings have special significance for contemporary spiritual direction.

#### a. *Direction from Within*

John of the Cross clearly holds that the primary Spiritual Director in guiding a person to divine union is God present within

the person. With God as the primary Director, the role of the human director is to help persons respond fully to this interior divine guidance<sup>47</sup>.

Rogers maintains as a central hypothesis derived from his experience and research with persons in individual psychotherapy and other forms of interpersonal relationships that the human organism contains within itself the capacity for constructive self-direction. This capacity is inherent in the organism's actualizing tendency and, given an atmosphere of interpersonal genuineness, caring, and understanding, a person will naturally direct his life in personally enriching and socially constructive ways. Consequently, the role of a counselor or psychotherapist is not to teach a person how to direct his life; rather it is to provide through his or her own attitudes of genuineness, caring, and understanding the conditions or the interpersonal climate in which the person's own potential for self-direction may be released<sup>48</sup>.

Both Rogers and St. John agree that guidance for attaining the full realization of a person's life comes primarily from within the person, rather than from outside. As a result, both see the primary role of a helping person such as a psychotherapist or spiritual director is to support and facilitate a reality already present within the person. While both agree that such helping persons play significant roles in fostering the guidance process within the person, whether conceived theologically or psychologically, they also concur that helping persons are instrumental rather than efficient causes of this guidance, their fundamental help being to remove obstacles that inhibit and to create an atmosphere that allows the inner direction process to occur.

Further research is needed to explore the relationship between John's theory of guidance as coming from God substantially present within the person and Roger's theory regarding the capacity for self-direction inherent in the actualizing tendency of the organism. The guiding hypothesis of this research is that God's interior guidance of the person to divine union is experienced psychologically in the human organism's natural tendency to develop all its

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<sup>47</sup> See above, pp. 28-30. Cf. A, Prologue, 3-6.

<sup>48</sup> «Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships», pp. 196-97; «Client-Centered Psychotherapy», p. 1838. See also the following works by Rogers: *On Becoming a Person*, pp. 31-33; *Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1951), pp. 19-64; «The Actualizing Tendency in Relation to 'Motives' and to Consciousness», in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, 1963*, ed. Marshall Jones (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), pp. 1-24; «The Formative Tendency», *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 18 (Winter 1978): 23-26.

capacities. This hypothesis does not limit God's guidance to the actualizing tendency of the organism; however, it does maintain that divine guidance is definitely expressed through it. The hypothesis also expresses John's contention that God guides persons to divine union through the ordinary processes of human nature, especially the light of reason and the laws of human development<sup>49</sup>.

The advantage for the ministry of spiritual direction in exploring this hypothesis would seem to be a better understanding of the essential factors involved in the spiritual director's fulfilling his instrumental role in disposing person to respond more effectively to God's interior guidance. Rogers has discovered in psychotherapy that the antecedent conditions to the self-directing movement of the organism's actualizing tendency are the attitudes of genuineness, caring, and understanding in the therapist. Applying this discovery to spiritual direction, it would appear that these same attitudes in the director would create the conditions most favorable to the directee's discovery of God's guidance within his or her own life. Thus, while John attributes a number of guidance functions to the spiritual director such as advice, counsel, instruction, evaluation, understanding, and compassion, it may be hypothesized on the basis of Rogers' work, that the director's attitudes of genuineness, caring, and understanding are the sufficient and necessary conditions which best dispose a directee to discover and respond to God's inner guidance<sup>50</sup>.

#### b. *The Goal of Direction*

In Saint John, the goal of spiritual direction is a person perfectly united with God through love. This goal in both theological and psychological: it implies not only the perfection of the spiritual faculties of intellect, memory, and will through the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, but also the fulfillment of the whole person. Persons united with God in faith, hope, and love are interiorly free and open, at peace within themselves, esthetically sensitive, perceive reality accurately, enjoy everything, love people, and work efficiently<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> See above, p. 28. Cf. A2, chaps. 17, 21, 22.

<sup>50</sup> See above, pp. 29-31. «Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships», pp. 212-21; cf. «The Actualizing Tendency», pp. 1-24.

<sup>51</sup> See above, pp. 28-29. See also A 3, 16, 6; 20, 1-4; 23, 1-6; 26, 5-7; 29, 2-5; 32, 1-4; N 2, 4, 1-2; N 2, 8, 5; 9, 1-5; 11, 3-4; 13, 11; 14, 2-3; 16, 10; 22, 1.

For Rogers, the goal of psychotherapy is a fully functioning person. This is purely a psychological goal, « the ultimate in the actualization of the human organism »<sup>52</sup>. From his experience in psychotherapy, Rogers has observed that in an interpersonal climate of genuineness, caring, and understanding, the human organism grows in observable and predictable directions, exhibiting « a shift in the quality of life from stasis to process, from structure to fluidity »<sup>53</sup>, a shift away from facades, « oughts », meeting expectations, and pleasing others toward self-direction, complexity of process, openness to experience, acceptance of others and trust of self. This experience led Rogers to formulate the behavioral characteristics of a hypothetical person who has experienced optimal psychological growth. Such a person is one: who is open to his experiencing process and whose experiences are available to conscious awareness and can be accurately symbolized in awareness without defensive denial or distortion; whose self-concept is congruent with his experiencing and thus flexible and able to change with the assimilation of new experience; whose organismic experiencing is both the source of evidence as to values that hold meaning for him and a trustworthy guide for satisfying behavior; who accepts his own experiencing unconditionally independent of the attitude of others; who meets each new situation uniquely and creatively; whose reality testing is effective; who lives harmoniously with others experiencing fully the reward of giving and receiving acceptance<sup>54</sup>.

Thus, St. John and Rogers both have goal-oriented views of human nature guiding their work in helping relationships. From their respective experience in spiritual direction and psychotherapy, both observe the behavioral characteristics of persons who are moving toward these goals. Both realize that these goals are not completely attainable in this life, for at any given point in one's growth a person is capable of further actualization, conceived either theologically or psychologically. Nonetheless, they both observe that the more persons move toward these goals, the more they exhibit the described behaviors.

Further research ought to investigate the relationship between John of the Cross' concept of a person perfectly united with God through love and Rogers' theory of the fully functioning person, the

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<sup>52</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », p. 234.

<sup>53</sup> « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1836.

<sup>54</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 234-35; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1839; cf. *On Becoming a Person*, pp. 163-96; Carl R. Rogers, *Freedom to Learn: A View of What Education Might Become* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 279-97.

guiding hypothesis being that a person growing in union with God through love will increasingly manifest in behavior the characteristics of a full functioning person.

This research would potentially benefit the ministry of spiritual direction by delineating more precisely than did St. John the behavioral indicators by which a director might discern a directee's growth in union with God. One cannot measure directly the degree of faith, hope, and love present in the intellect, will, and memory; however, one can observe directly in a person's behavior the above stated qualities noted by Rogers as characteristic of a fully functioning person. On the basis of this observation, a director might more confidently conclude to the directee's growth in union with God. This research would also help to provide specific behavioral referents or operational definitions to such traditional words in Christian spirituality as « sanctity », « holiness », and « perfection », thus removing from them much of their present ambiguity and rendering them more understandable to presentday Christians. Finally, this research would assure spiritual directors that helping persons toward union with God is simultaneously helping them become more fully functioning persons.

c. *Self-Experience-Congruence/Incongruence: Explanatory Concepts In Spiritual Direction*

Saint John explains human behavior by a person's relationship to God. When one centers his entire being — faculties, appetites, emotions — in God, one's life is well-ordered, productive, and rewarding; when one inordinately invests the energies of his being in objects other than God, the result is personal disorder. For John, human well-being depends upon one's conscious relationship with God<sup>55</sup>.

Rogers explains human behavior by the degree of congruence existing between a person's self-concept and his organismic experience. When one's experiencing process is in harmony with the self-concept, a person is well-adjusted psychologically and moving toward full functioning; when there is discrepancy between the experiencing of the organism and the concept of self, a person is in some degree psychologically maladjusted and becoming dysfunctional. For Rogers, human wellbeing depends upon the degree of congruence between self and experience<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> For example, see A3, chaps. 16-45.

<sup>56</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 203-7; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », pp. 1838-39.

Thus, St. John and Rogers explain human behavior by functional relationships. In John, human well-being is a function of one's relationship to God; in Rogers, of the degree of congruence present in the organism between the concept of self and the experiencing process. Rogers' functional relationships are stated more explicitly, in scientific and psychological terms; John's are expressed more implicitly, in scholastic and theological terminology<sup>57</sup>. Yet, their approaches are related; for behavioral problems which John attributes to disordered appetites, the influence of the devil, inordinately seeking joy in objects other than God, and the seven capital vices<sup>58</sup> can be explained phenomenologically by Rogers as arising from incongruence or a discrepancy between « the self as perceived, and the actual experience of the organism »<sup>59</sup>, leaving the person observably tense, vulnerable, threatened, defensive, rigid, and psychologically maladjusted.

Future research should explore the implications of Rogers' self-experience-congruence/incongruence model for St. John's theory of spiritual direction. The guiding hypothesis of this research would be that the behavioral phenomena associated with the spiritual life and the practice of spiritual direction described by St. John can be explained phenomenologically by the degree of congruence existing between a person's self-concept and his experiencing organism. The benefit of this research would be to provide spiritual directors with new conceptual tools for understanding the behavior of their directees and the optimal response to that behavior.

Consider, for example, John's description of the imperfections of beginners in the spiritual life and his advice to spiritual directors for dealing with them. Writing in Book One of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* where he deals primarily, though not exclusively, with beginners, John states that disordered appetites leave a person « unhappy ... with himself, ... cold toward his neighbors, ... sluggish and slothful in the things of God »<sup>60</sup>. To help persons overcome these evils, John gives this advice to spiritual directors:

...The chief concern of spiritual directors with their penitents is the immediate mortification of every appetite. The directors should make them remain empty of what they desire so as to liberate them from so much misery<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », p. 220. In John, see A 3, 16, 4 for an example of his statement of a functional relationship.

<sup>58</sup> See A1, chaps. 6-12; A 2, chaps. 11&21; A 3, chaps. 4&10; N 1, chaps. 2-7; N 2, chap. 23.

