

Andre Godin

Veterans of this Symposium bringing together Europe's Psychologists of Religion will, without doubt, have among their memories of such past occasions the compelling figure of Professor Andre Godin, always actively present at those scientific meetings who never failed, in his own inimitable english, to pose some small but always pertinent question to those who were presenting their work.

Andre Godin died near Brussels the 2nd of June 1997, at the age of 82. He entered the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in 1933 where he was first trained in Philosophy and Letters, and Theology, in which he received, respectively, a Doctorate (1942) and a Masters degree (1947). After a year of teaching and another year of further training in Ireland, he became interested in Psychology and went to New York, later there to achieve (1951) a Master of Arts in Psychology at Fordham University.

That vocation, to be a "Christian Psychologist", as he liked to call it, would remain until after his emeritatus in 1984. He gave himself utterly to this vocation both as practitioner and as researcher and teacher.

As a practitioner trained in psychoanalytic perspective, he identified with the fields which became known as Pastoral Counselling or Pastoral Care, as well as questions pertaining to the discernment of religious vocation. Thanks to this interest we have several books and other publications of his on this subject, including "La relation humaine dans le dialogue pastoral" (The human relationship in pastoral dialogue, 1967); "Guide psychologique et pastoral pour discerner les troubles mentaux" (A psychological and pastoral guide to the discernment of mental illness, 1968); "La vie des groupes dans l'Eglise" (Group life in the Church, 1969); "Psychologie de la vocation. Un bilan" (Psychology of vocation. A review, 1975). On account of these two interests in Clinical Psychology, A. Godin became particularly well known in the Belgian Society for Psychoanalysis, and the AIEMPR (Association Internationale pour l'Etude Medico - Psychologique et Religieuse), in which he was an active participant and whose scientific meetings he frequented with great vigor and interest.

As Professor and researcher, it was without doubt the Psychology of Religion that Andre Godin wished to see develop as a scientific discipline in its own right. If, in effect, he taught General Psychology at the Marie-Haps Institute at Brussels, where from 1956 to 1980 he taught students in Psychology and in Logopedics, he was also Professor of Religious Psychology at the Gregorian University in Rome, the Lumen Vitae Institute in Brussels, Laval University in Canada, and the Institut Supérieur de Sciences religieuses at Charleroi in Belgium, for varying lengths of time, between 1948 and 1984.

From the very beginning, he loved discussing the epistemological and methodological conditions required for the Psychology of Religion to become a scientific discipline, and he focused on this topic in a number of his publications. He conducted original research in keeping with this the rigorous criteria he proposed in this regard, with his students at Marie-Haps, devoting particular attention to the study of immanent justice, animistic thinking in children, and the symbolic import of the parental images for understanding subjects' emotional aspects of the rapport with God.

These projects, which he personally directed, resulted in a first essay entitled "Le Dieu des parents et le Dieu des enfants" (The God of parents and the God of Children, 1963) which was to long time thereafter be associated with his work and concerns. In fact, Godin

consecrated a large portion of his life to writing in this domain which so preoccupied him, namely, the psychological roots of religious behaviour. He is to be credited with more than one hundred published articles and chapters in entitled volumes. Perhaps his last book "Psychologie des experiences religieuses" (The Psychology of religious experiences : Desire and reality, 1981) may well be understood as falling into this line of research, at once concerned with the clinical and pastoral, on the one hand, and determined to found a Psychology of religious behaviour, on the other.

From the outset, Godin pursued contacts with and among every group of related concern in Belgium, France, Germany and Italy, as well as the United States and as far away as Australia. From 1957 to 1971, he succeeded in bringing together an important number of these researchers in Psychology of Religion around several broad themes, almost singelhandedly assuring, with the aid of Lumen Vitae, the publication of 5 major volumes of the series of the "Cahiers de Psychologie religieuse", volumes which have several times been reedited and which further added to Gidin's International reputation.

In the editorial section of each of the above mentioned volumes, Godin gave an accounting of the state of the field of the Psychology of Religion, remarking on its origins and roots as a scientific discipline, its principal actors, its methods, difficulties specific to it, its professional associations, its Journals, etc. In addition he wrote an innumerable series of reviews of others woks, always at once critical and stimulating, through which Godin familiarized his readers with current work in the field.

Drawing from the same impetus to stimulate sound research and to bring to light current work in the Psychology of Religion, Godin founded in 1964, thanks to a gift from the american Professor Gregory Zilboorg and the support of the Lumen Vitae Editions at Brussels, the "Commission Internationale de Psychologie Religieuse Scientifique" (C.I.P.R.S., International Commission for the Scientific Psychology of Religion) which would later become from 1977 onwards, a self supporting non profit organization registred in Luxembourg.

The essential mission of this Organization has become that of attributing every five years the International prize in Scientific Psychology of Religion, recognizing research of oustnding quality or an author who in some significant manner has contributed to the progress of the Psychology of Religion as a scientific endeavor. The first laureat, named in 1965, Professor Jean-Pierre Deconchy, has most recently served as the Commission's President. The last two Prizes have been given to the Professor Melvin Lerner, in 1986, and to Professor David Wulff, in 1991. The illness which plagued Andre Godin during the course of 1996 prevented the Commission from realizing its goal of awarding a new prize at this Symposium in Barcelona. The members of the Commission, who are present here, have decide to consult each other about the continuation of the mission Godin began in this domain.

It may thus be said that Andre Godin devoted the great majority of his scientific life to the cause of the Psychology of Religion and that he made an enormous contribution to the development of scientific rigour, on the one hand, and to the works of that science's principal protagonists, on the other hand.

It his without doubt no accident that David Wulff was able to remark in his cogent review of the field which he recently adapted for the second edition of his book "Psychology of Religion" (1997, p.503) that Andre Godin figures among the top 10 authors cited in the Psychology of Religion. This comes as no suprise to those who know the field, and it serves as a welcome reminder of the professional recognition and international renown that are due

Andre Godin. In this light, I invite you to celebrate the posthumous honor associated with this recognition of Andre Godin's contribution, and to express our profound gratitude for it.

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J.M. Jaspard

Translated in english by J. Day

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