<sup>59</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », p. 203.

<sup>60</sup> A 1, 10, 4.

<sup>61</sup> A 1, 12, 6.

As expressed, this advice is difficult for a director today to interpret and follow. First, what precisely does the phrase « every appetite » mean? In today's idiom, the word appetite does not convey the exact meaning given to it by Saint John. Even if we interpret appetite to mean, as it did for John, habitual, voluntary, inordinate attachments of the will to objects other than God<sup>62</sup>, a second question arises: how does the director bring about the « immediate mortification » of these attachments in his directee? By advice? Command? Instruction? Prescribing ascetical exercises? A reliable procedure for mortifying appetites in another is not given. Thus, John's advice, as stated, provides little light for today's director in understanding the condition of beginners and helping them overcome the effects of disordered appetites.

However, with the help of Roger's self-experience-congruence/incongruence theory, the director can more readily understand the behavior of beginners and his most effective response to it. Persons who are unhappy with themselves, cold toward their neighbors, and spiritually sluggish are clearly in a state of incongruence, their self-concept out of harmony with their organismic experience. This incongruence can be seen in the beginners who suffer from spiritual pride described by John in Book One of *The Dark Night*, persons not unlike many seen today by spiritual directors.

Sometimes they minimize their faults, and at other times they become discouraged by them, since they felt they were already saints, and they become impatient and angry with themselves, which is yet another fault<sup>63</sup>.

In these persons, the rationalization, impatience, anger and discouragement observed by the spiritual director arise from a concept of self as being a saint which is too rigid to accommodate the experience of personal fault. Such persons are in a state of incongruence which can be readily observed and understood by the director.

Rogers' congruence model also helps the director to see his role more clearly in assisting beginners. He may be uncertain about how to mortify the appetites of others; but there is no puzzle about how to reduce their incongruence. Rogers' experience and research in psychotherapy have revealed that incongruence in a client is best relieved through a relationship with a therapist who is experiencing

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<sup>62</sup> Kavanaugh, « Introduction to the *Ascent-Dark Night* » in *Collected Works*, pp. 48-50.

<sup>63</sup> N 1, 2, 5.

genuineness within himself together with caring and understanding for the client; and who can communicate something of these experiences to the client. In such a relationship, the discrepancy between self and experience decreases and the client moves gradually toward becoming a more fully functioning person.

Similarly, the spiritual director's best approach in helping beginners to overcome their disordered appetites is to provide them with a genuine, caring, and understanding human relationship. According to Rogers, this kind of interpersonal relationship allows an individual to see for himself the factors involved in his own incongruence and to reorganize his self-concept, thus allowing him to move toward greater psychological adjustment. A director, therefore, best mortifies the appetites of a beginner, not by advice or instruction, but by establishing an unthreatening interpersonal climate in which the beginner can become increasingly aware of the causes of his own disordered condition and find within his own natural tendency toward actualization the ways to remedy them. In this regard, Rogers' conclusions about psychotherapy also apply to spiritual direction:

...Psychotherapy is the releasing of an already existing capacity in a potentially competent individual, not the expert manipulation of a more or less passive personality. Philosophically it means that the individual has the capacity to guide, regulate, and control himself, provided only that certain definable conditions exist. Only in the absence of these conditions, and not in any basic sense, is it necessary to provide external control and regulation of the individual<sup>64</sup>.

This position is fundamentally in accord with John's view that persons committed to seeking divine union are by nature capable of following God's guidance without the help of a human spiritual director, although they may be greatly helped by an interpersonal relationship with a human guide<sup>65</sup>.

Rogers' self-experience-congruence/incongruence construct applies not only to beginners, but also to persons at any point on the spiritual journey, including the advanced stages of contemplative prayer. By definition, experience includes whatever is happening in a person at any given moment which is available to awareness. Furthermore, the self is not a rigidly fixed entity, but a fluid and

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<sup>64</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », p. 221.

<sup>65</sup> See above, pp. 29-30.

<sup>66</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 197-200; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1838.

changing conceptual gestalt, capable of continuing alteration as the person becomes aware of new experiences<sup>66</sup>. Thus, as the person's spiritual journey continues, there will always be some degree of congruence or incongruence between the ever new experiencing of the organism and the ever changing concept of self indicating the person's current psycho-spiritual condition.

Two important corollaries flow from using the self-experience-congruence/incongruence relationship in spiritual direction. First, when persons strive for spiritual ideals derived from Sacred Scripture or the history of Christian spirituality, they often apply literally to themselves lessons from Scripture or examples from the saints which are not in harmony with their own organismic experience. If this happens in an exaggerated degree, a person's actualizing tendency becomes bifurcated, with part of one's energy trying to actualize a self-ideal drawn from Scripture and tradition and part trying to meet the needs of the organism which may be at odds with one's conscious desires. Because the person is attempting to actualize a self-ideal not in harmony with experience, he or she is in a state of incongruence<sup>67</sup>. If a director continually reinforces a directee's incongruent strivings after static models of holiness, he more likely fosters estrangement and alienation within the person rather than progress toward union with God in love. Therefore, a director must help his directees adopt models of holiness and self-ideals which are relatively congruent with their organismic experiences.

A second, related corollary involves the interpretation of the word « self » which, aside from its use by Rogers and other modern psychologists, has a prominent place in the New Testament and the literature of Christian spirituality. Jesus insists upon self-denial (*aparnēsasthō heauton*) as a condition for discipleship and the losing or hating one's life or self (*apolesē tēn psychēn autou* — MT; *ho misōn tēn psychēn autou* — JN) in this world as a condition for salvation and eternal life<sup>68</sup>. Inspired by these biblical passages, Christian spiritual writers like St. John of the Cross emphasize self-denial, self-surrender, self-hatred, self-renunciation, and death to self as essential to Christian spirituality<sup>69</sup>. Because a misunderstanding of these terms has serious psychological consequences, a spiritual director often spends considerable effort in helping directees interpret and apply them to their lives. Although a wide range of

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<sup>67</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », p. 203; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », pp. 1838-39.

<sup>68</sup> Mt. 16: 24-26; Mk. 8: 34-33; Lk. 9: 23-26; Jn. 12: 23-25.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, A2, chap. 7; N2, 18, 4.

<sup>69</sup> See above, p. 32, n. 1.

exegetical and devotional interpretation of this terminology already exists<sup>70</sup>, Rogers' self-experience-congruence/incongruence theory provides an insight that is extremely valuable in spiritual direction: for example, death to self or self-surrender may be seen as letting go of rigid self-concepts and self-ideals which are incongruent with one's lived experience. In this interpretation, self-denial involves, not the inflicting of physical or emotional damage upon one's personhood, but rather the surrendering of unrealistic self-concepts which prevent a person from being open to God's guidance as manifested in one's own organismic experience.

#### d. *The Helping Relationship*

In his approach to spiritual direction, John of the Cross stressed the value of the relationship between the director and directee. In theory, John maintained that a person can respond to God's guidance without the help of a human director; indeed, one is better off having no human director than an incompetent one. In practice, however, John encouraged persons to have spiritual directors for the guidance, clarification, confirmation, and support provided by this relationship, enabling them to walk more securely on the road to union with God<sup>71</sup>.

We have already seen the importance Rogers assigns to genuine, caring, understanding interpersonal relationships for fostering a person's growth. In fact, his theory of therapy and personality change, derived from years of experience and research by himself and his colleagues with the helping relationship of psychotherapy, is the heart of his theoretical system, the most scientifically reliable

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<sup>70</sup> See, for example, the following: « Self-denial », *Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia: New Testament*, eds. John E. Steinmuller and Kathryn Sullivan (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1950), p. 582; William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 80, 211, 524, 805 & 901-902; R. S. Barbour, « Self-Surrender », in *Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings and rev. by Frederick C. Grant and H. H. Rowley (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 895; J. O. Hannay, « Self-Denial », in *Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. James Hastings, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1973), pp. 598-99; Robert Koch, « Self-denial », in *Sacramentum Verbi: An Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, ed. Johannes Bauer, vol. 3 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 833-39; R. L. Scheef, Jr., « Self-denial », in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, ed. G. A. Buttrick et al., Vol. 4 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 268; Bruce Vawter, *The Four Gospels: An Introduction* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1967), pp. 200, 304-5.

<sup>71</sup> See above, pp. 29-31.

portion of his theory, and the basis of his many hypotheses regarding personality, interpersonal relationships, the fully functioning person, and various other human activities such as family life, education, group leadership and conflict, and international relations; it is his most significant contribution to modern psychology<sup>72</sup>.

Rogers' theory of therapy hinges on the attitudes of genuineness, caring, and understanding in the therapist. To understand this theory fully, let me first review these qualities to see their significance for personality change and growth in a client.

Genuineness, or congruence, in a therapist means being oneself as fully as possible in the helping relationship. This involves a continual awareness in the therapist of his own organismic experiences, especially his attitudes and feelings, which arise in the course of the relationship and the ability to communicate this awareness to his client when it is appropriate to do so, particularly when the same attitudes and feelings persist in the therapist during his relationship with the client. Genuineness in a therapist is, quite simply, being real with himself and with his client<sup>73</sup>.

Caring, or unconditional positive regard, is an experience within the therapist of unqualified acceptance of the client as a person. Caring means prizing or valuing a client in all his uniqueness with all his strengths and weaknesses, placing no conditions which the client must fulfill to merit the therapist's esteem. Because caring implies respectful, non-possessive, non-romantic love for the client just as he is, it is equivalent to *agape* in the New Testament<sup>74</sup>.

The quality of understanding is an experience by the therapist of the client's inner world of meaning as if it were his own, but without losing the « as if » character of the experience. It is the therapist's ability to see life as the client sees it, from his or her own frame of reference, and to understand accurately and sensitively the experiences and feelings of the client and the meanings he or she attaches to them. Empathic understanding enables the therapist « to get inside of the skin » of his client and to understand his or her subjective world as though it were his own<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 192-94; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », pp. 1832-33.

<sup>73</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 213-15; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », pp. 1835-36; Carl R. Rogers, « The Interpersonal Relationship: The Core of Guidance », in *Person to Person*, pp. 90-92.

<sup>74</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 208-9; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », pp. 1834-35; « The Interpersonal Relationship », pp. 94-96.

<sup>75</sup> « Therapy, Personality and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 210-11; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », pp. 1833-34; « The Interpersonal Relationship », pp. 92-94; Carl R. Rogers, « Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being », *The Counseling Psychologist* 5 (1975): 2-10.

For therapeutic growth to take place in a client, these qualities of genuineness, caring, and understanding must be real organismic experiences of the therapist; they cannot be pretended or imagined. For the therapist to experience threat and discomfort in a helping relationship and be aware only of acceptance and understanding is to be incongruent in his relationship with the client; to act as though he prizes a client when he is aware only of deep antipathy or to believe he understands a client when he has merely formulated a diagnosis of him is for the therapist neither an experience of unconditional positive regard for the client nor an experience of empathic understanding of the client's inner world. Under these conditions, where there is little or no experience in the therapist of congruence, caring or understanding, it is unlikely that therapeutic growth will occur in the client <sup>76</sup>.

In addition to the three attitudes of the therapist, therapeutic growth also depends upon certain conditions present in the client: he or she must be both in a state of incongruence and able to perceive the therapist's genuineness, caring, and understanding. Thus, assuming contact between a therapist and client, five conditions are necessary for the therapeutic process to begin — a client in a state of incongruence, a therapist who is genuine or congruent in the relationship and who is experiencing unconditional positive regard for and empathic understanding of the client, and the client's perception of the therapist's attitudes in some degree. These conditions need only be minimally present for the therapeutic process to begin: if they are absent, even though the therapist and client are in contact, no therapeutic growth or constructive personality growth occurs in the client <sup>77</sup>.

When these five conditions are met, an observable process — the process of therapy — naturally begins within the client. There are many elements in this process, but the following are the most characteristic. The client becomes increasingly free in expressing his feelings which gradually refer more to the self than to the non-self. He begins to differentiate more accurately between his feelings and perceptions and their objects and his experiencing becomes more accurately symbolized in awareness. He begins to recognize the discrepancy between his immediate experiencing and his self-concept and to experience fully this discrepancy in awareness. His self-concept begins to change and

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<sup>76</sup> «Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships», pp. 213-215; «The Interpersonal Relationship», p. 92.

<sup>77</sup> «Theory of Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships», pp. 213-15; «Client-Centered Psychotherapy», p. 1839.

become reorganized to assimilate previously denied experiences. He recognizes that the structures by which he has guided his life are neither fixed nor outside himself, but within himself, the product of his own making and subject to his change. His defensiveness decreases. His self-concept becomes more congruent with his experience, leaving him less threatened, more able to receive the therapist's unconditional positive regard, and more free and open in his relationships with others. Increasingly, he comes to regard himself as the locus of evaluation, the source of his valuing process, reacting to his experience less according to conditions of worth imposed by others and more according to his own organismic valuing process<sup>78</sup>.

As this therapeutic process continues, certain relatively permanent outcomes are predictable in the personality and behavior of the client, outcomes which are implicit in the process itself. The main result is a greater degree of congruence between the client's experiencing process and his self-concept. But being more congruent, the client is also more open to his experience, less defensive, more realistic in his perceptions, more effective in problem solving, better adjusted psychologically, and less vulnerable to threat. His ideal self is more congruent with his self, more realistic, more achievable. He is less tense and anxious. His self-esteem is increased. He perceives the locus of evaluation to be within himself, feels more confident and self-directing, and his values are determined by his own organismic valuing process. He perceives others more accurately and realistically and experiences more acceptance from them. He is perceived by others as more mature. His behavior is more creative, more uniquely adaptive to each new situation and problem, and more fully expressive of his own purposes and values<sup>79</sup>.

In describing the conditions, process, and outcomes of psychotherapy, Rogers follows an *if-then* scientific procedure. *If* the operationally definable conditions for therapy exist (independent variables), *then* a process of therapy with certain characteristic elements (dependent variable) naturally follows; and *if* this process (now the independent variable) occurs, *then* certain outcomes in personality and behavior (dependent variables) will be observed. Rogers thus proposes a field theory of therapy, rather than a genetic theory. His theory posits no intervening variables and makes no attempt to explain why, under certain conditions, a process begins which has a predictable outcome. The theory states only that if A (the condi-

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<sup>78</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 216-17; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1839.

<sup>79</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 218-20; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1839.

tions for therapy) exists, then B (the process of therapy) and C (the outcomes in personality and behavior) will follow. « B and C are measurable events, predicted by A ». Moreover, speaking in terms of functional relationships, Rogers states:

The greater the degree of the conditions specified in A, the more marked or more extensive will be the process changes in B, and the greater or more extensive the outcome changes specified in C. Putting this in more general terms, the greater the degree of anxiety in the client, congruence in the therapist in the relationship, acceptance and empathy experienced by the therapist, and recognition by the client of these elements, the deeper will be the process of therapy, and the greater the extent of the personality and behavioral change<sup>80</sup>.

Although Rogers formulated his theory of therapy primarily from his experience in individual psychotherapy, he maintains that his discovery of the conditions necessary for constructive personal growth applies « in a wide variety of of professional work involving relationships with people — whether as a psychotherapist, teacher, religious worker, guidance counselor, social worker, clinical psychologist »<sup>81</sup>. Indeed, his theory has special relevance for the ministry of spiritual direction and future research ought especially to explore the significance of Rogers' work for elucidating John of the Cross' observations concerning the human relationship in spiritual direction. The guiding hypothesis of this research would be that to the degree a spiritual director can bring genuineness, caring, and understanding to his relationship with a directee, to that degree does the director fulfill his role as a human instrument in God's guidance of a person to divine union.

This hypothesis holds that the director's qualities of genuineness, caring, and understanding are important for helping persons at every stage of the journey to God. We have already seen how they facilitate the growth of beginners; let us now see their relevance for those experiencing both the purgative and illuminative effects of contemplation in the higher stages of the spiritual journey.

When describing the painful effects of purgative contemplation, John explains that a person undergoes excruciating interior suffering due to the pain of true self-knowledge and the fear that this pain will last forever. When one is in this condition, the advice and

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<sup>80</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 212, 217, 220; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1838.

<sup>81</sup> « The Interpersonal Relationship », p. 89.

reassurance of spiritual directors only aggravate the person's suffering, for « he believes his directors say these things because they do not understand him and do not see what he sees and feels (*parecele que, como ellos no ven lo que ella ve y siente, no la entendiendo dicen aquello*) »<sup>82</sup>. Instead of giving advice or reassurances, directors should rather, in John's opinion, recognize that this is

a period for leaving these persons alone in the purgation God is working in them, a time to give comfort and encouragement (*consolidándolas y animándolas*) that they might endure this suffering as long as God wills, for until then, no remedy — whatever the soul does, or the confessor says — is adequate<sup>83</sup>.

Analyzing this condition in light of Rogers' theory, we can see that one of the main causes of the person's distress is precisely his perception that his spiritual directors do not experience an empathic understanding of his inner world, that « they do not understand him and do not see what he sees and feels »<sup>84</sup>. Whereas, when one perceives that a director does understand something of his world as though it were also the director's, the person is not only supported in enduring the trials of this period, but also enabled to explore the personal meanings which these threatening experiences have for him. Clearly, a director's empathic understanding is of greater value to a directee in the throes of purgative contemplation than advice and reassurance.

Likewise, with persons experiencing illuminative contemplation, John encourages them to express their contemplative experiences to their directors for the purpose of clarification and confirmation. However, because these experiences are deeply spiritual, received without word or sensory image, they are difficult to express in ordinary language. The effort to do so often ends in vague generalities<sup>85</sup>. Yet, applying the discoveries of Rogers regarding empathy, even the person's perception of the director's attempt to understand these experiences as though they were his own is an incentive for trying to put these ineffable experiences into words<sup>86</sup>.

Thus, in cases involving both purgative and illuminative contemplation, the director's most important asset is the ability to understand empathically and accurately persons with these experien-

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<sup>82</sup> N 2, 7, 3.

<sup>83</sup> A, Prol., 5.

<sup>84</sup> N2, 7, 3.

<sup>85</sup> N2, 17, 2-5.

<sup>86</sup> « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », pp. 1833-34; « The Interpersonal Relationship », p. 93.

ces. This quality enables the director to be an effective instrument of God's guidance even in the presence of God's direct self-communication to persons, for his empathic understanding enables persons to explore the personal meanings contained in these contemplative experiences and derive for themselves the divine guidance implicit in them. Assuming also the characteristic of genuineness and caring, it is especially the director's ability to understand empathically the directee's experiences that enables him to be at every stage of the journey to God the directee's confident companion in his or her inner world<sup>87</sup>.

In researching the relationship between the necessary and sufficient conditions for therapy spelled out by Rogers and John's view of the helping relationship in spiritual direction, special attention must be paid to these conditions precisely as they apply to the ministry of spiritual direction, where the focus is primarily upon growth in the person's relationship with God and only secondarily upon constructive personality and behavioral change<sup>88</sup>. How, for example, do we understand the condition of client anxiety or incongruence in one committed to seeking union with God? Is this condition fulfilled by the incongruence found in beginners arising from disordered appetites or by the temporary incongruence found in more advanced contemplatives resulting from purgative and illuminative experiences of God? Or again, what is the relationship between therapist genuineness or congruence and John's insistence upon personal experience in the spiritual life as a necessary condition for giving spiritual direction?<sup>89</sup> Does the quality of genuineness include those instances where John expects the director to be directive and confrontative with the directee?<sup>90</sup> Does experience in the spiritual life enable the director to perceive more accurately and without distortion the behavior of his directee?<sup>91</sup> Or again, is the condition of empathic understanding able to be completely realized in a director when it involves the deeply spiritual and ineffable contemplative experiences of another? And, assuming that such an experience of empathic understanding is possible, how does a director best communicate his understanding of these experiences which transcend both sense and intellection to one advanced in the con-

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<sup>87</sup> « Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being », 2-9. For a discussion of the director as a companion, see James G. McCready, « Spiritual Direction As Pilgrim and Companion », *Review for Religious*, 36 (May 1977): 425-33.

<sup>88</sup> See above, pp. 29-31.

<sup>89</sup> See above, p. 32-33.

<sup>90</sup> See above, p. 30-31. Cf. also A 2, 22, 19; N 1, 2, 3.

<sup>91</sup> See above, p. 32-33.

templative life? These and similar questions, arising from John's understanding of a person's relationship with God, must be asked when investigating the relevance of Rogers' theory of therapy for John's view of the helping relationship in spiritual direction.

Several important corollaries, each in turn requiring further research, seem logically to follow from applying Rogers' theory of therapy to the helping relationship of spiritual direction. First, although John uses various images in referring to spiritual direction — a father-son, master-disciple, confessor-penitent, or a guidance relationship — the director's abiding concern, however he prefers to imagine or describe his work, must be to create an interpersonal atmosphere of genuineness, caring, and understanding, for these are the necessary conditions for promoting personal growth in another. There is no one model which best characterizes the spiritual direction relationship. A director may view his role as that of a spiritual father, a teacher, a guide, a confessor, or in any way he chooses; however, his effectiveness as a human instrument in God's guidance of a person to divine union always depends upon the degree of genuineness, caring, and understanding he brings to his relationship with the directee.

Secondly, John saw knowledge, experience and skill in helping relationships as the necessary qualities for an effective spiritual director<sup>92</sup>. All three contribute to the work of direction, but the most essential is the director's skill in interpersonal relationships. Without this skill, knowledge and experience are of limited value in helping others to dispose themselves for God's guidance in contemplation; whereas the ability to form genuine, caring, and understanding relationships enables others to grow in their relationship with God, even though the director himself lacks extensive knowledge and experience of the spiritual life. In psychotherapy, Rogers views the quality of the therapist's relationship with the client to be more determinative of the client's personal growth than the director's scholarly knowledge, professional training, and therapeutic orientation and techniques<sup>93</sup>. Similarly, in spiritual direction: the various activities of teaching, advising, instructing, discerning, and evaluating, which John sees as arising out of the director's knowledge and experience, facilitate the directee's spiritual growth only to the extent that the director has an honest, caring, and understanding relationship with the directee.

The third corollary pertains to the distinction between spiritual

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<sup>92</sup> See above, pp. 31-34.

<sup>93</sup> « The Interpersonal Relationship », pp. 89-90.

direction and psychotherapy. In theory, real distinctions can easily be drawn between these two helping modes on the basis of the purpose, goals, subject matter, and setting of each; in practice, however, it does not appear necessary to insist too strongly on these distinctions. According to Rogers' theory of therapy, both psychotherapy and spiritual direction depend for their success primarily upon the attitudinal ingredients of the helping person, ingredients he describes under the headings of genuineness, caring, and understanding. Since these ingredients may be found as readily in a spiritual director as in a psychotherapist, spiritual direction can begin with any person who desires to improve his or her relationship with God, even though the person may be at a point on the continuum of human behavior which causes others to judge him or her to be « neurotic », incapable of spiritual growth, and in need of referral to psychotherapy. However, the degree of incongruence described by John in beginners who have made a sincere conversion to God and who therefore are normal candidates for spiritual direction appears no less severe than in those described by Rogers who seek help in psychotherapy. Moreover, in both psychotherapy and spiritual direction, the primary concern for the helping person is to create an interpersonal climate characterized by genuineness, caring, and understanding. If this climate is established, then a process naturally begins in the person seeking help that has as its predicted outcome both the reduction of incongruence and continued personal growth, both psychological and spiritual. Thus, the primary concern for a spiritual director in his initial encounters with a directee is not whether the person is a candidate for psychotherapy or for spiritual direction judged by some arbitrary set of external criteria, but whether he as a helping person can form with the person a working relationship that is honest, caring, and understanding. If such a relationship can be established, then both spiritual and psychological growth can be predicted for the directee; if not, it is doubtful if any constructive change will occur. In the latter case, the director ought to refer the person to another helper, not because the person is more appropriately a candidate for psychotherapy, but because the director is unable to establish a growth producing relationship with the person.

Fourthly, Rogers asserts that if certain conditions exist in a helping relationship, certain positive changes may be predicted in a client, including a more positive self-image<sup>94</sup>. To this prediction we may also add, based on limited observations in spiritual direc-

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<sup>94</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 212-20; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1839.

tion, that as a person's image of self changes in a positive direction, the person's image of God will also change in a positive direction, normally from a long-held concept of a rigid and condemning God to an image of God as more accepting and forgiving. Thus, it appears that positive changes in one's view of God are related to positive changes in one's self-concept, and that both changes are an effect of a helping relationship that is characterized by genuineness, caring, and understanding.

*e. Experience: The Subject Matter of Spiritual Direction*

For St. John of the Cross, the subject matter or focus of the spiritual direction relationship is the total experience of the directee, insofar as this experience manifests the directee's relationship with God. Experience includes thoughts, volitions, memories, fantasies, sensations, appetites or desires, emotions or passions, feelings, and purely spiritual phenomena involving neither sensory nor cognitive processes. These psychological experiences reveal the actual state of a person's unique relationship with God and the particular way God is guiding that person<sup>95</sup>.

Experience is also an important concept for Rogers. In his theory, experience means « all that is going on within the envelope of the organism at any given moment which is potentially available to awareness »<sup>96</sup>. It is primarily a psychological term, including: all that is immediately present in a person's conscious awareness as well as events of which the person is not immediately conscious, but whose effects are available to awareness; the impact of sensory phenomena, even when these are not the focus of attention; and the effects of memories and past events. In Rogers' system, experience does not include purely physiological events such as neuron discharges or changes in blood sugar, « because these are not directly available to awareness »<sup>97</sup>.

Experience refers to the « here and now », to what is happening in the present moment of a person's life rather than to the sum total of past events. Experience implies process, the ebb and flow of whatever is occurring within a person at any given moment of his life. Rogers often uses the verbal form « experiencing » to capture the here-and-now, process quality of this concept<sup>98</sup>.

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<sup>95</sup> See above, p. 30. See also, A 1, chaps. 6-12; A 2, 4, 4; 10, 1-4; A 3, 16, 1-6; N 1, 7, 1; 9, 1-9; 13, 10; N 2, 7, 7; 16, 3.

<sup>96</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », p. 197.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., pp. 197-98; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », pp. 1838-39.

An important element in the experiencing process is « feeling », described by Rogers as « an emotionally tinged experience, together with its personal meaning »<sup>99</sup>. Feelings contain both emotional and cognitive components. Feelings are not haphazard psychological events without personal consequence; rather, they are significant clues leading to the discovery of meaning and direction in one's life.

In Rogers' theory, the natural capacity for self-direction inherent in a person's actualizing tendency is directly related to the experiencing process and the meanings implicit in feelings. With growth, persons gradually rely less upon external guides such as parents and teachers for direction and more upon their own experiencing. Indeed, one of the positive changes resulting from successful psychotherapy is that a person comes « to regard his experiencing as positive, constructive, and a useful guide »<sup>100</sup>.

Experiencing is a source, not only of guidance, but of personal values as well. As persons mature, their values emerge more from within, from an organismic valuing process rooted in experiencing, rather than from external sources; from reference to the experiencing of one's organism, rather than to outside authority<sup>101</sup>. Experience for Rogers is thus the ultimate source of personal meaning, guidance, and values.

Future research should explore the implications of Rogers' concept of experience for John's theory of spiritual direction. The main hypothesis in this research would be that God present within the human person guides the person to union with Himself principally through the person's experience. As a person becomes increasingly aware of his experiencing process and especially the personal meanings implicit in his feelings, he becomes more attuned to God's guidance in his life. Accordingly, the human spiritual director fulfills his role as an instrument of God's guidance by assisting the directee to discover the personal meanings implicit in his or her experiencing process, for these meanings reveal God's unique guidance of the directee, the way in which He guides one person to divine union differently from every other person.

This hypothesis does not posit the experiencing process as the only reliable source of divine guidance. Differing notably on this point from Rogers, who maintains that the person's inner experiencing is the primary source of personal direction and values, John holds that Sacred Scripture, Church teachings, and the judgment of competent

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<sup>99</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », p. 198.

<sup>100</sup> « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1839.

<sup>101</sup> « Toward a Modern Approach to Values », pp. 13-28.

persons are also principal sources of guidance<sup>102</sup>. However, this hypothesis does imply that behavioral norms arising from these external sources become meaningfully directive in individual persons only to the degree that they are verified in the person's experience. According to John, God's direction of a person to divine union is always away from what is most exterior toward what is most interior<sup>103</sup>. For example, the Gospel admonition to self-denial becomes personally directive only when one experiences the exhilarating inner freedom that comes with saying « no » to one's inordinate appetites. Or again, persons begin to live more in the darkness of faith only as they experience the personal rewards of relying solely on the Word of God and His providence. As the experience of Israel with God which is recorded in Sacred Scripture and the Christian interpretation of that experience become validated anew in the experience of the individual Christian believer, Scripture and tradition become living sources of guidance, not dead words or external moralism.

A first corollary of this research is the definition and extension of experience when used in discussing the theories of St. John of the Cross. Experience may be defined as any activity or subjective state of the person, regardless of its origin. It thus includes not only all the organismic, visceral, psycho-physiological events denoted by Rogers' concept of experiencing, but also those mystical experiences which involve only the spiritual part of a person and are independent of sensory activity, yet are significant and often determinative human events. Experience in St. John includes all human knowledge — active or passive, ordinary or extraordinary, natural or supernatural — regardless of origin. And experience includes faith which although not originating in organismic experiencing is always a human activity available to awareness and for discussion in the spiritual direction dialogue. Thus, the value of the term experience is that it can be used to include all that is happening in the human person, regardless of origin.

As a second corollary, it appears unwise to limit arbitrarily the subject matter of the spiritual direction dialogue, as, for example, to a discussion of the directee's prayer or progress in faith, hope, and love. In theory, growth in one's relationship with God is intrinsically related to prayer and the theological virtues; in practice, however, prayer and theological virtue can never be separated from one's experience and behavior<sup>104</sup>. Spiritual direction's abiding concern is the directee's relationship with God, a God who is known

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<sup>102</sup> A, Prologue, 2; C, Prologue, 4; F, Prologue, 1.

<sup>103</sup> A 2, 17, 4.

<sup>104</sup> For example, see N 2, 7, 7.

more through experience (*sentir*) than through conceptual knowledge (*entender*)<sup>105</sup>. Because this relationship is manifested in the person's experience, any sensory or spiritual experience of the person — any thought, feeling, desire, emotion, or purely spiritual movement — may reveal the nature or quality of this relationship, where one is in the journey to divine union, or how God is presently acting in one's life. Since the major variables in the spiritual direction process are God, the human person, and their relationship, any experience of God, of self, or of the relationship is potential subject matter for the spiritual direction dialogue.

A third corollary involves the discernment of spirits or the determination of God's will in choosing a particular course of action. If God guides persons through the experiencing process, then this process ought to be consulted in discerning God's will in individual choices. Along with consulting such factors as the Gospel, human reason, the judgment of directors, and the potential growth in one's personal virtue and fervor toward God when considering a practical course of action, one must also clarify the personal meanings present in one's own experiencing process, for these meanings not only constitute « the wisest and most satisfying indication of appropriate behavior »<sup>106</sup>, but they are also a principal means for revealing God's will. In turn, a person is most likely to discover the meanings present in his or her feelings and experiencing in a relationship with an empathic person, for the empathic understanding of another (in this case, a spiritual director) provides the most conducive climate in which to discover the personal meanings implicit in one's total organismic functioning<sup>107</sup>.

A fourth corollary concerns the trustworthiness of human nature. How far can human experience be trusted as a guide to human behavior? Rogers' answer to this question is more optimistic than St. John's. While maintaining that God is present in the human person communicating Himself through the person's experience and that human reason is more reliable in discerning God's will than supernatural revelations, John also holds that in matters of faith and of the spirit the sensory part of human nature (*el sentido*) is often a source of error and little to be trusted<sup>108</sup>. Rogers, on the other hand, though by no means regarding the experiencing process of the organism (roughly equivalent to « sense » in St. John) as infallible, maintains on the basis of thirty years of experience as a

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<sup>105</sup> For example, see C7, 9-10.

<sup>106</sup> « The Actualizing Tendency », p. 18.

<sup>107</sup> « Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being », pp. 2-10.

<sup>108</sup> For example, see A 2, 4, 1-4; 21, 4; N 2, 16, 12.

psychotherapist that the basic nature of the human being is constructive and trustworthy and the organismic valuing process is a source of personally and socially enhancing behavior<sup>109</sup>. In light of Rogers' experience and research, we ought to reevaluate John's position on the untrustworthiness of sense in the life of the spirit to determine whether in his theory of spirituality a development is possible that would permit a greater integration of sense and spirit in the order of behavior, thus enabling persons in their journey to union with God to maintain a « close and confident relationship » with their ongoing organismic process<sup>110</sup>.

#### f. *Growth In Prayer and the Therapeutic Process*

From his perspective as a spiritual director, John of the Cross views the human person's ascent to union with God as a journey in prayer. In the beginning of this journey, one is « unhappy with himself, ... cold toward his neighbors, ... sluggish and slothful in the things of God »<sup>111</sup>: at the end, one is transformed through faith, hope, and love. It is a journey with three distinct and successive stages, the first stage being that of beginners, the second of those making progress in prayer, and the third of those whose prayer is perfect. This prayerful journey leads from meditation to contemplation, from a life centered in the senses to one centered in the spirit. The journey is often dark and disruptive, forcing persons to change in light of new insights into themselves and into God; but these changes also mean profound growth. In the last stage of the journey, purified of inordinate desires for created things and united with God through the loving knowledge that is contemplation, the person transcends human laws and ways and is a « law unto himself »<sup>112</sup>, lives free of social expectations, is open to all creation, loves others, is healed of deeply rooted disorders, and is fully an individual. This journey in prayer thus leads not only theologically to the transformation of the person in God, but also psychologically to the perfection of the human personality<sup>113</sup>.

<sup>109</sup> *Freedom To Learn*, pp. 290-91; « Toward a Modern Approach to Values », pp. 23-28.

<sup>110</sup> « The Actualizing Tendency », p. 20. For a discussion of the need to reinterpret the negative and pessimistic aspects of John's ascetical doctrine, see Marilyn May Mallory, *Christian Mysticism: Transcending Techniques* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum Assen, 1977), pp. 3-10, 20-22, 299-300.

<sup>111</sup> A 1, 10, 4.

<sup>112</sup> « The Sketch of Mount Carmel », in Kavanaugh and Rodriguez, *Collected Works*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>113</sup> N 1, 1, 1; N 2, 3, 1; 6, 4-5; 8, 5; 9, 1; 10, 2; 11, 3-4; 16, 10. See also C. theme, 1-2; C. 28, 7; 29, 7-8. See above, pp. 28-29, 45.

From his perspective as a psychotherapist, Rogers views becoming a fully functioning person as a process that begins with a person who is incongruent, in a state of tension or internal confusion due to the discrepancy between the self-concept and the experience of the organism, and ends with a person who has achieved harmony between self and experience, who is whole, integrated and genuine<sup>114</sup>. This process, involving a relationship with an honest, caring, and understanding person, continues through seven distinct stages, from a « rigid fixity of attitudes and constructs and perceptions, to a changingness and flow in all these respects... from remoteness from experiencing to immediacy of experiencing »<sup>115</sup>. The process is often disruptive as the self reorganizes to incorporate experiences newly admitted to awareness<sup>116</sup>; yet, out of this process emerges a person who is more open to his experience, more accepting of others, more trusting of self, more creative, more « that self which one truly is »<sup>117</sup>.

Although John's viewpoint is theological, centered in prayer, and Rogers' is psychological, centered in the therapeutic relationship, both men have similar views of a person's progress toward the goal they each posit for human life. Both see this progress as a journey or process with recognizable stages of growth, involving periods of inner turmoil, leading from a rigid, conflicted style of living to one that is more existential and effective, the end result being a person who is autonomous, open, caring, and free.

Further research ought to be conducted relating John's view of progress in contemplative prayer to Rogers' theory of the psychotherapeutic process. The guiding hypothesis for this research would be that both contemplative prayer and effective psychotherapy create the necessary psychological climate that enables a person's self-concept to change and broaden so as to incorporate experiences previously denied to awareness, resulting in greater congruence between self and experience and, thus, by hypothesis, a more fully functioning person, a person growing in union with God through love.

This hypothesis implies that prayer itself is primarily an interpersonal relationship, a relationship based on faith between God and the human person (analogous to the relationship between a therapist and client) which enables the person through infused contemplation to see himself more honestly and accurately, to experience himself loved unconditionally and understood in the deepest

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<sup>114</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 203-7.

<sup>115</sup> « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1836.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1836-38; *Freedom to Learn*, pp. 289-90.

<sup>117</sup> *On Becoming a Person*, pp. 163-182.

recesses of his being. As a person in prayer experiences this honesty, caring, and understanding, his self-structure becomes less rigid, more open to the experiencing of the organism, more congruent, more fully functioning, and more open to God's guidance. The key relationship in spiritual direction, then, is not that of the directee with the director, but rather the directee's ongoing, ever-deepening relationship with God that continues through prayer outside of the time spent with the human spiritual director; the directee's relationship with the human director simply supports, confirms, and clarifies through the director's own honesty, caring, and understanding the directee's growing relationship with God.

This hypothesis further implies that the director fulfills his role as an instrument of God's guidance by being a guide in prayer. He teaches persons how to pray, supports them in their efforts to pray, and listens empathically as they describe their experiences in prayer. The director's role is to dispose persons to receive God's self-communication in contemplation, for in this communication God heals persons of their incongruence, makes them more fully functioning, and brings them to union with Himself. Thus, if the director is essentially a guide (the term that comes closest to expressing John's idea of a spiritual director), he is primarily a guide in prayer. Spiritual direction can thus be most appropriately called « prayer counseling »<sup>118</sup>, the spiritual director being an expert in prayer, one who understands it, can teach it to others, and foster its growth in others.

As a first corollary to this hypothesis, it appears that the healing and growth producing factor in both psychotherapy and contemplative prayer is the knowledge of self gained in these processes. Psychotherapy enables a person to recognize and symbolize in awareness experiences of the organism — anger, hurt, fear, etc., — that previously had been repressed or denied to awareness; as the self-structure expands to incorporate these experiences, the person lives less defensively, more realistically, more existentially. In contemplative prayer, the light of contemplation enables a person to see himself — especially all his inordinate attachments to objects — as he truly is, without distortion. This self-knowledge leads to change as one gradually lets go of the inordinate attachments which cause the distorted view of self. Thus, in both psychotherapy and in contemplative prayer the person's increasing self-knowledge rather than

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<sup>118</sup> Don Goergen, *The Christian Counselor: A Guide to the Art of Spiritual Direction*, tape 2: *Types of Spiritual Direction* (Kansas City, Mo.: NCR Cassettes, n.d.).

the technique of the therapist or spiritual director causes the growth producing change in a person; the therapist and director merely establish a psychological atmosphere that helps this growth producing self-knowledge to occur<sup>119</sup>.

Moreover, in contemplative prayer, this growth producing knowledge also extends to God. In light of God's self communication, a person sees the inadequacy of his own understanding of God and begins to relinquish these inadequate conceptions or images and to relate to God more by unknowing than by knowing, by knowing Him through « what He is not, rather than through what He is »<sup>120</sup>. Thus, in contemplative prayer, not only is one's concept of self continually changing in light of new knowledge about self, but one's conception of God is continually changing, progressing from the known to the unknown, from particular conceptions of God to a general experience of God that transcends human conceptualizations. As a result, a person is less bound to rigid or limited concepts of self and God, more open to change in ways of thinking about existence, less defensive and more open to his experience in all areas of life — the personal, interpersonal, cosmic, and transcendent.

A second corollary to our hypothesis is that Rogers' seven stage process conception of psychotherapy<sup>121</sup> appears useful for discerning a person's growth in contemplative prayer. If it is true, as our hypothesis maintains, that both psychotherapy and contemplative prayer facilitate a change in a person's self-structure that enables one to be more congruent with his experiencing and if in both therapy and contemplation the growth is away from rigidity to openness, from stasis to process, from fixedness to fluidity, then the stages of growth delineated by Rogers for measuring progress in psychotherapy ought also to be useful in assessing growth in contemplative prayer.

*g. Applications: Training, Research, and Contributions to Theology and Psychology*

Up to this point, I have been concerned with establishing subject areas wherein the psychological theories of Carl Rogers might profitably be compared with St. John of the Cross' theory of spiritual direction with a view ultimately of building a theoretical model

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<sup>119</sup> N 1, 12, 2-6; N 2, 5, 5: see also F 1, 19-21.

<sup>120</sup> A 3, 2, 3.

<sup>121</sup> *On Becoming a Person*, pp. 125-59; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », pp. 1836-38.

for guiding practice and research in contemporary spiritual direction. I would now like to comment on the relevance of Rogers' work for the ministry of spiritual direction today in the areas of training, research, and contributions to theological and psychological science.

### *Training*

According to St. John of the Cross, competent spiritual directors should possess knowledge, experience and skill in helping relationships. To be effective, training programs in spiritual direction ought to prepare trainees in each of these three areas. Academic knowledge alone is obviously insufficient preparation for the ministry of spiritual direction: the training of spiritual directors must also provide for experience in the spiritual life and the acquiring of skills in the helping relationship.

For years, training counselors and psychotherapists has been a major concern of Carl Rogers<sup>122</sup>. In his mind, the challenge of counselor education is not to turn out individuals skilled in counseling technique, but rather persons capable of experiencing and communicating their own realness, caring, and empathy. Training should aim primarily at cultivating these human attitudes in prospective counselors and only secondarily at teaching them therapeutic technique.

The growth of spiritual direction as a modern ministry will in part depend upon the wise selection and adequate training of future directors. Based upon theories of both St. John and Carl Rogers, training programs in spiritual direction ought to include at least the following four components: (A) a training atmosphere created by the staff which is conducive to the growth of trainees as persons who are honest, caring, understanding, and able to communicate these attitudes to others; (B) opportunities for personal and spiritual growth experiences, including private prayer and meditation, retreats and spiritual exercises, common worship and litur-

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<sup>122</sup> Rogers' approach to the selection and training of counselors and psychotherapists may be seen in his following writings: *Counseling and Psychotherapy: Newer Concepts in Practice* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1942), 253-58; *Client-Centered Therapy*, pp. 429-78; *On Becoming a Person*, pp. 273-313; *Freedom to Learn*, pp. 101-202; *Carl Rogers on Encounter Groups* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 149-57; *Carl Rogers on Personal Power: Inner Strength and Its Revolutionary Impact* (New York: Dell Publishing Co.; A Delta Book, 1977), pp. 69-89; « The Interpersonal Relationship », pp. 102-3; « Client-Centered Psychotherapy », pp. 1832-33, 1842-43.

gical celebrations, journal keeping, spiritual reading, psychotherapy and/or spiritual direction on an individual and/or group basis; (C) academic studies in theology, Sacred Scripture, spirituality, philosophy, and psychology, concentrating on learnings in these fields which apply to the ministry of spiritual direction; and (D) opportunities to provide spiritual direction for persons desiring guidance in the spiritual life under the supervision of qualified staff members. Training programs built on these foundations should increase the number of directors who are personally, practically, and theoretically qualified to guide others in the spiritual life<sup>123</sup>.

### Research

As noted earlier, John of the Cross and Carl Rogers both evidence a scientific spirit in their respective approaches to the helping relationship and the study of human behavior. Living in an age previous to the development of empirical methodology, John researched the spiritual life as a participant observer, building his theories of spirituality and spiritual direction upon personal introspection and natural observation. Rogers, on the other hand, as a twentieth-century American psychologist, has used empirical procedures extensively in ascertaining the natural order present in helping relationships and in formulating his theories of psychotherapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships. Utilizing such research instruments and methods as analysis of tape recorded therapeutic interviews, rating of interviews by independent judges, Stephenson's Q technique, Rank Pattern Analysis, operational definitions of theoretical constructs, psychological tests, statistical measurement, and research designs involving pre and post therapy evaluation of matched therapy and control groups, Rogers and his colleagues have

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<sup>123</sup> Approaches to selection and training of persons in spiritual direction may be seen in Mauricio Iriciarte, «Una Gran Preocupación de San Juan de la Cruz: la Formación de Los Directores Espirituales», *Manresa* 3 (1942): 302-18; van Kaam, «Religious Anthropology-Religious Counseling», 1-7; Norbert C. Brockman, «Spiritual Direction: Training and Charism», *Sisters Today* 48 (October 1976): 104-9; William A. Barry, «The Centre for Religious Development: An Urban Centre of Spirituality», *The Clergy Review* 62 (April 1977): 146-50; Barry, «The Prior Experience of Spiritual Directors», *Spiritual Life* 23 (Summer, 1977): 84-89; William A. Barry and Mary C. Guy, «The Practice of Supervision in Spiritual Direction», *Review for Religious* 37 November 1978): 834-42. For an evaluative review of current training possibilities in spiritual direction see Alfred C. Hughes, *A Report on Some Centers Offering Professional Training in Spiritual Formation* Brighton, Mass.: St. John's Seminary, n.d.); Religious Formation Conference, «Resources for Personal Growth in Spirituality, Giving Spiritual Direction and Giving Retreats», Washington D.C., February, 1977.

defined many of the significant factors affecting the therapeutic relationship and the process and outcome of psychotherapy and have developed many testable hypotheses regarding personality and interpersonal relationships which have implications for education, family life, group behavior, intercultural conflicts, and other areas of human life where interpersonal relationships are involved. Writing in 1974, Rogers claimed: « No other mode of psychotherapy has been so thoroughly investigated by the methods of empirical research as client-centered therapy »<sup>124</sup>; indeed, this research has greatly increased the effectiveness of the client-centered approach to helping relationships and greatly enhanced our understanding of the nature of psychotherapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships.

While modern psychologists have been developing objective empirical methods and instruments for researching counseling and psychotherapy<sup>125</sup>, spiritual directors investigate their own work relying almost exclusively upon subjective approaches such as introspection and uncontrolled observation used by Saint John in the sixteenth century. Current literature in spiritual direction notes the importance of research<sup>126</sup>, yet reports very little empirical research. The vast majority of studies in spiritual direction today either apply psychological or theological insights to the spiritual direction process or present the results of uncontrolled observation of that process: there are almost no reports of studies using objective empirical methodology<sup>127</sup>.

Admittedly, it is difficult to design empirical research for the spiritual direction process, primarily because the main « variables »

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<sup>124</sup> Client-Centered Psychotherapy », p. 1841. Rogers' approach to research in counseling and psychotherapy may be seen in the following works: Carl R. Rogers and Rosalind F. Dymond, eds., *Psychotherapy and Personality Change: Co-ordinated Research Studies in the Client-Centered Approach* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); Carl R. Rogers et al., *The Therapeutic Relationship and Its Impact: A Study of Psychotherapy with Schizophrenics* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967); *On Becoming a Person*, pp. 197-270; *Carl Rogers on Encounter Groups*, pp. 117-34; Carl R. Rogers, « A Tentative Scale for the Measurement of Process in Psychotherapy », in *Research in Psychotherapy* eds. Eli A. Rubenstein and Morris B. Parloff, Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1962), pp. 96-107; Carl R. Rogers, « A Study of Psychotherapeutic Change in Schizophrenics and Normals: Design and Instrumentation », *Psychiatric Research Reports* 15 (April 1962): 51-60; « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 184-256.

<sup>125</sup> See, for example, American Psychological Association, *Research in Psychotherapy*, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1962-68); Louis A. Gottschalk and Arthur H. Auerbach, eds., *Methods of Research in Psychotherapy* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966); Edward S. Bordin, *Research Strategies in Psychotherapy* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974).

<sup>126</sup> van Kaam, « Religious Anthropology — Religious Counseling » 4-7; Barry, « Centre for Religious Development », 146-50.

in spiritual direction — God dynamically present in human life and the human person considered principally as a spiritual and transcendent being — defy empirical control and measurement. Nevertheless, spiritual direction also implies a human relationship, as amenable to empirical investigation as the counseling or psychotherapeutic relationship. The renewal of spiritual direction as a ministry in the Church today can be greatly enhanced by adapting empirical research methods of psychology to investigate the significant factors affecting the director-directee relationship and the process and outcome of that relationship and to develop testable hypotheses regarding a person's journey to union with God as these emerge within the direction process itself (e.g.; the relation of the director's spiritual life to the progress of the directee, the effects of prayer in a person's daily life, the effects of change in one's self-concept upon one's understanding of God and growth in faith, etc.). If, like Rogers, spiritual directors bring a research attitude to their work and creatively adapt available psychological methods and instruments for use in discovering the significant factors affecting the spiritual direction relationship, their understanding of their work and their effectiveness as instruments in God's guidance of persons to divine union will surely increase.

### *Contributions to Theological and Psychological Science*

John of the Cross was not a professional theologian; yet, as a spiritual director he carefully observed the psychological effects of God's action in persons who consciously strive for divine union. His treatises on the spiritual life indicate that his understanding of the journey to union with God was derived both from personal introspection and from his discoveries in guiding others to God. As modern theological writings testify, John's observations as a spiritual direc-

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<sup>127</sup> For example, see Gregory I. Carlson, « Spiritual Direction and the Paschal Mystery », *Review for Religious* 33 (May 1974): 532-41; William Walsh, « Reality Therapy and Spiritual Direction », *Review for Religious* 35 (1976): 372-85; William J. Connolly, « Noticing Key Interior Facts in the Early Stages of Spiritual Direction », *Review for Religious*, 35 (January 1976): 112-21. Barry and his associates use an empirical approach to spiritual direction, doing research « based on reflection on present experience [in spiritual direction] and on the study of the tradition ». (William A. Barry, « Centre for Religious Development », 146; see also, « Spiritual Direction: the Empirical Approach », *America*, April 24, 1976, pp. 356-58). However, they report no controlled empirical studies. For an example of spiritual direction research employing statistical evaluation of questionnaire data, see Henry J. Simoneaux, *Spiritual Guidance and the Varieties of Character* (New York: Pageant Press, 1956).

tor have contributed greatly to theological science, especially spiritual theology which treats of the person's growth to a perfect Christian life<sup>128</sup>.

Similarly, the major contributions of Carl Rogers to modern psychological science stem primarily from his observations as a psychotherapist<sup>129</sup>. His experience in the interpersonal relationship that is psychotherapy led him to postulate that the therapist's empathic understanding of the client's inner subjective world is not only a necessary condition for the client's growth, but also a valid and fruitful source of knowledge for advancing psychological science. Rogers discovered that when through his own genuineness, caring, and understanding he is able to provide a non-threatening climate for his client, the client experiences the freedom to explore, discover, and describe his or her own inner world — experiencing, feelings, perceptions of self, goals, beliefs, attitudes, values, motives, etc., — which previously had been largely hidden from the client's conscious awareness. By translating his client's subjective discoveries into operational terms that can be explored by more objective procedures, Rogers paved the way for building his psychological theories of psychotherapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships upon a solid empirical basis. By thus using empathic understanding both as a means of facilitating his client's personal growth in psychotherapy and as a source of scientific information, Rogers has contributed to developing psychology as a truly human science, one not limited to studying only observable external human behavior, but able also to explore the vast inner world of personal meaning<sup>130</sup>.

As John of the Cross and Carl Rogers have both contributed respectively to theology and psychology from their experience in the helping relationship of spiritual direction and psychotherapy, so spiritual directors today and in the future can contribute to the continuing development of both theological and psychological science if, in addition to being companions with persons in their interior

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<sup>128</sup> See, for example, Guibert, *Theology of the Spiritual Life*; Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life: Prelude of Eternal Life*, 2 vols., trans. M. Timothea Doyle (St. Louis: B. Herder Book, Co., 1948); Royo and Aumann, *Theology of Christian Perfection*. St. John's observations have also influenced modern psychological writing as may be seen in Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques* (New York: Viking Press; Compass Edition, 1965), pp. 47-48.

<sup>129</sup> *On Becoming a Person*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>130</sup> Carl R. Rogers, « Toward a Science of the Person », in *Behaviorism and Phenomenology: Contrasting Bases for Modern Psychology*, ed. T. W. Wann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Phoenix Books, 1964), pp. 109-40. See also « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 210-12; *On Becoming a Person*, pp. 199-224.

journey to union with God, they also attempt to share with theologians and psychologists what they observe in persons who make this journey.

Theology, of course, is the perennial « search for an understanding of our relationship to God »<sup>131</sup>. Traditionally, the sources of knowledge about this relationship are divine revelation, Sacred Scripture, the traditions of the Church, and the writings of gifted persons like St. Augustine or St. Teresa of Avila who had profound personal experiences of this relationship. However, the empathic understanding which Rogers has shown to be such a fruitful means of increasing our psychological understanding of the human person emerges also as a valuable source of knowledge for increasing our theological understanding of the human person in relationship to God. Spiritual direction is a window through which theologians can observe how God is experienced by very ordinary people in their daily living.

As hypothesized earlier<sup>132</sup>, a director's empathic understanding of the directee's subjective world is one quality that constitutes an effective spiritual direction relationship. When this quality is present together with a director's genuineness and caring, the directee experiences the freedom to explore, discover, and describe without threat of embarrassment or ridicule perhaps the most intimate of subjective experiences — his or her personal relationship with God. Directors who are companions to persons in this inner discovery are often amazed at both the depth and variety of their experience of God. By formulating their observations in terms comprehensible to theologians, spiritual directors can provide new data and hypotheses that will lead to a richer theological understanding of the human person's relationship with God. These findings when critically evaluated against traditional sources of theological knowledge and the ongoing experience of Christian persons, should prove particularly helpful to theories of prayer<sup>133</sup>, and grace<sup>134</sup>, and divine provi-

<sup>131</sup> John H. Wright, « Is There an American Theology » *Communio: International Catholic Review*, 3 (Summer 1976): 138.

<sup>132</sup> See above, pp. 50-58.

<sup>133</sup> Barry and his colleagues, using an empirical approach to spiritual direction, have discovered the following when systematically asking the question, « What happens when people pray? »: (a) the importance of a contemplative attitude « as the necessary prelude to the kind of prayer that leads to a deeper relationship with the Lord »; (b) the directee gradually becomes more real before God and God becomes more real for the directee; and (c) a heightened (rather than diminished) social consciousness in directees. These discoveries emerging from the spiritual direction relationship are crucially significant for a modern theology of prayer. See Barry, « Spiritual Direction: the Empirical Approach », 356-58, and « Centre for Religious Development », 146-47.

<sup>134</sup> Findings flowing from the interpersonal relationship of spiritual direction are especially relevant to developments in the theology of grace which

dence<sup>135</sup>. Thus, in addition to enabling directors to be more confident guides of persons in their spiritual journey, empathic understanding makes the spiritual direction relationship itself a fruitful source of theological knowledge for an ever deepening understanding of our relationship to God.

Spiritual directors can also contribute to psychological science, especially today in the United States when psychologists are moving beyond the limits of research established earlier by behaviorism and psychoanalysis to investigate the phenomenological, humanistic, existential, and transpersonal aspects of human life. Rogers has long championed this movement: in fact, after 45 years as a clinical psychologist he has challenged his fellow American psychologists to consider « the possibility of another reality (or realities), operating on rules quite different from our well-known commonsense empirical reality, the only one known to most psychologists »<sup>136</sup>.

Spiritual direction is a centuries-old ministry devoted to helping persons live daily in just such a reality, the inner world of human spirit, which might be aptly described in Rogers' own words as

...a lawful reality which is not open to our five senses; a reality in which present, past, and future are intermingled, in which space is not a barrier and time has disappeared; a reality which can be perceived and known only when we are passively receptive, rather than actively bent on knowing<sup>137</sup>.

St. John of the Cross described the laws of this reality with such precision that his writings continue after four centuries to be a reliable handbook for persons who live daily in this world of the

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concerns itself specifically with our relationship with God and which today, without rejecting earlier metaphysical categories, is attempting to formulate this relationship more in personalistic, phenomenological, and psychological terms, often drawing analogies from the work of American psychologists such as Rollo May, Abraham Maslow, and Carl Rogers. See Francis Colborn, « The Theology of Grace », 692-711.

<sup>135</sup> Spiritual Direction, which frequently involves persons in the process of free choice, responsible decision-making, and discerning God's will, can be a rich source of data for theologians who are today attempting to reformulate the theology of divine providence in the light of new biblical interpretations, modern scientific attitudes, and a historical consciousness that views history not simply as « the context for Christian experience », but also as « the process of men and women working out their destiny in interaction with the divine saving presence. ... the progressive creation of humanity by men and women whose freedom is a decisive input into the unfolding of the future ». See Bernard J. Cooke, « American Catholic Theology », *Commonweal*, August 18, 1978, 520-24.

<sup>136</sup> « Some New Challenges », 385.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

spirit<sup>138</sup>. In this world, spiritual directors act as companions and guides for persons in their interior journey to union with God through love, the most fascinating of all transpersonal journeys. If, in addition to being guides and companions, spiritual directors today also attempt to formulate in language comprehensible to modern psychologists what they observe in persons who live in the reality of the spirit, they will contribute significantly to psychology's own exploration of the farthest reaches of human nature, and most especially into such areas as the nature of human consciousness, the mind-body-spirit relationship, behavioral self-control, and the therapeutic effects of prayer, meditation, and contemplation<sup>139</sup>.

Rogers has commented that only a « secure scientist » aims his work toward areas of « greatest mystery »<sup>140</sup>. Yet spiritual directors work daily with the greatest mysteries: the mystery of God, the mystery of the human person, and the mystery of the human person's relationship with God. From the vantage point of their helping relationship with persons consciously living this mysterious relationship with God, spiritual directors who attempt to share their discoveries in this world of the spirit with the world of science will contribute significantly to the advancement of both theology and psychology.

### Summary

This section explores the relevance of Carl R. Rogers' psychological theories of psychotherapy, personality, and interpersonal re-

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<sup>138</sup> John sees the human person as both sense (*el sentido*) and spirit (*el espiritu*). « Sense » in John corresponds roughly to those areas of human life most often treated in modern psychology, while « spirit » corresponds more to the other « reality » to which Rogers refers above. While John recognizes the importance of « sense », the primary focus in his writings is upon « spirit », the other reality.

<sup>139</sup> There is already a growing psychological literature in these areas. See, for example, Robert E. Ornstein, *The Psychology of Consciousness* (New York: Viking Press, 1972); Robert E. Ornstein, ed., *The Nature of Human Consciousness: A Book of Readings* (New York: Viking Press, 1973); Kenneth S. Pope and Jerode L. Singer, *The Stream of Consciousness: Scientific Investigations into the Flow of Human Experience* (New York: Plenum Publishing Co., 1978); Gary E. Schwartz and David Shapiro, eds., *Consciousness and Self-Regulation: Advances in Research and Theory*, 2 vols. (New York: Plenum Publishing Co., 1976&1978); Richard B. Stuart, ed., *Behavioral Self-Management: Strategies, Techniques and Outcome* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1977); Claudio Naranjo and Robert E. Ornstein, *On the Psychology of Meditation* (New York: Viking Press, 1971); William Johnston, *Silent Music: The Science of Meditation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); Herbert Benson, *The Relaxation Response* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1976).

<sup>140</sup> « Some New Challenges », 386.

relationships for the theory of spiritual direction found in Saint John of the Cross' *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night*. After a discussion of the similarities and differences between these two authors, six areas are indicated where the theories of Rogers relate to those of Saint John and hypotheses are stated to guide further examination of these relationships. The six areas are: direction from within, the goal of direction, self-experience-congruence/incongruence as explanatory concepts in spiritual direction, the helping relationship, experience as the subject matter of spiritual direction, and growth in prayer and the therapeutic process. The relevance of Rogers' work is also shown for the contemporary ministry of spiritual direction in the areas of training, research, and contributions to psychological and theological science.

### III. A METHOD OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF MODELS IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

In the preceding section, I elaborated six areas of research in which the psychological theories of Carl R. Rogers appear to relate to St. John of the Cross' theory of spiritual direction as contained in the *Ascent-Dark Night* and stated hypotheses which might serve as the bases for exploring these relationships further. It remains now to enumerate the steps necessary to carry forth this research with a view to formulating a theoretical framework or model to guide practice and research in spiritual direction.

#### — *Analysis and synthesis of the theory of spiritual direction in the collected writings of St. John of the Cross*

Following a method drawn from biblical theology for analyzing and synthesizing themes or teachings in religious writings, I analyzed St. John of the Cross' *The Ascent of Mount Carmel-The Dark Night* to discover both its explicit and implicit teachings on spiritual direction. I then synthesized these teachings into eight statements and arranged them in a logical order suggested by the teachings themselves. As presented in Part One of this article, these logically arranged statements express St. John's theory of spiritual direction in the *Ascent-Dark Night*.

Future research must now extend this method to all the writings of Saint John, first analyzing their content for both the explicit

and implicit teachings on spiritual direction and then synthesizing these teachings into statements which are arranged according to a logic suggested by the teachings themselves. This final synthetic statement would represent the complete theory of spiritual direction as found in all the writings of St. John <sup>141</sup>.

— *Heuristic analysis of collected writings of Carl Rogers*

To arrive at the six areas stated above in Part Two in which Rogers' theories appear related to St. John's, I carefully examined two writings of Rogers' — « A Theory of Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships, as Developed in the Client-Centered Framework » and « Client-Centered Psychotherapy » — which rigorously and economically express the essential components of his psychological theories, asking one heuristic question: What relevance do these theories derived from Rogers' clinical experience and empirical research have for St. John's theory of spiritual direction as derived from the *Ascent-Dark Night*? I discovered six areas where an apparent relationship exists between St. John's theories and those of Rogers. I stated these relationships and formulated hypotheses to guide future explorations of these relationships.

Following these same procedures, all of Rogers' writings, especially those most supported by clinical experience and empirical research, must be heuristically analyzed with the question: How does this article, this book, this insight, this research finding relate to the theory of spiritual direction found in the writings of Saint John of the Cross? As demonstrated earlier, the perceived relationships between Rogers' psychological theories and St. John's theory of spiritual direction are systematically formulated into hypotheses that can be evaluated in future research <sup>142</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup> Because St. John's entire theory of spiritual direction appears to be contained in principle in the *Ascent-Dark Night*, it is predictable now that the results of the analysis and synthesis of spiritual direction in his other writings will further elaborate rather than substantially change the theory of spiritual direction presented here.

<sup>142</sup> Since the heart of Rogers' clinical and scientific work is expressed in the two articles we have examined, it is predictable now that a heuristic analysis of all his writings will supplement and expand, rather than substantially change, the major areas of future research already spelled out in this article.

— *Researching relationships and testing hypotheses derived from the theories of John of the Cross and Carl Rogers*

Once the significant relationships between the theories of St. John and Rogers and the guiding hypotheses for researching these relationships have been formulated in the manner demonstrated in the preceding section, these relationships and hypotheses can be explored and tested according to the appropriate phenomenological, theological, and empirical research procedures. Because spiritual direction relies upon both theology and psychology as upon basic sciences, these relationships and hypotheses must be open to critical examination by both theological and psychological methods. For this reason, the relationships and hypotheses must be formulated broadly enough, yet economically and operationally enough, to permit this interdisciplinary evaluation. The six areas of research already developed in this article indicate the major relationships and hypotheses which can be drawn from the theories of St. John and Rogers; however, as the complete works of both are analyzed according to the steps explained above, these areas of research may increase in number.

— *Formulation of theoretical model for guiding practice and research in spiritual direction*

The results of exploring and testing relationships and hypotheses derived from John of the Cross and Carl Rogers will be formulated into a theoretical model of spiritual direction. A model is a network of concepts and relationships which to some degree represents symbolically a particular reality, but more importantly guides practice and research within that reality. Thus, the concepts and relationships that emerge from investigating the hypotheses drawn from St. John and Rogers must to the extent possible be operationally defined and systematically arranged so as both to express conceptually the reality of spiritual direction and to guide actual practice and continuing research therein.

The components of this theoretical model — its basic concepts and relationships and their systematic arrangement — can be determined only as the three steps of previous research outlined above reveal them; yet, from the exploratory research already concluded the emerging structure of such a model may be tentatively outlined as follows:

1. *basic assumptions* underlying the ministry of spiritual direction drawn from theology, philosophy, and psychology

2. *definition of terms* to be used in the model, defined as rigorously and operationally as possible
3. *goal* of spiritual direction
4. the *practice* of spiritual direction, expressed to the degree possible in operational terms and functional (if-then) relationships, as it pertains to
  - a. the directee
  - b. the director
  - c. the relationship of the director and directee
  - d. the process of spiritual growth
5. *research* procedures for investigating the practice of spiritual direction.

Several points may be made about this model. First of all, it is primarily an interpersonal relationship model of spiritual direction in that it places the utmost importance upon the relationship between the director and directee. However, there are other ways of understanding spiritual direction in the Church today: direction as institutionalized, direction as charismatic, direction as sacramental, direction as incarnational, and so forth<sup>143</sup>. Because each of these models expresses a valid truth about the reality or mystery of spiritual direction, the interpersonal model must not be viewed as describing the entirety of this reality. It presents but one aspect of the mystery of spiritual direction and must be used with the awareness that other equally valid models of direction exist.

Secondly, a theoretical model is not a dogma, but merely a useful conceptual tool for guiding research and practice. Thus, as this model of spiritual direction develops, it must never be regarded as a final statement about the reality of direction; rather, it must always be ready for reformulation to incorporate new data arising from practice and research.

Thirdly, the hypotheses from which this model is derived originate, not in the direct observation of spiritual direction as practised today, but in the reported experiences of a sixteenth-century Spanish spiritual director and the clinical and research findings of a twentieth-century American psychotherapist. The initial formulation of this model, then, while not totally a conceptual entity unrelated to the actual experience of spiritual direction or the helping relationship, is nevertheless several steps removed from the current reality it

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<sup>143</sup> David Fleming, « Models of Spiritual Direction », 351-57. The model emerging from this dissertation contains many elements of both the interpersonal and incarnational models of spiritual direction described by Fleming. While Fleming's interpersonal model is built upon the notion of spiritual friendship, mine rests more upon the helping relationship as understood in the therapeutic professions today.

attempts to describe and, for this reason, will undoubtedly contain a large degree of error and mistaken inference. Yet even a model built initially upon deductive hypotheses related only indirectly to experience is valuable if it contributes to more enlightened practice and stimulates illuminating research. As new data arise from practice and experience in spiritual direction, the model can be reformulated to reduce its margin of error and mistaken inferences and to represent more accurately the actual experience of spiritual direction today<sup>144</sup>.

Finally, this model should not be conceived as Saint John of the Cross' theory of spiritual direction updated with the insights of Carl Rogers or as a client-centered theory of psychotherapy baptized for spiritual direction; rather, it should be thought of as an independent theoretical model to guide future practice and research in spiritual direction. Although its initial formulation relies heavily upon hypotheses drawn from the work of both St. John of the Cross and Carl Rogers, the model may with continual revision according to new data arising from ongoing research and practice in spiritual direction evolve to an expression quite removed from the original theories of either St. John or Rogers.

In the four successive steps stated above — analysis and synthesis of theories of spiritual direction in religious writings, heuristic analysis of psychological writings for data relevant to these theories, evaluation of hypotheses derived from these analyses, and formulation of a theoretical model based on this evaluation — we have a method for constructing theoretical models for use in spiritual direction. Assuming the importance of contemporary psychology for the traditional Christian ministry of spiritual direction<sup>145</sup>, this method enables any reliable theory of spiritual direction (one validated in experience and theology)<sup>146</sup> and any reliable theory of

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<sup>144</sup> « Therapy, Personality, and Interpersonal Relationships », pp. 188-92, 244, 249-52.

<sup>145</sup> Our research suggests both the importance of psychology for spiritual directors and a method for exploring the relationship between psychology and spirituality. See Cameli, *Spiritual Direction for Priests*, p. 15.

<sup>146</sup> For examples of other theories of spiritual direction, see Kimper, « A Psychological Analysis of the Spiritual Direction Given by Saint Francis of Sales »; Cirillo Di Rienzo, *La Direzione Spirituale negli Scritti di S. Teresa d'Avila* (Rome: Teresianum, 1965); Gerald Dennis Coleman, « Religious Experience as Guide of Spiritual Living: A Study in Ignatius of Loyola and Karl Rahner, His Interpreter » (Ph. D. dissertation, University of St. Michael's College, Canada, 1974); T. K. Johnson, « The Spiritual Dialogue: Some Insights from the Practice of Spiritual Direction » (Th. D. dissertation, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, Rome, 1977); William A. Sutton, « An Exposition of St. Alphonsus Liguri's Doctrine on Spiritual Direction (S.T.D. dissertation, Pontificia Studiorum Universitas a S. Thomas Aquinate, Rome, 1978).

personality and psychotherapy (one supported by solid clinical and research evidence) to be assimilated into an integrated conceptual framework useful for guiding practice and research in spiritual direction. Hopefully, developing such models will promote the renewal of spiritual direction as a relevant ministry in today's Church.

### *Summary*

In this final section, a method is described for continuing the research reported in this article and for developing a theoretical model of spiritual direction based on the writings of Saint John of the Cross and Carl R. Rogers. This method involves four successive stages: analysis and synthesis of the theory of spiritual direction in the collected works of St. John; heuristic analysis of all the writings of Carl Rogers; critical evaluation of the relationship and hypotheses derived from the theories of John and Rogers; and the formulation of a theoretical model for guiding practice and research in spiritual direction. A tentative outline of the components of such a model is presented and evaluated. The chapter concludes with the suggestion that this four-step method may be used for developing a variety of theoretical models of spiritual direction based on writers other than St. John of the Cross and Carl Rogers.

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